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THE DUAL STATUS OF ISRAEL IN ROMANS 11:28

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Three major views of the identity of "all Israel" in Rom 11:26 have concluded that "all Israel" refers to the church, to the elect remnant of believing Jews during the present age, and to the ethnic nation of Israel. Romans 11:28 is an often neglected verse that helps in determining which of the views is correct, because the pronoun "they" in v. 28 refers to the same people as the "all Israel" of v. 26. Since context requires that the pronoun "you" in v. 28 refers to Gentiles, the "enemies" and the "they" of v. 28 must be ethnic Jews, thereby eliminating the possibility of "all Israel" being the church. The two clauses in v. 28 describe what is true of ethnic Israel at the same time, not one condition prior to Israel's salvation and another subsequent to that salvation. That eliminates the view that "all Israel" depicts an elect remnant of believing Jews, because they could hardly be enemies according to the gospel after becoming believers. The view that "all Israel" is the ethnic nation of Israel has v. 28 speaking of Israel's dual status: simultaneously they are enemies according to the gospel and beloved because of the fathers. In her current rejection of Christ, the nation still enjoys the irrevocable corporate election by God. That identification of "all Israel" is therefore correct.

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The role of the nation Israel in the redemptive plan of God is a significant issue, and one that has received much attention through the years. A fundamental question in the discussion involves the future of Israel and whether or not she has a future. According to Herman Ridderbos, "The church … as the people of the New Covenant has taken the place of Israel, and national Israel is nothing other than the empty shell from which the pearl has been removed and which has lost its function in the history of redemption."[1] In similar fashion, Bruce K. Waltke asserts that "national Israel and its law have been permanently replaced by the church and the

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[1]Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 354–55.

New Covenant."[2]

Is this true? Did Israel permanently forfeit her privileged status by rejecting the Messiah and the gospel? Or is she still God's chosen nation? Put another way, Is there yet a future hope for the nation of Israel in the redemptive plan of God?

THREE VIEWS OF ROMANS 11:26A

At the forefront of the discussion stands the Apostle Paul's declaration in Rom 11:26a: "And thus all Israel will be saved." As interpreters have considered this verse, three main views have emerged regarding the identity of the "all Israel" that will be saved: (1) "all Israel" is the church, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles who are saved throughout the present age; (2) "all Israel" is the elect remnant of believing Jews within the ethnic nation of Israel, which is saved throughout the present age; and (3) "all Israel" refers to the ethnic nation of Israel, which will be saved at the end of the present age.

View 1: "All Israel" Is the Church

The first view is that the "all Israel" of Rom 11:26 consists of both Jews and Gentiles who together constitute the church of Jesus of Christ. In other words, "all Israel" equals the church, which is the Israel of God.[3] According to this interpretation, even though a partial hardening has come upon ethnic Israel, a remnant of believing Jews is still being saved throughout the present age. At the same time, Gentiles also are being grafted in among the Jews as they turn to Christ and are saved. In the end, the full number of those who are saved, "coming in from both the Jewish and the Gentile communities, will constitute the final Israel of God."[4] In this manner, Paul writes in Rom 11:26, all the Israel of God will be saved.

According to this view, Rom 11:26 consists of "a typically Pauline

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[2]Bruce K. Waltke, "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1988) 274. According to Waltke, "no clear passage teaches the restoration of national Israel," and "the Jewish *nation* no longer has a place as the special people of God" because "that place has been taken by the Christian community which fulfills God's purposes for Israel" (ibid., 274–75) [emphasis in the original].

[3]This is the view of John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. and ed. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993) 437; Lee Irons, "Paul's Theology of Israel's Future: A Nonmillennial Interpretation of Romans 11," *Reformation & Revival Journal* 6 (1997):101–26; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R, 2000) 167–92; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 231–57; Marten H. Woudstra, "Israel and the Church: A Case for Continuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity* 235–37; Philip E. Hughes, "The Olive Tree of Romans XI," *Evangelical Quarterly* 20 (1948):44–45; Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989) 131–35, 194.

[4]Robertson, *The Israel of God* 188. Robertson's view in *The Israel of God* is a departure from his previous position that "all Israel" refers to all the elect people within the ethnic community of Israel (see O. Palmer Robertson, "Is There a Distinctive Future for Ethnic Israel in Romans 11?," in *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stanley N. Gundry [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979] 209–27).

polemical redefinition"[5] of Israel in which the word "Israel" no longer refers to the ethnic nation. As Irons explains, "Paul has literally redefined the term 'Israel' to refer to the New Testament church by arguing that God's irrevocable promises to Israel are fulfilled by means of the salvation of both Jew and Gentile in the church age."[6] In this way, then, "all Israel" in Rom 11:26 refers to all the elect of God, whether Jew or Gentile, who are saved throughout the present age.

View 2: "All Israel" Is the Remnant

The second view is that "all Israel" in Rom 11:26 refers to all the elect Jews within the ethnic nation of Israel.[7] In other words, "all Israel" is the believing remnant which is saved throughout the present age. According to this position, the hardening of the nation Israel is only partial, and God will continue to save a remnant from among the Jews until the end of the present age. The designation "all Israel," then, refers to the totality of that believing remnant of ethnic Jews,[8] and Rom 11:26 affirms "that there will always be a remnant of believing Jews until the end of time."[9]

According to this view, the mystery alluded to in Rom 11:25 is not the *fact* of the remnant's salvation, but rather the *manner* in which God saves them.[10] As described earlier in Romans 11, God has purposed to use the salvation of Gentiles to arouse the Jews to jealousy that some of them might also turn to Christ and be saved. This He will continue to do throughout the present age, and in this manner—Paul writes in Rom 11:26—all the elect Jews within ethnic Israel will be saved.

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[5]Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* 250.

[6]Irons, "Paul's Theology of Israel's Future" 102.

[7]This is the view of Ben L. Merkle, "Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 (2000):709–21; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 698–700; Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) 1024–30; Charles M. Horne, "The Meaning of the Phrase 'And Thus All Israel Shall Be Saved' (Romans 11:26)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 (1978):329–34; Robert B. Strimple, "Amillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999) 112–18; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1936) 723–28; William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 379–82; idem, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968) 32–57; Herman Bavinck, *The Last Things: Hope for This World and the Next*, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) 104–7; Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free, 1966) 788–95; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* 354–61; and Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 139–47.

[8]In the words of Berkhoff, "all Israel" is a designation "of the whole number of the elect out of the ancient covenant people" (Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology* 699). In similar fashion, Hoeksema states that the term "denotes the fullness of the elect Jews in the new dispensation" (Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* 793).

[9]Merkle, "Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel" 721.

[10]Ibid., 719; Strimple, "Amillennialism" 116.

View 3: "All Israel" Is the Nation

The third view is that "all Israel" in Rom 11:26 refers to the entire ethnic nation of Israel.[11] According to this interpretation, the current partial hardening of Israel will persist until the end of the present age, when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. At that time, the divine hardening will be removed, and in this manner—Paul writes in Rom 11:26—the ethnic nation of Israel as a whole will turn to Christ and be saved.

According to proponents of view 3, this eschatological salvation of the nation of Israel is rooted in the Lord's faithfulness to fulfill the covenantal promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[12] In other words, although the majority of Israel is currently the object of God's rejection, He will not forsake His people but has pledged, in accordance with his covenantal love, to grant them salvation at the end of the present age.[13]

The difference in interpretation, then, is clear: Does "all Israel" in Rom 11:26 refer to (1) Jews and Gentiles who make up the church and are saved throughout the present age, (2) the elect remnant of believing Jews within ethnic Israel who are saved throughout the present age, or (3) the ethnic nation of Israel

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[11]This is the view of F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 209; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary, ed. Charles A. Briggs, Samuel R. Driver, and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905) 335–37; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983) 576–77; Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995) 223–25; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary of the New Testament, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 719–26; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 420–22; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, vol. 38b, Word Biblical Commentaries, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word, 1988) 681–83, 691–93; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, vol. 6, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 612–23; Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) 250–63; S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "Evidence from Romans 9–11," in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*, ed. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody, 1992) 199–223; Harold W. Hoehner, "Israel in Romans 9–11," in *Israel, the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God's Promises*, ed. H. Wayne House (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 145–67; Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 374; and Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 10:123–25.

[12]Schreiner, *Romans* 626–27.

[13]Ibid., 627. Among those who hold this third view, there is disagreement regarding the precise meaning of the designation "*all* Israel." Some believe it refers to the nation as a collective whole, not including every single Israelite (e.g., Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 722–24; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* 420–21; Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 374; Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 576–77), and others believe it refers to every single Israelite alive at the time of that salvation (e.g., Hoehner, "Israel in Romans 9–11" 155–56; James Kristian Brackett, "Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9–11" [Th.M. thesis, The Master's Seminary, Sun Valley, Calif., 1998] 153–55).

which will be saved at the end of the present age?

View	*Identity of "All Israel"*	*Timing of the Salvation*
1	The Church	Throughout Present Age
2	The Remnant	Throughout Present Age
3	The Nation	At End of Present Age

In other words, is "all Israel" the church, the remnant, or the nation?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ROMANS 11:28

As interpreters have wrestled with this question, various aspects of the context of Romans 11 have received much attention. For example, proponents of all three views have examined Paul's question in v. 1a and the answer he provides in vv. 1b-10; Paul's second question in v. 11a and the answer he provides in vv. 11b-24; Paul's use of μυστήριον (*mystērion*, "mystery") in v. 25; Paul's use of ἄχρις (*achris*, "until") in v. 25; Paul's use of καὶ οὕτως (*kai houtōs*, "and thus") at the beginning of v. 26; and the implications of Paul's OT quotations in vv. 26b and 27. Each of these issues is significant in determining the identity of the "all Israel" of Rom 11:26.

One verse in the immediate context, however, has direct bearing on the identity of "all Israel" in Rom 11:26 and yet has not received the amount of attention it deserves. That verse is Rom 11:28. The purpose of this article is to examine Rom 11:28 and to determine its contribution to the debate over the identity of "all Israel."

In Rom 11:28, Paul writes, "From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for the sake of you, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved because of the fathers" (writer's personal translation, κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἐχθροὶ δι' ὑμᾶς, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν ἀγαπητοὶ διὰ τοὺς πατέρας, *kata men to euangelion echthroi di' hymas, kata de tēn eklogēn agapētoi dia tous pateras*). In this verse, Paul begins what may be viewed as a small, detached paragraph in which he grounds and elaborates his prediction of the salvation of "all Israel" two verses earlier.[14] Although v. 28 begins with asyndeton and is not formally connected with the previous context, an implicit connection is forged by the need to supply the subject of v. 28—"they" in the translation above—from v. 27.[15] In other words, "they" is not in the original and must be supplied. The antecedent of the supplied "they" in v. 28 is "them" (αὐτοῖς, *autois*) in v. 27, which refers back to "Jacob" ('Ιακώβ, *Iakōb*) in v. 26b, which in turn refers back to "all Israel" (πᾶς 'Ισραήλ, *pas Israēl*) in v. 26a. This is significant because it indicates that the group of individuals described in v. 28 is the same group designated by the term "all Israel" in v. 26. Put another way, Paul's words in v. 28 describe the "all Israel" of v. 26 and

[14]Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 729. Verses 28–29 form a paragraph, as do vv. 30–32, and the two paragraphs function together, as Cranfield writes, to "draw out" and "sum up" the "implications of the preceding verses" (Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 579).

[15]Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 730.

help to establish its identity.

For this reason, it is imperative to determine which of the three proposed identities of "all Israel" in v. 26—the church, the remnant, or the nation—is most accurately described in v. 28. Rightly understood, does Rom 11:28 describe the church, the remnant, or the nation?

Romans 11:28 and View 1

In considering whether or not Rom 11:28 can be understood to describe the church, two difficulties arise for view 1. First, the supplied subject of v. 28 ("they") is set in contrast to Gentiles ("you") in this verse and therefore must refer exclusively to ethnic Jews.[16] In the first clause of v. 28, the people in question are described as "enemies for the sake of you" (ἐχθροὶ δι' ὑμᾶς, *echthroi di' hymas*). Because Paul uses the second person to refer exclusively to Gentiles throughout 11:11–32,[17] his use of the pronoun *hymas* ("you") in v. 28 must also refer to Gentiles, and the "enemies" must therefore refer to ethnic Jews. In other words, the idea of the first half of v. 28 is this: "From the standpoint of the gospel they [ethnic Jews] are enemies for the sake of you [Gentiles]." The "all Israel" of v. 26, in turn, must also be exclusively Jewish, which precludes the interpretation that equates "all Israel" with the church, for the church obviously contains Gentiles.

This distinction between Jews and Gentiles is the same one Paul has been maintaining throughout the chapter. In fact, his point in the first half of v. 28 is a general summary of statements made earlier in Romans 11. In v. 11 Paul writes that Israel's transgression was the means by which salvation came to the Gentiles; in v. 12 he writes that Israel's transgression and failure resulted in riches for the Gentiles; in v. 15 he writes that Israel's rejection resulted in the reconciliation of Gentiles; and here in v. 28 Paul sums up these ideas by stating that those unbelievers who comprise the ethnic nation of Israel are enemies of God "for the sake of"—or "with a view to

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[16]Schreiner, *Romans* 615. Schreiner here borrows from Hafemann, who writes, "Rom 11:28 is especially important in this regard since it makes clear that the Israel of 11:26 must be ethnic Israel, since it is clearly ethnic Israelites who are 'enemies for the sake of the Gentiles' in 11:28a …" (Scott Hafemann, "The Salvation of Israel in Romans 11:25–32: A Response to Krister Stendahl," *Ex Auditu* 4 [1988]:53).

[17]Paul's use of the second person in reference to Gentiles as distinguished from Jews can be seen in the following second-person pronouns and second-person verbs throughout this section: ὑμῖν in v. 13; σύ in v. 17; κατακαυχῶ in v. 18; σύ in v. 18; σέ in v. 18; ἐρεῖς in v. 19; σύ in v. 20; ἔστηκας in v. 20; φρόνει in v. 20; σοῦ in v. 21; σέ in v. 22; ἐπιμένῃς in v. 22; σύ in v. 22; ὑμᾶς in v. 25; ὑμεῖς in v. 30; ἠπειθήσατε in v. 30; ἠλεήθατε in v. 30; and ὑμετέρῳ in v. 31. Every time Paul uses the second person, he does so in reference to Gentiles, and his use of ὑμᾶς in v. 28 is no exception. In contrast, he consistently uses the third person to refer to ethnic Jews: ἔπταισαν in v. 11; πέσωσιν in v. 11; αὐτῶν in v. 11; αὐτούς in v. 11; αὐτῶν in v. 12; αὐτῶν in v. 12; αὐτῶν in v. 14; αὐτῶν in v. 15; αὐτοῖς in v. 17; ἐξεκλάσθησαν in v. 20; κἀκεῖνοι in v. 23; ἐπιμένωσιν in v. 23; ἐγκεντρισθήσονται in v. 23; αὐτούς in v. 23; αὐτοῖς in v. 27; αὐτῶν in v. 27; τούτων in v. 30; ἠπείσθησαν in v. 31; αὐτοί in v. 31; and ἐλεηθῶσιν in v. 31.

the advantage of"[18]—the Gentiles.[19] Again, the individuals described in v. 28 must be exclusively Jewish, and therefore so must the "all Israel" of v. 26. This simply will not allow for the interpretation proposed by proponents of view 1, which sees "all Israel" as including Gentiles.

The second reason that v. 28 poses a problem for view 1 is that the two clauses in this verse simply cannot be said to describe the church. The place to begin in considering v. 28 is the unmistakably parallel structure of its two clauses:

κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον	ἐχθροὶ	δι' ὑμᾶς
kata men to euangelion	*echthroi*	*di' hymas*
"according to the gospel"	"enemies"	"for the sake of you"
κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν	ἀγαπητοὶ	διὰ τοὺς πατέρας
kata de tēn eklogēn	*agapatētoi*	*dia tous pateras*
"according to election"	"beloved"	"because of the fathers"

The basic meaning of these two clauses is that on one hand the individuals who comprise the "all Israel" of v. 26 are *enemies* of God, and yet on the other hand they are *beloved* by Him. From the standpoint of their rejection of the gospel, they are His enemies, and this for the sake of the Gentiles. But from the standpoint of God's election of them, they are beloved by Him, and this because of God's promises to the Jewish patriarchs ("the fathers"). This is what has been called the "dual status"[20] of Israel, for it sets forth two apparently contradictory descriptions of the people, and yet both descriptions are simultaneously true of them.[21]

Put simply, it is difficult—if not impossible—to understand these two clauses as describing the church. In what sense can those in the Body of Christ be described as the "enemies" of God? Paul says in v. 28 that these individuals are enemies *from the standpoint of the gospel* (*kata to euangelion*), but it is specifically because of the gospel and their reception of it that believers are *not* God's enemies.

Some proponents of view 1 interpret v. 28 as a description of ethnic Jews.[22] The dilemma for these interpreters is that they must do one of two things to maintain their position. Either they must deny that the supplied subject of v. 28 ultimately

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[18]Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 581.

[19]Paul reiterates the concept again in vv. 30–31 where, in both verses, he says that the disobedience of the Jews led to mercy for the Gentiles.

[20]Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 729. In similar fashion, Dunn refers to it as the "double status" of Israel (Dunn, *Romans 9–16* 693).

[21]This is indicated by Paul's use of the correlative conjunctions μέν … δέ, which express the idea: "On the one hand … but on the other hand" (see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996] 672).

[22]Robertson, *The Israel of God* 189–90; Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 440; Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1949) 404-5.

refers back to the "all Israel" of v. 26,[23] or they must contend that the "all Israel" of v. 26 includes Gentiles even though it specifically excludes them when it is described in v. 28. Neither of these two options is defensible.

Other proponents of view 1 interpret v. 28 as a description of the church.[24] For these interpreters, the two insurmountable problems described above remain. First, the contrast in v. 28 between the subject of the sentence and the second-person pronoun ὑμᾶς—which must refer to Gentiles—indicates that the subject is exclusively Jewish. Second, it is not possible to describe the church as consisting of individuals who are enemies of God.[25] Rom 11:28, in other words, precludes view 1 as an interpretive possibility.

Romans 11:28 and View 2

Because Rom 11:28 indicates that the "all Israel" of Rom 11:26 is exclusively Jewish, view 2—which sees "all Israel" as the Jewish remnant—begins as a distinct possibility.[26] Adding further support, some proponents of view 2 believe Rom 11:28 specifically points to the remnant interpretation of "all Israel," insisting that the verse describes those who were *once* God's enemies but who are *now* beloved by Him. For example, according to Lenski, Rom 11:28 is a fitting description of the elect remnant within the nation of Israel—those who were at first "enemies" (*echthroi*) because of their personal hostility to the gospel are described as "beloved" (*agapētoi*) when regarded according to God's election of them.[27] In similar fashion, Hendriksen notes, "these 'enemies' and these 'beloved ones' are the same people, namely, the elect. At first they were hostile to the gospel, but later on, because of the wonderful manifestation of God's mercy … they become friends."[28] In other words, the first clause describes the elect prior to their conversion, while the second describes them after. Hendriksen explains:

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[23]Such a denial would require that the antecedent of the supplied "they" in v. 28 is not "them" (αὐτοῖς) in v. 27a, "Jacob" ('Ιακώβ) in v. 26b, or "all Israel" (πᾶς 'Ισραήλ) in v. 26a, but rather "Israel" ('Ισραήλ) in v. 25. To say that the subject of v. 28 refers to "Israel" in v. 25 rather than these closer antecedents seems more than a bit arbitrary.

[24]Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (New York: Oxford University, 1950) 418–19. This also appears to be the position of Irons ("Paul's Theology of Israel's Future" 121), although it is difficult to be certain.

[25]Barth interprets v. 28 as a description of individuals who, though once vessels of God's wrath, become vessels of His mercy (Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* 419). The problem with this interpretation is that Paul's use of the correlative conjunctions μὲν and δὲ indicate that these individuals are simultaneously "enemies" (ἐχθροὶ) and "beloved" (ἀγαπητοὶ). This point will be addressed further in the discussion of view 2 below.

[26]In this way, view 2 manages to escape at least one of the difficulties of view 1.

[27]Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle* 732–33. Commenting on Rom 11:29, Lenski writes, "Paul explains how Jews who are at first enemies of the gospel are yet allowed eventually to become beloved of God" (ibid., 734).

[28]Hendriksen, *Romans* 384. The only other possible explanation for proponents of view 2 is to say that Paul switches subject mid-verse—from the Jews who are God's enemies in light of the gospel, to Jews who are beloved by God as elect members of the remnant—which is quite improbable (Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 731).

> The same Jews who at one time had been enemies of the gospel had become friends, beloved of God and fellow-believers. This great change had been brought about because of the fact that these former enemies had been designed by God, in his eternal decree, to become friends.[29]

The difficulty with this understanding of Rom 11:28 (and therefore the difficulty with view 2 in general) is that the two clauses in this verse—*kata men to euangelion echthroi di' hymas* and *kata de tēn eklogēn agapētoi dia tous pateras*—set forth two descriptions of Israel, and both descriptions are true of them *at the same time*. This is indicated by Paul's use of the correlative conjunctions *men ... de*, which express the idea: "On the one hand … but on the other hand."[30] In other words, Paul's use of the correlative conjunctions indicates that these individuals are *simultaneously* "enemies" and "beloved," not enemies for a time and then later beloved.

Had Paul intended to refer to a people who were *previously* enemies but who are *now* beloved, he would not have used the combination "on the one hand … but on the other hand"). Instead, it would be more likely for him to have used the combination ποτέ … νῦν (*pote … nun*, "formerly … now") or ποτέ … νῦν δέ (*pote … nun de*, "formerly … but now"), for Paul often uses this combination to highlight the contrast between the pre-conversion past and the post-conversion present. For example:

> Rom 11:30: "For just as you *once* [*pote*] were disobedient to God, *but now* [*nun de*] have been shown mercy because of their disobedience…."
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> Gal 1:23: "… but only, they kept hearing, 'He who *once* [*pote*] persecuted us is *now* [*nun*] preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.'"
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> Eph 2:11-13: "Therefore remember, that *formerly* [*pote*] you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called 'Uncircumcision' by the so-called 'Circumcision,' which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. *But now* [*nuni de*] in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."
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> Eph 5:8a: "For you were *formerly* [*pote*] darkness, *but now* [*nun de*] you are light in the Lord."
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> Col 1:21-22a: "And although you were *formerly* [*pote*] alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, *yet* He has *now* [*nun de*] reconciled you in His fleshly body through death…."

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[29]Hendriksen, *Romans* 384.

[30]See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* 672.

> Col 3:7-8: " … and in them you also *once* [*pote*] walked, when you were living in them. *But now* [*nuni de*] you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth."
>
> Phile 10-11: "I appeal to you for my child, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, Onesimus, who *formerly* [*pote*] was useless to you, *but now* [*nuni de*] is useful both to you and to me."[31]

Other times, Paul employs a different combination to indicate the temporal contrast between the pre-conversion past and the post-conversion present. For example, in Rom 7:5-6, he uses the imperfect active indicative of εἰμί (ἦμεν, *ēmen,* "we were") in combination with *nuni de* ("but now"):

> Rom 7:5-6: "For while we were [*ēmen*] in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now [*nuni de*] we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter."[32]

Elsewhere he establishes the same temporal contrast with the combination of τότε (*tote*, "at that time") and νῦν δέ (*nun de*, "but now"):

> Gal 4:8-9: "However at that time [*tote*], when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. But now [*nun de*] that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?"

In Rom 11:28, however, rather than using one of these (or a similar combination) to establish a contrast between the pre-conversion past and the post-conversion present of the individuals in question, Paul uses the correlative conjunctions *men ... de* to indicate two simultaneously existing states. Romans 11:28, therefore, cannot refer to individuals who were once enemies prior to their conversion but who are now beloved after their conversion—as view 2 says it does—and view 2 cannot be considered a plausible interpretation of the "all Israel" in Rom 11:26.

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[31]This combination is used in 1 Peter 2:10 to set up the same contrast: "… for you *once* [ποτέ] were not a people, *but now* [νῦν δέ] you are the people of God; you had not received [perfect passive participle of ἐλεέω] mercy, *but now* [νῦν δέ] you have received [aorist passive participle of ἐλεέω] mercy."

[32]This is similar to the way Peter establishes the same temporal contrast in 1 Pet 2:25: "For you were [ἦτε, imperfect active indicative of εἰμί] continually straying like sheep, but now [ἀλλὰ … νῦν] you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (cf. Rom 6:17).

Romans 11:28 and View 3

In contrast with the first two views, the dual status of "all Israel" as portrayed in Rom 11:28 fits perfectly with the interpretation of view 3, the view that sees "all Israel" as a reference to the nation of Israel as a whole. This can be seen by considering the first half of the dual status in v. 28a, the second half the dual status in v. 28b, and the ground of that status in v. 29.

The First Half of Israel's Dual Status (v. 28a)

According to view 3, Israel presently exists in a state in which a majority of the nation of is hardened (Rom 11:25).[33] This majority has rejected the Messiah, a rejection that is described in Romans 11 as a *stumbling* (ἔπταισαν, *eptaisan*) in v. 11, "their transgression" (παραπτώματι αὐτῶν, *paraptōmati autōn*) in v. 11, "their transgression" (παράπτωμα, *paraptōma*) in v. 12, and "their rejection" (ἀποβολή, *apobolē*) in v. 15.[34] Paul describes this present state of hardening in the first clause of Rom 11:28, where he refers to the nation of Israel as God's enemies—those who stand under His enmity and displeasure.[35] They are enemies, Paul writes, "according to the gospel" (κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, *kata men to euangelion*). The preposition κατά (*kata*) here indicates the norm or the standard "according to which a judgment is rendered"[36] and therefore "defines the rule by which God's relation to Israel is determined."[37] In other words, when regarded according to their rejection of the gospel, they are considered God's enemies.[38]

Paul continues this first clause and writes that they are enemies "for the sake of you" (δι' ὑμᾶς, *di' hymas*). The second-person pronoun here refers to Gentile believers, as it does throughout the chapter. Paul's point is that Israel's rejection of the gospel was not without benefit—it was "for the sake of" or "with a view to the

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[33]That the present hardening of Israel is only partial and does not extend to every individual in the nation is argued in Rom 11:1-10 and stated explicitly in Rom 11:25.

[34]This rejection of Messiah and the salvation found in Him can also be seen earlier in Paul's argument, specifically in Rom 9:30-33; 10:2-3, 19-21; 11:7-10.

[35]Schreiner, *Romans* 625. Although there has been some debate about whether the term ἐχθροὶ ("enemies") should be understood passively (i.e., the Jews are objects of God's hostility) or actively (the Jews are hostile to God), it should be taken passively, for it stands parallel to ἀγαπητοὶ ("beloved"), which is passive (i.e., "loved by God") (ibid.; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* 422; Mounce, *Romans* 225; Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 580). At the same time, as Schreiner notes, "Enmity by God necessarily implies that the people involved also hate God (cf. 9:30–10:21), for the idea that those who are God's enemies loved God is inconceivable for Paul …" (Schreiner, *Romans* 625).

[36]Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000) 512.

[37]James Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. 2, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 684.

[38]According to Moo, "'Enemies according to the gospel' succinctly summarizes the point that Paul has made in 9:30–10:21: through their failure to respond to the revelation of God's righteousness in Christ, the heart of the gospel, Israel as a whole has failed to attain the eschatological salvation manifested in the gospel" (Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 730).

advantage of" the Gentiles.[39] "All Israel," in other words, is presently the enemy of God, but this rejection has led to the salvation of Gentiles (see Rom 11:11–12, 15). The unbelieving Jews that make up the nation of Israel, then, are enemies *according to the gospel* and *for the sake of the Gentiles.* This is the first half of Israel's dual status.

The Second Half of Israel's Dual Status (v. 28b)

At the same time, however, Paul writes that they are not only *enemies* of God, they are also *beloved* by Him. In the second clause in v. 28, the apostle again uses two prepositional phrases to explain Israel's status. First he writes that they are beloved "according to election" (κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογήν, *kata de tēn eklogēn*). Here Paul uses the preposition *kata* in the same way he did in the first clause of the verse—to indicate the norm or the standard "according to which a judgment is rendered"[40] and therefore to define "the rule by which God's relation to Israel is determined."[41] The phrase "according to election" (*kata de tēn eklogēn*), then, indicates that although they are considered *enemies* when regarded according to their rejection of the gospel, they are considered *beloved* when regarded according to God's choice—His corporate election of Israel as His chosen nation.[42] As Murray notes, the word "beloved" indicates "that God has not suspended or rescinded his relation to Israel as his chosen people in terms of the covenants made with the fathers."[43] Israel, although hardened and unbelieving, is still God's chosen and beloved nation.[44]

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[39]This, according to Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 581, is the meaning of the preposition διά in the first clause of v. 28.

[40]Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon* 512.

[41]Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans" 684.

[42]It is significant to recognize that "Paul is talking about the place of the nation in God's plan, not the fate of individuals" (Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* 423). In other words, the apostle refers here in v. 28 not to the choice of specific individuals unto salvation, but rather to the choice of the nation as a corporate entity (see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 731–32, and John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968] 100–101). In the words of Schreiner, "The word ἐκλογήν refers to the electing work of God by which he has chosen Israel to be his people" (Schreiner, *Romans* 625–26). In similar fashion, Cranfield writes, "By 'election' here is meant the election of the people as a whole (cf. v. 2), not that election which distinguishes within Israel (cf. vv. 5 and 7) and which is itself a pointer to the election of the people as a whole" (Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 580).

[43]Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* 101.

[44]As Morris writes, God "had not forgotten that Israel was his people; their refusal to accept the gospel did not alter the fact that he had chosen them to be in a special relationship to him" (Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* 423). Lenski, a proponent of view 2, objects to view 3's interpretation of the "beloved" in Rom 11:28, writing, "Why is 'beloved' and this peculiar consideration of the fathers absent today, and why was it absent during all the past centuries? And where is 'beloved' used with reference to any persons but believers? No; the hardened mass is *not* 'Israel' …" (Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle* 734). The answer to Lenski's first two questions is that—as explained above—the "beloved" status of unbelieving Israel is *not* absent today. In answer to his third question, the entire nation of Israel was considered beloved by God in the OT, even though not every individual in the nation was a genuine believer. For example, in Deut 7:7-8, Moses writes, "The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were fewest of all

Paul emphasizes this point further with the second prepositional phrase in this clause—"because of the fathers" (διὰ τοὺς πατέρας, *dia tous pateras*).[45] The word "fathers" is a reference to the patriarchs of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob[46]—and more specifically to the covenant promises God made to them.[47] As Morris writes, "Paul is appealing to the covenant God had made with Abraham and the promises he had made again and again to Abraham's descendants."[48] The essence of this second clause, then, is that when regarded according to the standpoint of God's corporate election of the nation, "all Israel" is beloved by God because of the covenant promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

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peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." This is the same love that Paul refers to in Rom 11:28 and is a love that continues to this day.

[45]Although Paul's use of the preposition διά in the second clause is parallel to his use of the same preposition in the first clause, the two uses of the preposition carry slightly different nuances (Dunn, *Romans 9–16* 684; Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 580). In the first clause διά has a final sense and means "for the sake of," but in the second clause it has a causal sense and means "because of." Put another way, the first use of the preposition looks forward and the second looks backward (ibid.).

[46]The word is used the same way in Rom 9:5.

[47]As Moo writes, "In saying that God's love for Israel is 'based on' the patriarchs, Paul is not of course suggesting that the patriarchs have done anything to merit God's love for themselves or their descendants. As Gal. 3 and Rom. 4 make clear, the significance of Abraham and the other patriarchs in the plan of salvation rests not on their own actions but on the gracious promises that God has made to them. So it is not because of the patriarchs in and of themselves that the Jews are still beloved; it is because of the promises God made to them. As it is by the standard of the gospel that the Jews are now judged to be enemies of God, so it is by the standard of 'election' that they are loved by God" (*The Epistle to the Romans* 731). In similar fashion, Mounce writes, "Paul was not supporting the idea that merit is passed on from the patriarchs to their descendants. But they were the ones who received his call (Gen 12:1–2; Deut 7:6–7), and it was to them that he first gave his gifts. And God's gifts and call are irrevocable…. He does not change his mind regarding the nation he called and sustained with gracious acts of provision and protection" (Mounce, *Romans* 225–26).

Opponents of view 3 often claim that it undermines the unconditional nature of God's sovereign election by affirming ethnicity is the *basis* for the salvation of Israel. This, however, is not the case. "Israel's ancestry does not amount to a claim on God. God freely pledged to bestow his grace upon Israel as an expression of his lovingkindness" (Schreiner, *Romans* 627). In other words, "Israel is beloved because God is faithful to His own love, which in His sovereign freedom He bestowed upon the fathers on no other ground than His love, which knows no cause outside itself (cf. Deut. 7:7f)" (Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 581). The insights of Piper are helpful: "Since God's free and unconstrained election of Israel from all the nations of the earth (Deut 7:6) embraced from the outset his intention to bless Israel for centuries in unique ways among the nations and in the last days to purify and save the whole people, his fulfillment of this intention is just as free from human constraints as the initial election of Abraham. We may infer from Rom 9:6ff that God has employed four thousand years of redemptive history to teach that he is free and not bound to save anyone because of his Jewishness nor to condemn anyone because of his non-Jewishness. Can he not at the end of the age, having demonstrated his freedom beyond the shadow of a doubt, bring his free and sovereign election of Israel to a climax by banishing ungodliness from Jacob and saving the whole people?" (John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23*, 2d ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983] 27). Can He not, in other words, have mercy on whom He desires (Rom 9:14–18)?

[48]Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* 423.

The Ground of Israel's Dual Status (v. 29)

To support his assertion that Israel is still beloved by God as His chosen nation, Paul provides in v. 29 a reason for his assertion in v. 28b.[49] He writes: "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλῆσις τοῦ θεοῦ, *ametamelētа gar ta charismata kai hē klēsis tou theou*). Although Paul does not define what he means by "gifts" (*ta charismata*) in this context, it is likely that he uses the word to summarize those privileges of Israel enumerated in Rom 9:4–5.[50] The "calling" (*klēsis*) of God, however, is clear, for it "refers to the election according to which the Jews are beloved."[51] In other words, it refers to "God's calling of Israel to be His special people, to stand in a special relation to Himself, and to fulfil a special function in history."[52]

Paul's point in v. 29 is that the gifts and calling of God are "irrevocable" (*ametamelētа*). This adjective, which Paul places at the beginning of the verse for emphasis, is best translated "irrevocable," for it describes something that "one does not take back."[53] How can Paul's readers be certain that Israel is still considered beloved by God when regarded from the standpoint of His choice of them? Because God does not take back His promises—His gifts to Israel and His calling of Israel to be His chosen nation are irrevocable. As Moo states, this word "emphasizes the point that Paul made at the beginning of his argument: 'The word of God has not failed' (9:6a).... Israel still has a place in God's plan *because* God is faithful."[54] In other words, "God has not abandoned the promises given to the fathers; they have not been nullified by Israel's unbelief; God is still faithful."[55]

According to Moo,

> Paul's assertion of Israel's dual status in v. 28 succinctly summarizes the dilemma that drives the whole argument of these chapters: the Israel now at enmity with God because of the gospel is nevertheless the Israel to whom God has made irrevocable promises of blessing. In broad terms, as 9:30–10:21 has elaborated the former, negative side of this dilemma, so 9:6b–29 and 11:1–27 have explained the second, positive side.[56]

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[49]The conjunction γάρ that introduces v. 29 is causal.

[50]Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 732; cf. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* 101.

[51]Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 732. Moo explains the relationship between the "gifts" of God and the "calling" of God like this: "The 'gifts' may then be combined with 'call' as one idea—'the benefits of God's call'—or be taken as a distinct category—'the gifts and the call of God.' … God's 'call,' then, is probably to be seen as one of the most important of those gifts: 'the gifts and especially, among those gifts, the call of God'" (ibid.).

[52]Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 581. In this way, the "calling" of God in v. 29 serves as a synonym of the "choice" of God in v. 28.

[53]Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon* 53.

[54]Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 732.

[55]Dunn, *Romans 9–16* 694. Morris puts it this way: "God does not change his mind after he has made gifts or issued calls. He does not take them back. What God has done and said stands" (*The Epistle to the Romans* 423).

[56]Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 729–30.

In similar fashion, Murray writes,

> Israel are both "enemies" and "beloved" at the same time, enemies as regards the gospel, beloved as regards the election. This contrast means that by their rejection of the gospel they have been cast away and the gospel had been given to the Gentiles but that nevertheless by reason of election and on account of their relation to the fathers they were beloved…. "Beloved" thus means that God has not suspended or rescinded his relation to Israel as his chosen people in terms of the covenants made with the fathers. Unfaithful as Israel have been and broken off for that reason, yet God still sustains his peculiar relation of love to them, a relation that will be demonstrated and vindicated in the restoration (vss. 12, 15, 26).[57]

The description of "all Israel" in Rom 11:28, then, not only indicates that the unbelieving nation as a whole is in view, but also points to the fact that that nation will one day be restored. God made specific promises to the nation of Israel, and her refusal to embrace Christ and the gospel did not mean that the gospel had failed or that God would fail to fulfill those promises. In the words of Bloesch: "His rejection of his people is not final but only provisional. In the No of God's rejection is hidden the Yes of his election."[58] All Israel *will* be saved.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that only the interpretation of view 3 corresponds to the dual status of "all Israel" as portrayed in Rom 11:28, for only this interpretation envisions a scenario in which both clauses of the verse are simultaneously and presently true of the entity "all Israel." On the one hand the unbelieving nation of Israel is an enemy of God, but on the other she is beloved by Him. When the partial hardening of Israel is removed at the end of the present age (Rom 11:25), her present "transgression" will give way to her "fulfillment" (Rom 11:12); her present "rejection" will give way to her "acceptance" (Rom 11:15); and the natural branches will be grafted back in (Rom 11:23-24). And in this manner, all Israel will be saved in accordance with God's covenantal love and in fulfillment of His promises (Rom 11:26-27). God has not, and will not, forsake His chosen nation.

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[57]Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* 100–101.

[58]Donald G. Bloesch, "'All Israel Will Be Saved': Supersessionism and the Biblical Witness," *Interpretation* 43 (1989):134.