(This document contains two excerpts from Brian Abasciano, "Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9.1-9: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis" [Ph.D. thesis; University of Aberdeen, 2004], the full version of which is available at the Society of Evangelical Arminians website at http://evangelicalarminians.org/Abasciano-Pauls-Use-of-the-Old-Testament-in-Romans-9.1-9-An-Intertextual-and-Theological-Exegesis. This doctoral dissertation has also been revised and published under the same title. The first excerpt provided here addresses the corporate orientation of Paul and his culture, which serves as significant context for Paul's concept of corporate election. The second excerpt addresses the translation of Romans 9:6b, countering John Piper's view of the verse advanced in his well known study, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23*, used to support Piper's position of unconditional individualistic election. The second excerpt further argues for corporate election unto salvation in Romans 9 over against individualistic election.)

Excerpt # 1: Individual and Corporate Perspectives in Romans 9-11

(pp. 108-12 in Abasciano's dissertation)

The nature of Paul's social orientation toward reality is a hermeneutical issue in Pauline studies generally. It is the type of issue that one carries convictions about based on a scholarly impression of first century culture, the New Testament writings, and other socio-historical data, and consequently brings this conviction in the form of presupposition to the task of exegesis. This presupposition then affects one's reading of Paul, a presupposition which has often simply been carried over automatically from individualistic western culture. An individualistic reading of Paul has long been the overwhelmingly dominant approach, until only recently with the appearance of the work of E. P. Sanders and the ensuing "new perspective on Paul."[1] Sanders'

[1] See especially, E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, and J. D. G. Dunn's influential commentary on Romans (especially 1.lxiii-lxxii). While the new perspective has enjoyed a precarious consensus over the last decade, it is now under increasing attack for ironically misrepresenting first century Judaism. See e.g., D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien, and M. Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Vol. 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*; Charles Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists"; Andrew A. Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*; Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel*; Peter Stuhlmacher and Donald A. Hagner, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective*; Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5*; Francis Watson, "Not the New Perspective"; cf. Mark Adam Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism*. Karl P. Donfried has indicated to me in personal correspondence that he regards the major development in scholarship on Romans at this time to be the increasing distance between many scholars and the work of the "new perspective." For a recent,

work helped to usher in a far greater appreciation of the concept of covenant in Paul's thought resulting in a far greater emphasis on corporate over against individual concerns, particularly concerning the relationship of Jews and Gentiles in the Church of Christ.[2] Now, the corporate perspective is widely accepted, and may even be called the firm consensus among NT scholars.[3]

This corporate perspective is probably nowhere more in evidence than in Romans 9-11. Yet a few voices have risen up in protest against this tide of corporate appreciation in the interpretation of these chapters.[4] There is some justification for these protests in that many advocates of a corporate perspective seem to advance a vague conception of Paul's corporate concerns which does justice to the importance of group identity and the relationship between

---

concise, and helpful survey of scholarship on Paul and the Law, see Veronica Koperski, *What Are They Saying about Paul and the Law?* (note the valuable select, annotated bibliography on pp. 130-38, as well as the sensible discussion of the center of Paul's thought on pp. 93-103 [ch. 6]).

[2] Gary W. Burnett has documented the increasing emphasis on the group in NT studies in *Paul and the Salvation of the Individual*, 1-6. This important study seeks to redress what Burnett regards as an overemphasis on the collective nature of Paul's thought to the exclusion of individual concerns in recent NT research. While it might at first appear that Burnett is seeking to vindicate the older, individualistic approach to Paul, this is not the case. He acknowledges the corrective to an individualistic approach as beneficial and offers a more balanced account of Paul's thought which gives an important place to the individual within the community. As important and welcome as Burnett's corrective is, it tends to suffer from what many approaches to this issue do—a failure to identify the nature of the relationship between the group and the individual in a way that integrates them properly. Burnett regularly operates on the all too typical "individual vs. the group" mentality, although he strikes a much better balance in this regard than most (for a concise statement of the right balance, see E. Earle Ellis, "How the New Testament Uses the Old," 212f.). For a convenient discussion of the present state of the question of the relationship between individual and community in biblical studies, see Shannon Burkes, *God, Self, and Death: The Shape of Religious Transformation in the Second Temple Period*, 17-29 (pp. 244-49 for conclusions from the study). Burnett identifies the other major contributing force in the prevalence of collective over individual concerns as the use of the social sciences in NT studies beginning around the same time as Sanders' study appeared.

[3] See Burnett, *Paul*, 1-2. Interestingly, a related monograph published in the same year as Burnett's study decries the extreme overemphasis in Pauline scholarship on individual concerns in Paul's thought: Sang-Won (Aaron) Son, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology: A Study of Selected Terms, Idioms, and Concepts in the Light of Paul's Usage and Background*. Son seems unaware of the recent trend in scholarship to which Burnett responds. Nevertheless, Son's study is important for its extensive treatment of the topic and its attempt to articulate the relationship between the individual and the group in Paul's thought, an articulation sorely lacking in much Pauline scholarship as mentioned below. Moreover, despite the research situation correctly observed by Burnett, there still seems to be a significant amount of naively individualistic interpretation afoot in Pauline studies.

[4] See the excursus on "The Translation of Romans 9:6b and the Corporate Nature of Election" in ch. 4 below. It is significant that even Burnett, *Paul*, 18, regards Rom 9-12 as solidly collectivist and finds it necessary to argue that Paul's concern for collective matters in these chapters "does not make up the sum total of Paul's thinking in Romans."

Jews and Gentiles, but ignores the implications for individuals that Paul's argument so obviously has.

What is needed is an appreciation of the collectivist character of Paul and his first century socio-historical milieu that integrates and recognizes the role of the individual. Given the scope of this topic, which would require a monograph of its own, we cannot pursue the question in detail here.[5] We must be content to limit our comments to what we deem important for our purposes here. First, we must recognize that Paul's thought was thoroughly covenantal, focused on the fulfillment of the covenant purposes of God in Christ and their consequences for Jews and Gentiles. Second, for Paul and virtually all Jews (and non-Jews in Mediterranean and Hellenistic culture) of his time, the group was primary and the individual secondary. This is an essential point to grasp for interpretation of Paul and the NT. Modern westerners tend to view social reality in the opposite way: the individual is primary and the group secondary. So the individual is viewed as standing on his own, and corporate concerns are subordinated to individual concerns. One's view of the group is conditioned by one's view of the individual so that the group both draws its identity from the individuals in the group and is seen as merely a collection of individuals. But I would contend that Paul's (and his culture's) perspective was essentially corporate. The individual was not viewed as standing on her own, but was seen as embedded in the group to which she belonged. Corporate concerns generally took precedence over individual concerns, and when it did not, this was judged as wrong. Such corporate interest can be seen in Paul's primary concern for love and unity dominant in all his letters. The Pauline corporate perspective found individual identity based in the group rather than vice versa.

[5] For recent monographs on this topic see Burnett, *Paul*, and Son, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology*; cf. the literature cited in the excursus mentioned in the previous note.

None of this means that in first century Mediterranean and Hellenistic perception the individual was non-existent or that individuals had no self-consciousness or individuality or selfishness. Quite the contrary, a balanced corporate perspective addresses these very individual characteristics in subordinating them to collective concerns. Nor does Paul's corporate perspective mean that he had no interest in individual salvation. He had no interest in the salvation of the individual *as an individual alone*. Rather he was concerned with the individual as embedded in the people of God. Individual concerns are seen as corporately embedded. Once this is seen, then much of what Paul says can and must be applied to the individual—the individual who lives in community and whose identity derives from the covenant people of God. Much of what Paul says—his calls to unity, his exhortations to loving attitudes and actions, and even his description of salvation history—must apply at the individual level. It is individuals who are saved, individuals who love, and individuals who unite. However, for Paul and others of his first century context, it would not have been individuals considered in and of themselves who so acted and were so treated, but individuals who acted and were treated as members of a group. As Howard Clark Kee has so aptly stated, "Although an act of decision could align the individual with one or another of . . . [the] competing factions within Judaism in this period, the outcome of the decision was a mode of community identity."[6]

I would argue that here, as with so much of Paul's thought, the Old Testament provides the most suitable background for understanding his perspective. Drawing on the latest research, Gary Burnett has recently described the Old Testament view of social reality well:

[6] Howard Clark Kee, *Knowing the Truth*, 5.

> Kaminsky . . . suggests that it is always the case that the "individual's very self-understanding was derived from his or her relationship to the community". It is the individual as a member of the community where the emphasis lies, not the individual as an "autonomous entity before God."
>
> This is not to deny, however, that individual ideas exist within the Hebrew Bible; they do so, however, not as a progression from older corporate ideas, but alongside them as complementary. . . . Both [collective emphases and individual responsibility] are important, but individualism only in so far as it is closely related to community life.[7]

This is precisely Paul's view.

All of this has considerable import for interpretation of Romans 9-11. We must recognize that Paul's primary concern involves the corporate relationship between Jews and Gentiles and the true identity of the people of God as well as their defining characteristic(s). Moreover, he calls for a loving community orientation which prioritizes the concerns of the group above the concerns of the individual. What Paul says about Jews, Gentiles, and Christians, whether of their place in God's plan, or their election, or their salvation, or how they should think or behave, he says from a corporate perspective which views the group as primary and those he speaks about as embedded in the group. These individuals act as members of the group to which they belong, and what happens to them happens by virtue of their membership in the group.

---

[7] Burnett, *Paul*, 76; his citations here are of J. S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, 153.

****

Excerpt # 2: Excursus: The Translation of Romans 9:6b and the Corporate Nature of Election

(pp. 310-17 in Abasciano's dissertation)

John Piper seems to base his understanding of the second occurrence of Ἰσραήλ in Romans 9:6 as referring to the elect within ethnic Israel upon the grammar of the verse.[8] He argues that οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ should be translated as "for all those from Israel, these are not Israel." Although this translation might seem peculiar at first, it has been followed by Dunn, Moo, Schreiner, and Wilk.[9] One reason why some more recent commentators might follow Piper or give this translation more credence than one might expect is that Piper gives concrete reasons for his construal of the sentence, whereas virtually no other commentators justify their constructions, as Piper complains. Despite Piper's complaint, the reason for this is probably that the typical construction of the passage is the most natural way to take the Greek. Οὐ would generally modify what immediately follows it rather than a more distant phrase. Therefore, there must be some good reasons to follow Piper's awkward rendering. He gives two reasons for taking οὐ to modify the clause οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ rather than as typically understood, πάντες: (1) οὗτοι refers to a definite group while οὐ πάντες is indefinite; (2) he also points to

[8] See especially *Justification*, 65-67. Piper does not say this directly, but does say that 9:6b proves there to be an election within Israel in the context of his discussion of his translation of the phrase. As Schreiner's (493) comment implies, the translation does not demand the Jewish Christian view. But it does favor it.

[9] Dunn, 539, not officially adopting it, but calling it more precise; Moo, 573; Schreiner, 493; Wilk, *Bedeutung des Jesajabuches*, 313. Both Lodge, *Romans 9-11*, and Cosgrove, *Elusive Israel*, 117, note the translation. None of these scholars explicitly analyze Piper's case.

Romans 7:15 (οὐ γὰρ ὃ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω, ἀλλ᾽ ὃ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ.) as a grammatical parallel, in which οὐ must modify the verb πράσσω at the end of the phrase rather than the closer verb θέλω due to the contrastive nature of the following phrase. But the arguments do not stand up under scrutiny.

First, while it may be true that the negation οὐ πάντες is indefinite, it is not necessary to press for a definite referent for οὗτοι, for it functions as a virtual copula[10] in this verbless clause, highlighting the contrast between οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραήλ and the second occurrence of Ἰσραήλ. This seems to be the assumption that lies behind the vast majority of translations. So there is no compelling reason to take οὐ as modifying a phrase so distant on the grounds of definiteness.

As for Romans 7:15, I must question whether οὐ modifies the second clause. Piper is correct to say that οὐ cannot modify θέλω since the next clause would repeat rather than contrast what Paul has just said, as ἀλλ᾽ demands. But this does not mean that οὐ must then modify the next verb five words away in the next clause. Piper appears to assume that οὐ must modify a verb. But that is not the case. Οὐ can modify any word, verb or not, and even clauses.[11] I would suggest that the most natural way to take the Greek would be to construe οὐ as modifying the relative clause ὃ θέλω: "for not that which I wish do I do, but that which I hate, I do" (even more literally, "for not that which I wish, this I do, but that which I hate, this I do").[12] Of course, this literal rendering is quite awkward in English. But we must be careful not to let English

[10] Cf. Mark 6:2 and its parallel in Matt 13:56 where τούτῳ differs in number from the subject and is used as a copula. Cf. also the use of הוּא in biblical Hebrew and Aramaic as a copula.

[11] See BDAG, s.v. οὐ, where Rom 9:6 is also listed as an example of the negation of πάντες. Another option would be to take οὐ to negate the whole sentence.

[12] Cf. Dunn, 375, 389, who takes οὐ to modify an implied verb "to be," tantamount to modifying ὃ θέλω: "for that I commit is not what I want, but what I hate that I do." Accordingly, we might also translate Rom 9:6: "for it is not all who are from Israel who are Israel." This would find support from 9:7a where οὐδ᾽ arguably (see below) negates the whole subordinate clause introduced by ὅτι.

translation determine our understanding of the Greek text. The accusative relative clause is thrust forward to the beginning of the sentence for emphasis, while the demonstrative pronoun is also used for emphasis.[13] Perhaps the best translation of Romans 9:6b would recognize the copulative function of οὗτοι and yet capture its simultaneous emphasizing function: "For not all who are of Israel are actually Israel."

The larger concern of Piper's construction of 9:6b is his estimation that it establishes Paul's argument as concerned with individual election unto salvation. Although many modern scholars are convinced that Paul implies nothing about the salvation of individuals in Romans 9,[14] there remains a persistent strain who think that he does. John Piper is probably the most detailed and forceful modern proponent of this view vis-à-vis Romans 9, and is followed by the recent commentaries of Moo and Schreiner.[15] Although the general trend in recent years has been to reject this view, there has been little significant interaction with Piper's arguments on these points, despite the fact that his work is generally regarded as a standard exegesis of Romans 9:1-23.[16] Often phrased as a single issue, there are actually two main issues here which

[13] Rom 7:16 furnishes another clear example of the relative accusative placed at the beginning of a sentence for emphasis: εἰ δὲ ὃ οὐ θέλω τοῦτο ποιῶ. Here also, the demonstrative pronoun refers to the relative clause. We should not think that if a relative clause or word is negated that the demonstrative pronoun for that reason could not be used, especially since its purpose is to give emphasis.

[14] Moo, 571, calls this group "an increasingly large number." Indeed, several recent treatments of Rom 9 have found that Paul is not discussing the eternal fate of individuals: e.g. Byrne, 299; L. T. Johnson, 140; Wright, *Climax*, 238-39; Fitzmyer, 563.

[15] Schreiner has actually dedicated his commentary to Piper. See also Schreiner's article on this subject: "Does Romans 9 Teach Individual Election unto Salvation? Some Exegetical and Theological Reflections;" Moo's essay, "The Theology of Romans 9-11," 252; and Kuss, 928-29. Cf. Jack Cottrell ("Conditional Election"), who argues for an individual election which is (in contrast to Schreiner et al.) conditional.

[16] Piper is cited frequently. Hays, *Echoes*, 206, for example, cites him for his thorough discussion of Paul's exegesis, and Cosgrove, *Elusive Israel*, 105, comments that "Piper makes a strong exegetical case that while Paul's argument focuses on the question of Israel and God's interaction with peoples in history, it establishes, as one of its premises, that God unconditionally elects individuals to eternal glory or eternal destruction, the election to wrath serving the election to mercy."

are separate but related:[17] (1) whether Paul speaks of an individual or corporate election; (2) whether he speaks of an election unto eternal destiny or historical role.

Piper argues convincingly that Paul is speaking of eschatological salvation based on his grief-filled lament in 9:1-5.[18] Our exegesis of 9:1-5 has confirmed this insight. Moreover, 10:1 shows that Paul's concern is for the salvation of his kinsmen: "Brothers, the desire of my heart and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation." As Paul moves to a new stage in the argument of Romans 9-11 he restates his basic concern, his fellow Jews' need for salvation. This arises directly out of the preceding promise of salvation for those who believe found in 9:33. We may regard 10:1 as parallel to 9:1-3;[19] both talk about prayer to God for Israel, and in both Paul speaks of "my heart."[20]

Though not often considered, I would like to suggest that while Paul is speaking of eternal destiny,[21] he does so with respect to groups/corporate entities, not individuals directly. 9:6 is one of Piper's main arguments for individual election and against the idea of corporate election. He

---

[17] The issues are probably stated together so often because scholars who opt for individual election usually opt for eternal destiny while those who opt for corporate election usually opt for historical role. Piper, *Justification*, 56, though recognizing both issues elsewhere, states the question as a singular dichotomy when he speaks in terms of "an election which determines the eternal destiny of individuals, or an election which merely assigns to individuals and nations the roles they are to play in history."

[18] Ibid, 17-46, 64-65. Piper argues just as convincingly from the vocabulary and structure of 9:6b-8 and analogous Pauline texts (67-71). For a recent, detailed treatment which argues that Paul does not speak of final division or condemnation in Rom 9-11, see Sven Hillert, *Limited and Universal Salvation: A Text-Oriented and Hermeneutical Study of Two Perspectives in Paul*, 126-151. While detailed, Hillert's argument is unconvincing. His method of identifying uniting or dividing perspectives in argumentation and using them as the key heuristic device of interpretation is dubious, and fails to recognize the complexity with which arguments can be constructed, e.g., that an argument which has an overall purpose of asserting unity of some type might not at the same time establish various types of division among its premises (cf. Cosgrove's description of Piper's work in note 121 above).

[19] Cf. Räisänen, "Römer 9-11," 2907; Gordon P. Wiles, *Paul's Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of St. Paul*, 256.

[20] τῇ καρδίᾳ μου in 9:2, and τῆς ἐμῆς καρδίας in 10:1.

[21] It is important to remember that this is not the main issue of Paul's argument however. We have already identified that as the faithfulness of God to his word. Moreover, we do not mean that every example Paul uses is of eternal destiny, but that his main argument has to do with it.

argues that 9:6 proves there to be an election of individuals within Israel.[22] Paul is concerned that some individual Israelites are accursed and cut off from Christ. But I would counter that according to Piper's own unusual translation, this phrase is termed in corporate language. How else should we understand the corporate term πάντες? Piper himself unwittingly shows its force when he explains 9:6b as meaning "πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραήλ are not the *group* to whom salvation was assured by God's word.[23] On the other hand, if we are right and Piper's translation of 9:6b should be rejected, there is still no compelling reason to think that Paul's argument concerns individual election. The negation of πάντες gives no indication of whether its referents are conceived of as individuals or as a group. Moreover, even if conceived of as individuals, there is no indication that election is individual; what Paul says is that they are not among the elect people. Indeed, Paul goes on to speak of classes of people, viz., children of the flesh, children of God, and children of the promise (9:8). Even the individuals Paul speaks of in his unfolding argument are representatives of peoples who are treated as types.

What I am suggesting is that Paul here views the elect primarily as a corporate entity. This does not mean that individuals are not in view at all. Rather, it means that the group is the object of election and that individuals are in view only by virtue of their connection to the group. It is a question of which is primary, the group or the individual. Is the group elect as a corporate entity, and individuals elected by their inclusion in that group, or is the individual elect, and the group elected as a group of elect individuals (i.e. only because it is an association of elect individuals)? The answer to this question is found in the socio-historical context of first century Judaism and

[22] Piper, *Justification*, 65-67. Cf. Cranfield's (474) famous phrase "Israel within Israel."

[23] Ibid, 66; emphasis mine; Piper's emphasis removed.

the New Testament. For the first century Jew, the corporate view was clearly dominant.[24] This was also the orientation of the Old Testament, from which Paul is developing his theology and argument. Piper's own question is telling: "How else could Paul have argued from the OT for the principle of God's freedom in election, since the eternal salvation of the individual as Paul teaches it is almost never the subject of discussion in the OT?"[25] This only shows how unlikely it is that the concept of individual election unto salvation would even occur to Paul. Of course, it is possible that he departed from the Old Testament conception. But the burden of proof should lie upon those who claim that he did.

Again, it is important to understand that such a corporate view of election takes sufficient account of the individual. There need not be an exclusive dichotomy holding that either the group or the individual is elect. Schreiner's assertion that "groups are always composed of

---

[24] Cf. the discussion of "Individual and Corporate Perspectives in Romans 9-11" in ch. 2 above. On the concept of corporate election, see Robert Shank, *Elect in the Son*; William W. Klein, *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election*; Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph*, 230-33, 246-49; William G. MacDonald, "The Biblical Doctrine of Election"; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, 341-54; B. J. Oropeza, *Paul and Apostasy: Eschatology, Perseverance, and Falling Away in the Corinthian Congregation*, 204-10. Cf. I. H. Marshall, "Universal Grace and Atonement in the Pastoral Epistles"; C. Müller, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, 75-78. On the corporate perception of reality in the ancient world, see Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 51-70; Walter Bo Russell III, *The Flesh/Spirit Conflict in Galatians*, especially pp. 87-94, and sources he cites in his discussion, though in his RBL review, Charles H. Cosgrove contends that Russell exaggerates the corporate to virtual exclusion of the individual. Cf. Gary W. Burnett, *Paul and the Salvation of the Individual*; Sang-Won (Aaron) Son, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology: A Study of Selected Terms, Idioms, and Concepts in the Light of Paul's Usage and Background*; and Howard Clark Kee's introduction to his *Knowing the Truth: A Sociological Approach to New Testament Interpretation*, 1-6, in which he traces some of the history of an individualistic tendency in NT scholarship and criticizes this approach, pointing up its inadequacy and its distortion of the social nature of early Christianity and the Jewish milieu out of which it arose. In fact, it is the thesis of his book that such an individualistic "perception of Christianity in its origins is directly contradicted by the study of the New Testament—the New Covenant—which sets out the ways that Jesus and the movement to which his words and works gave rise sought to define participation in the community of God's people" (idem, 1). Kee states our position well when he writes, "It is now evident that the major issue in Judaism from the time of the return of the Israelites from captivity in Babylon—especially in the two centuries before and after the birth of Jesus—was: What are the criteria for participation in the covenant people? This question was fiercely debated between the Jewish nationalists, the priests, and those Jews who had in some degree assimilated to Hellenistic culture, on the one hand, and dissident groups such as the Dead Sea community and the Pharisees, on the other. *Although an act of decision could align the individual with one or another of these competing factions within Judaism in this period, the outcome of the decision was a mode of community identity*" (idem, 5; emphasis mine).

[25] Piper, *Justification*, 64.

individuals, and one cannot have the former without including the latter"[26] would be simplistic and miss the point if applied to the present argument for the primacy of corporate election. The statement is a truism which ignores the fundamental question of how the corporate and individual aspects relate. The answer we have suggested is that Paul continues the Old Testament understanding of corporate election found in the scriptural texts he is interpreting and applying, which regards the group as the object of election and the individual to be elect only by inclusion in the elect people. In Romans 9 Paul speaks of an election which involves salvation. So an individual is elected unto salvation only by connection to the corporate people so elected. His concern is not with who is elected to be in the elect people—election as a concept simply does not apply to entrance into the elect people—but with the elect people and who they are, as well as "the character and mode" of their election.[27]

The same can be said of Schreiner's point that selection of a remnant out of Israel implies the selection of individuals.[28] While this is of course true in the sense that what happens to a group affects the individuals of that group, it tells us nothing about how they are viewed, whether as individuals or as a group. The very use of the collective term "remnant" suggests the corporate view. Therefore, the "individual decision" of chapter 10 does not demand a concept of individual election as traditionally conceived. Chapter 10 reveals how one joins the elect people and the

[26] Schreiner, 498. Would Schreiner then maintain that there is no difference between the OT and NT conceptions of election, since this point argues for individual election of the individual as an individual as a necessary corollary of corporate election? Schreiner and others who argue for individual election unto salvation implicitly admit that corporate election does not necessitate individual election as traditionally conceived when they assert that the election of ethnic Israel did not ensure salvation for every ethnic Israelite.

[27] Dunn, 540, though Dunn wrongly separates the character and mode of election from the fact of election (cf. Heikki Räisänen, "Romans 9-11 and the 'History of Early Christian Religion' ," 750 n. 54). 9:6b clearly grounds 9:6a with the identity of the true Israel.

[28] Schreiner, 498.

basis of the group's election—faith.[29] Schreiner consistently confuses the distinction between election unto salvation and election to be among the elect people.[30] Paul speaks of the former with respect to corporate entities, but does not use such language of individuals. As we have said, individuals are elect only by virtue of membership in the elect people, a membership which is effected by faith. Indeed, as one progresses through Romans 9 it can be seen that the basic distinction is between two classes of people, believers (i.e. the elect/called) and unbelievers. All of Romans 9-11 concerns distinctions between classes of people, whether believers/unbelievers, Jews/Gentiles, or groups from within Israel and the Gentiles.

---

[29] One might ask whether the fact that both the means of individual entrance into the elect community and the basis of the group's election are the same indicates that the concept of election encompasses individual entrance into the community. But this does not necessarily follow. Moreover, in Paul's thought, faith permeates all relationship with God to eliminate boasting and glorify him. Faith is a means of apprehending God's blessings, not a work which merits it. Furthermore, the Christocentric character of election and of Paul's soteriology helps clarify the relationship between the individual and corporate aspects of election. Jesus is the elect Son of God, in whom is every spiritual blessing, including election (Eph 1:3-4; even if one does not accept Pauline authorship of Ephesians, it still may be regarded as faithful to Pauline teaching). Those who are in him possess those blessings. As the Messiah, Jesus is both an individual and corporate figure, for he represents and sums up his people in himself. The individual becomes united to Christ through faith. But union with, or incorporation into, Christ, is inherently corporate because of Jesus' identity as Christ, the head of the body (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12; cf. Col 1:18). All experience of spiritual blessing, whether individual or corporate, only takes place in Christ, and relationship with Christ can only take place through faith. So faith can be both individual means of entrance and corporate basis of election. Theoretically, we could say that the individual is elect unto salvation (only) in Christ. But that is neither Paul's language nor the NT's. Election unto salvation is invariably spoken of in corporate terms.

[30] The same is true of Moo in his Romans commentary, and in his essay, "The Theology of Romans" in which he gives detailed attention to the distinction between corporate and individual election with a view towards resolving the tension between Paul's assertion of the eventual salvation of all Israel and his teaching in Rom 9:6-29 and 11:5-10 (254-58). Moo concedes that Paul's Scriptures and Jewish heritage taught him only of a corporate election, but goes on to argue that the rejection of the gospel by the vast majority of the Jewish people combined with the influx of Gentiles "as individuals, not as a 'people' " into the Church led Paul to individualize "election by insisting that membership in the true people of God was reserved for certain people rather than for a nation" (254). But Moo gratuitously assumes that Paul shifts the locus of election from a people to individuals based on the idea that Gentiles entered the people of God as individuals. Yet the mode of entrance into the elect people does not necessarily impinge on the locus or fact of election itself. Moreover, Paul only speaks of election unto salvation in corporate terms. Furthermore, while it is undoubtedly true that many Gentiles entered the Church individually, this again tells us nothing of how Paul viewed their entrance, whether as individuals or as a people. Most likely, he would have had a corporate perspective akin to Acts 15:14, which speaks of God taking from the Gentiles a *people* for his name. Cf. Paul's corporate view of Gentiles frequently in Romans, and note his language of "the Gentiles" in Rom 11:11-13, 25; 15:9, 16, 27; 16:4, 26.

Thus we can see how the corporate election of two peoples in Romans 9:12, 13 fits with 9:6b, and we avoid the pitfall of taking Paul's extreme grief in 9:1-5 lightly.[31] We can admit what is obvious—Paul's grief comes from "the pressing problem of eternally condemned Israelites in Rom 9:3."[32] Indeed, the corporate perspective we are espousing intensifies our perception of Paul's grief, for it helps us to observe that Paul seems to have considered Israel as a whole to have rejected Christ.[33] This does not mean that every Jew had rejected Christ; Paul himself is proof of that (11:1). Yet the corporate failure of Israel to receive God's Messiah is evident from Paul's use of the term Ἰσραήλ throughout chapters 9-11. This explains why Paul's grief is so great. And it points up Paul's corporate perspective once again.

[31] Cf. Piper, *Justification*, 58.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Cf. Räisänen, "Recent Research," 199 n. 36; idem, "Römer 9-11," 2900 (in note 54 he criticizes Piper on this point).