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“Christ in you, the Hope of Glory” (Colossians 1:27):

Paul’s Apocalypse of the Cross

By

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Imitatio and Stanford.

A friend of mine, who for many years took private lessons in theology from Fr Louis Bouyer, tells of visiting the old man in his last days in a Parisian nursing home. Bouyer’s superb mind had faded to nothing, and all he could or wanted to say is the title of this paper, “... Christ in you the hope of glory!” Thus one of the lights of a former generation summed up the light of truth for all generations, and I want here to re-visit this succinct summary text. The unknown disciple of Paul who wrote the Colossians and first penned the line, intended it to summarize his teacher’s faith. This, therefore, is Paul’s theology as seen by a close disciple.

The passage from which the phrase comes is pure apocalypse, in its references to the “Mystery hidden from the ages and the generations,” and to the “Hope of Glory:” Listen:

“Now I rejoice in sufferings on your behalf, and fulfill in my flesh what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ, for the sake of his body which is the church, of which I became a servant according to the plan of God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, - the mystery hidden from the ages and from the generations - but now revealed to his saints, to whom God wished to make known the

riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, that is, Christ in you the hope of glory. (Col.1: 24-27).’

I shall take the two parts of this saying as mottoes for the two parts of this paper, “Christ in you,” and “ Hope of Glory”<sup>1</sup>. The two items are really inseparable, separated only for the sake of the argument.

### **“Christ in you”: The Apocalypse of Christ Crucified in the Life of Paul.**

We are fortunate to have autobiographical texts to guide our understanding of the Apostle’s experience. I intend to stick closely to them and that means I intend to ignore the later, novelistic accounts of Paul’s so-called “conversion” on the Damascus road as told by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles (chapters 9, 22, and 26). I do this for the sake of Occam’s razor, not because there are no links at all between the autobiography and the biography.

Let me register at the outset my discontent with the term “conversion.” There is no such term in the Bible; the closest the Bible comes is the term “repentance,” which in the Hebrew means, “to change direction” and in the Greek “to change the mind.” The essence of the term, therefore, is change, and not random change but the specific change of allegiance from the world to God. Paul uses the term “apocalypse of Jesus Christ” to describe what we

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<sup>1</sup> A preacher friend of mine, Barry Wilbanks tells me that when he preaches on this phrase he speaks of the Three E’s: Essence= Christ; Experience =”in you”; Expectation = ‘the hope of Glory.’ Very Elegant I think.

carelessly call his “conversion.”<sup>2</sup>”

I turn now to the accounts Paul gives of his experience of “the apocalypse of Christ in me.”

Galatians 1:11-24;

“I want you to know brothers that the Gospel preached by me is not according to man, neither did I receive it from man neither was I taught it. On the contrary, it came through an apocalypse of Jesus Christ (alla di’ apokalypseos Jesou Christou (vs. 11)...(I was an exemplary Jew, more zealous than most of my contemporaries) ...But when it pleased him who had set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace to reveal his son in me (apokalypsai ton huion en emoi) so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood (vss. 15-16).

So Paul calls his experience an “apocalypse of Jesus Christ,” and says not that God revealed Christ to him, but that “God caused an apocalypse of his son in me.” Note the phrasing, “in me” rather than the expected “to me.” The experience in view therefore, is something internal, rather than the external drama of a blinding light from heaven and voice from above as narrated by Luke. What might this internal experience have been?

To explore an answer I turn to the next chapter of Galatians (2:11-21), where Paul gives his side of the story of a major argument

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<sup>2</sup> “Conversion” used of Paul in English it is an anachronism, and is doubly misleading. Firstly it suggests that Paul left one religion and joined another, was “converted” from Judaism to Christianity. In fact Paul never ceased to regard himself as a Jew; his quarrel with his co-religionists was about what constituted true Judaism or more precisely, what is Judaism now that the Messiah has come? My teacher WD Davies used to say that Paul was a Pharisee for whom the Messiah had come. The central difference is that now the God of Abraham is no longer just a Jewish God, but God of all the Gentiles too, without them needing first to become Jews in order to approach God. Secondly, there was at that time no Christianity to convert to. Paul’s faith was the Jewish faith fulfilled and therefore metamorphosed (Rom 10:4).

he had with Peter in the church at Antioch, over the propriety of eating with Gentile Christians. Peter the Jew, ignoring the kosher laws, ate with his fellow Gentile Christians in the church in Antioch until representatives of the Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem, which was led by James, the brother of Jesus, and strictly observant of Jewish law, arrived on the scene and either persuaded or intimidated Peter into picking up his plate and moving to the “Jews only” table. Paul was furious; he accused Peter of rebuilding the “wall of separation” – a metaphor from the actual wall in the Temple precinct that excluded Gentiles from the holier places.

Paul has already established that we are put in a right relationship with God not by doing the “works of law,” - which means the Jewish way of life based on the Law of Moses, marked by the rituals of circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath, and defining an exclusive community<sup>3</sup>, - but by the faithful work of Jesus Christ on our behalf (dia pisteos Jesou Christou). This phrase was formerly translated “through faith in Jesus Christ,”-thus allowing the opposition, “ not by works but by faith” and making faith an alternative religious action to deeds of religious observance - but is now convincingly to be translated, “through the faith of Jesus Christ,” namely, the faithfulness of Jesus in performing the task of our salvation his Father had assigned him<sup>4</sup>. Thus, it is not our action of putting faith in Jesus that saves us, but Jesus’ action of faithfully putting first the work of God entrusted to him for our benefit. The

<sup>3</sup> R Hamerton-Kelly, Sacred Violence: Paul’s Hermeneutic of the Cross, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); “Sacred Violence and ‘Works of the Law’: ‘Is Christ then an Agent of Sin?’ (Gal 2:17).” Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 52 1990.

<sup>4</sup> R B Hays, The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

faithful work of Jesus renders the human effort to justify the self by moral and ritual deeds, unnecessary. “To have faith” on this reading is to allow God-in-Christ to do for you what you cannot do for yourself, restore your relationship with God.

Now Paul describes precisely how the benefits of Christ’s faithful work are given to us, namely, by the inner apocalypse, the advent of the living Christ in the center of the subject.

“For through the Law I died to the Law in order that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live through the faithfulness of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal 2:20).” (Christo sunestauromai; zo de ouketi ego, ze de en emoi Christos. Ho de nun zo ev sarki pistei zote tou huiou tou theou tou agapesantos me kai paradontos heauton huper me.)”

I paraphrase this passage as follows: The way of life of a Jew devoted to the Law of Moses made me a violent man and killed my relationship with God, so I had to change my way of life in order to fulfill God’s will for me. The change is so radical that I can only call it a “death.” The Mosaic Law killed me spiritually, and I was not its only victim. Jesus was a prior victim (Gal 3:13); he and I died for the same reason: we were crucified together by religion. That identification in death has now become an identification in life; I live in the aura and atmosphere of Christ to such an extent that I can say, “I live in Christ and Christ lives in me. Christ is I and I am Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. 2:16; 2Cor.13: 3

There is only one way to parse this phenomenon further, namely, Mimetic Theory. MT does this in two ways: It identifies this Pauline self as an iconic instance of the mutually constituted imitative subject, which explains how Paul and Christ can be so thoroughly present in each other. Secondly MT describes the human world made by the imitative subject as a structure of violence erected by a technology for controlling violence by means of violence, a technology which in its essence is imitation working through ritual, prohibition and myth, and together called Religion. Thus MT enables us to appreciate the anthropological context of both moments of criticism in the text, the criticism of the independent self and the criticism of religion as a violent technology of violence control. (The fact that the religion in question is Judaism is generally speaking an historical contingency not an ontological peculiarity; all religions are more or less successful technologies for the control of violence. However, theologically speaking, as we shall see, the involvement of Judaism is an essential part of its role as an ongoing revealer of the one, true God.).

The inner experience of co-crucifixion is the effect in Paul of the slow torturing-to-death of the young Jew, Jesus: young like Paul, expelled like Paul, losing everything like Paul. Since he probably did not witness the Crucifixion of Jesus, Paul's access to the experience must have been through memory shared with him by others, and mimesis operating by imagination, the same modes of access that we can have. Therefore, Paul was not privy to something entirely closed to the rest of us; the torture of Jesus as an apocalypse of violence

and a promise of liberation from violence is fully available to each of us through the apostolic narrative and our own mimetic imagination. This is the public part of the message, that violence makes the world go round, especially violence in its mimetic form of vengeance. There was, however, also a private part, namely that he the Jewish zealot should be the apostle to the Gentiles. These are the two halves of the mystery long-hidden, the apocalypse of violence and the revelation of a humanity beyond violence because beyond the distinction of religion and culture. The God of Abraham is the God of the Gentiles, as Gentiles, that is they need not become Jews in order to be the chosen ones of Abraham's God.

Thus through the mimetic-imaginative internalization of the Cross, Paul comes to understand that the violence with which he is persecuting the followers of Jesus is the same violence as crucified Jesus. The apocalypse of Jesus Christ that Paul received is the disclosure in the Cross of Christ of his own violence and the violence of the world, and its concerted action through religion, which is essentially a violent technology of violence-control<sup>6</sup>.

For Paul violence and suffering are the truth about the subject and its life in this world. The only way to deal with them is to share them with Christ; that is authentic existence; and so I return to the passage from Colossians with which I began.

“ At present I rejoice in sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of

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<sup>6</sup> Jesus describes it as Satan casting out Satan, and contrasts it with the Kingdom of God (Matthew 12: 24-28 and parallels).

his body, which is the church. (Col. 1:24)”

In this passage the physical dimension, the images of the three bodies - of Jesus, Paul and the church -, is extended as far as it will go to convey the unity of the three. Note the parallel between “my flesh” and “his body.” Paul now identifies with Christ in a quasi-physical way. He assimilates the considerable pain and abuse he received as an apostle of Jesus (2 Cor. 11:23-29) to the pain and abuse of the Cross, and experiences an oneness with Christ and with Christ’s followers who make up the church. Jesus’ tortured body, Paul’s suffering body, and the group of believers in the church, all three are spiritually and by metaphor corporately one. In the structure of the saving work of God through the faithfulness of Christ, the Apostle is to be located in between the Church and Christ. The Church is metaphorically the body of Christ, the apostle is the instantiation of the church, in whose flesh Christ himself suffers.

There can be no doubt that the apocalypse of Christ Paul received is the apocalypse of the Cross, the revelation of the violence of the mimetically constituted world, through its technology of violent violence-control, religion. This is why Paul says that through religion he died to religion and identified with Christ in his crucifixion. He discovered the violence of the world in the violence of religion and he allowed himself to be wrenched by God from the religious role of victimizer to the anti-religious role of victim. Christ pulled him over the line of the Sacred onto the secular side, “outside the camp” (Hebrews 13:13-16)<sup>7</sup>, and as Paul said, this entailed the loss of everything he

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<sup>7</sup> “Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he bore,

had built up in this world, and especially for a zealot, the forfeiture of all the prestige that religion bestows.

“It is out of the question for me to boast about anything excepting the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which, as far as I am concerned the world is crucified, and as far as the world is concerned, I am crucified. So, neither “circumcision” nor “uncircumcision” (i.e. religions of different kinds) is of any importance at all; all that matters is “New Creation.”<sup>8</sup> (Gal 6: 14-15)

Paul’s consciousness of having lost worldly prestige is impressively on record. Martyn call his experience, “a loss of world.” In 2 Corinthians 11 Paul deploys his credentials sarcastically, and in Philippians 3 confessionally. I turn now to the latter passage:

“Circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, according to the Law a Pharisee, according to zeal a persecutor of the church, according to the righteousness that accrues from the Law, blameless. But whatever

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for here we have no abiding city but we seek one which is to come. Through him, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such are the sacrifices that are pleasing to God.”

<sup>8</sup> J.L.Martyn, Galatians, The Anchor Bible, 33A, (New York: Doubleday, 1997) pp. 563 -566. “The world that is now passé is not Judaism as such, but rather the world of all religious differentiation.” He quotes his teacher Ernst Kaesemann as follows: “God does not just want a new religiosity but a renewed creation under the cosmocrator Christ.” Kaesemann was Martyn’s teacher and Martyn was my teacher, so in good rabbinic form I too belong to a chain of traditional interpretation of Paul. Martyn’s commentary on Galatians is the best work on Pauline theology, bar none. Christos Kosmokrator, is of course a major theme in Orthodox theology.

was once gain for me, I now for the sake of Christ, consider loss. Indeed, I consider all things loss on account of the great gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, on whose account I did in fact lose everything. Now I consider it all garbage, if only I might gain Christ, and be found in him not having my own righteousness that comes from living according to the Law, but the righteousness that comes through the faithful work of Christ, the righteousness of God that is given through that faithfulness, and if only I might know him and the power of his Resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings (koinonian pathematon autou), being conformed his death (summorphizomenos to thanato autou), so that I might perhaps attain to the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:5-11).”

Note the phrases, “be found in him,” “the fellowship of his sufferings,” and “being conformed to his death.” They are further warrant for our understanding of Paul’s inner apocalypse as a revelation of the mimetic violence of the Cross and the opening up of the possibility of a mimetic relationship with Christ himself, which takes the form of “living in him” by the mutual constitution – (Christ=Paul=Christ) - of the mimetic self, co-crucifixion, fellowship (koinonia) with Christ in his sufferings, and conformity (“metamorphosis into”) to his death. I have called the force that conforms us to Christ “mimetic imagination”.

A brief survey of Paul’s total use of the terms “Cross” and “crucify ” confirms my claim that the torture-to-death of the young Jew Jesus, is at the heart of his consciousness. He calls his preaching “the word of the Cross” (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:2) and knows that it is a

scandal to Jews<sup>9</sup> and stupidity to Greeks, but for us Christians, Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 23). The Cross is a conduit of the power of God and must not be abridged in any way, not even by the sacrament of baptism (1Cor. 1:17). His preaching to the Galatians was a “placarding of Christ crucified before their very eyes (Gal 3:1),” and the nadir of the humiliation Christ accepted faithfully in order to do the work of our salvation, is “death on a Cross,” (Phil.2:8). In Colossians and Ephesians, Paul’s disciples understand the Cross to be the point of reconciliation between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2: 14-16; Col. 1:20, 2:14), the place where the mimetic reciprocity of violence ends and the reconciliation of the New Creation happens.

The scandal of the cross was for Paul not simply the fact of a crucified God, but also the anti-religious consequences that follow from that. Accepting the religious demands of Jewish ritual would deliver Paul from the persecution he experiences from the religious upholders of the necessity of ritual circumcision (Gal 6:11-12). He accuses those pushers of circumcision of doing so for two reasons, because they want to make a good religious showing, and “in order that they may not be persecuted for the Cross of Christ”(Gal 6:12). Apparently his fellow Jewish Christians was persecuting Paul because he maintained that the crucifixion made religious ritual obsolete. According to MT it does this by making public the truth of religion as a violent violence-control mechanism because once it is

<sup>9</sup> Gal 5:11, shows that part of the scandal of the Cross for the Jews was that circumcision, symbol of “being Jewish,” is not necessary for living in divine grace. The new covenant is not religiously or ethnically contingent. The revelation of the mimetic mechanism discloses the violence of religion and so makes its rituals and prohibitions passé.

seen for what it is the mechanism progressively loses its power to control and ritual becomes less and less important.

Religion<sup>10</sup> is a curse (Gal. 3:13). The important passage here is Galatians 3:1-29, which ends with the currently much quoted vs. 28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The nub of Paul’s argument is that the Law of Moses, which is religion, cursed God’s messiah (Gal. 3:13, quoting Deuteronomy 21:23), and thus showed that religion is hostile to God. Paul has already said, in the previous chapter, that it was through religion that he died to religion, in order to live for God (2:19-20). The truth is that God gives himself to the whole world, as He promised to Abraham, and the ethnically restrictive Law of Moses is merely one among many temporary religious phenomena in the history of the fulfillment of that promise. Now the promise of God beyond religion has come true and all the distinctions made by Judaism and other religions, are passé, even the apparently natural differences of gender!<sup>11</sup> “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:29).” You do not need Moses!

The Cross discloses the dirty secret of religion, that its form is the result of violence and its dynamic is violence itself. This disclosure was made by a divine ruse that Rene Girard has ingeniously decoded for us. In 1 Cor. 2:6-16. Paul says that he did not

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<sup>10</sup> The jealously guarded difference between Jew and Gentile is a clear indication of the nature of Mosaic existence as the process of the violent violence-control mechanism, religion.

<sup>11</sup> The “Christian” opponents of same-sex marriage clearly have never understood this; they are still mired with Moses in religion. The women of Islam could be glad of this message, but are probably not permitted to hear it.

tell the Corinthians the “mystery of God” in high-flown rhetoric or *recherché* philosophy because he had resolved to speak only of “Jesus Christ and Him Crucified,” which event he had already established is the power and wisdom of God. However, having repudiated rhetoric and philosophy, Paul does allow that there is a “wisdom” that is worth knowing,

“...not of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are passing away...the hidden wisdom of God, which God ordained before the eons for our glory, and which none of the rulers of this age has known, for if they had known it they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory (1Cor.2: 7-8).”

This wisdom is the plan to end religion by revealing its violent structure and dynamics, since once the mechanism is exposed to the light of day it loses its power. God’s wisdom is the ruse by which the violent powers of this world are made to commit suicide by revealing through the torture of the Cross the dirty secret of their violence. God does not resist them violently but rather non-violently gives himself into their hands and they unwittingly disclose their nature by torturing him publicly. God outwits them.<sup>12</sup> This is the sense in which the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men (1 Cor. 18-25). God gives us enough rope and we hang ourselves. This plan is what God ordained for our glory, the apocalyptic denouement in which violence destroys itself.

The wisdom of the Cross therefore, is precisely that we should all, at last, see the dirty truth of religion and abandon it for Jesus

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<sup>12</sup> This recalls the Patristic theory of the Atonement in which God tricks the devil like the fisherman tricks the fish, using the concealed bait of Jesus’ divinity to hook the devil when he swallowed the concealing humanity.

Christ whose faithful execution (pardon the pun) of God's task removes the differences religion maintains and makes all humanity one, "Neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female." The great negative for Paul, what we generally refer to as "sin," is therefore violence organized as religion.

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## **2 "...the Hope of Glory" The Apocalypse of the Will of God in the History of Israel."**

Up to this point I have used the term "religion" unguardedly because I think Paul used its equivalents- circumcision, Law of Moses - in the same way. Now however a qualification might be in order. MT generally holds that it is primarily in "archaic" religion that one sees its nature as a violent violence-control technology. To be sure, there is a difference between the archaic and the so-called "great religions," but the archaic continues to be present in all religions (including the Christian religion) to this day. All religions are more or less violent, in their repression, coercion and exclusionism. I have suggested that the proportion of archaism still present in it gauge the "greatness" of a great religion. By this gauge the self-criticism or prophetic element in a religion will be a positive indicator, that is, the more self-critical a religion is, the better.

My suggestion has sunk like a stone along with all of my work on Paul and I have been smeared an anti-Semite. I am too old now to care about smears and slanders, but let me take this late

opportunity once more to try to make my point. I am in any case positive that the great Apocalypse that is coming soon will show it to be the truth about religion in general and the Jews and the Christians in particular.

We turn now to the Letter to the Romans, chapters 9-11, where Paul spells out for us what the Glory God in Christ promises will be in store for the Jews. These passages show that Judaism is for Paul not on just another religion, but rather is the religious vehicle God chose to take the human race beyond religion and into Christ. Here I can give only a summary account of Paul's argument.

These chapters (Rom 9-11) seem to belong together and to be poorly integrated into the rest of the letter. Their removal from the present context would improve the argumentation of the letter as a whole. It seems likely that Paul wrote them as a treatise or series of sermons on the theme, "What of the Jews now that they have rejected God's Messiah?" and that they were fortuitously lodged in the Letter to the Romans.

Paul introduces the argument by saying that the rejection of Jesus by the majority of the Jewish people is the greatest grief he has ever experienced, and that he could even imagine himself being "cut off from Christ" if that would cause the majority to change its mind. Nevertheless, though the Jews may have rejected God, God has not rejected them. The covenant and the fellowship with God in history do not go for naught. The rejecting Jews may no longer love God but God continues to love them, possibly even more in their apostasy than in their conformity (9:1-9).

“But it is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel... (9: 6).”

Just as all of Israel’s history unfolded within the arena of the divine election, so also does this critical period of the acceptance and rejection of the Messiah. Drawing on the theme of the Remnant from the prophet Isaiah<sup>13</sup> Paul identifies two parties within the one elect people, the Remnant and the Rest. The Remnant does the positive work of God and the Rest does the negative work, but both positive and negative contribute to the fulfillment of God’s purpose. Emphatically, therefore, the whole Jewish nation remains in God’s service until that purpose is achieved (9:9-10:4).

The process of achieving God’s purpose advances by two groups and two functions, Remnant/Rest: Accepting Jesus/Rejecting Jesus. The Remnant is made up of Paul himself and his small band of disciples, and the rest by his opponents in Galatia and Corinth and all the Jews who insist on the primacy of Moses over Jesus. Therefore Paul’s Jewishness is central to his self-understanding and rather than repudiate it he exalts it. He and his Jewish converts are the roots and stems of the olive tree into which the Gentiles are being grafted, and therefore the grafted Gentiles should respect even the Rest, because despite their rejection of Jesus they too are the roots and trunks of the tree of life, still and forever (11:17-24).

Paul illustrates this argument by an analogy drawn from the realm of pottery: Vessels are made for different purposes, he says,

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<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 10: 20-22 (Rom 9:27-28); Isaiah 11:11-16, 16:14; Rom 9:27-28 , 11:5 ( “...a remnant chosen by grace.”).

some for the dining table and some to be put under the bed, some for noble functions and some for humble functions. God made the Remnant for the noble role of faith in Jesus and the Rest for the humble role of withholding faith from Jesus. Both however are doing God's will and in the end will come together beyond religion, when there are no more Jews and no more Christians, no more upscale and downscale social strata, and no more gender differences (vss. 19-27; Gal 3:28-29; Colossians 3:11).

He gives a mimetic explanation of how the “yes and no” of the Remnant and the Rest works in this world. The “no” of the Rest forces the “yes” of the Remnant out of the confines of Israel into the wide Gentile world. Were it not for the “no,” faith in Jesus could have been just another inner-Jewish phenomenon, a blessing to Israel but no light to the Nations. Furthermore, there is a mimetic element at work:

“So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean... Inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles I magnify my ministry in order to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.” (11:11-14).

There will come a day of reunification, a day when differences will be swallowed up in the divine love and even the dialectic relationship of “yes and no” between Jews and Christians will be

transformed into the univocal “Yes, Yes!”<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, he says to his Christians, remember that the Rest of the Jews is still and will ever be the heirs of the promises to the patriarchs and beloved of God (11:25-28).

“If their apostasy reconciles the cosmos, what will their acceptance be, if not life from the dead (11:15)?

“Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the gentiles come in and so all Israel will be saved (11:25-26).”

Paul therefore teaches that the Jews continue to serve God in the strange work of rejecting God’s messiah for the sake of us Gentiles. Therefore, we have more and more for which to thank Israel, and we should have done all we could in history to honor and protect the Jews as our forbears in faith, bearers of our salvation and performers of the intolerably difficult “strange work of God.” Instead of honoring them we Christians failed our own Pauline theology, with catastrophic results that I shall not, for obvious reasons, develop here.

“O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways... From him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory

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<sup>14</sup> cf. 2 Cor. 1:17-20.

forever. Amen.” (Rom.11: 33; 36).”

The Glory we hope for is the glory of the reconciliation of both Israels, the Remnant and the Rest, when the mystery of God’s love is finally revealed and all religions fall away to leave one humanity beyond the violence of division and discrimination, made in the image of Christ, the non-violent.

**“Brethren, join in imitating me and mark those who live as you have an example in us. For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, live as enemies of the Cross of Christ.” (Philippians 4:17).”**