

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A GRACIOUS REVERSAL: THE USE OF HOSEA 1:10 AND 2:23 IN ROMANS 9:25-26

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BY
ANDREW D. HANE
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Introduction

The prophet Hosea, as instructed by the Lord, gave some odd names to his children. A son, Jezreel, symbolized that the ten northern tribes of Israel would soon be crushed in the Jezreel Valley. A daughter was named, “No-love,” because God would not have mercy on and forgive his people. Another son, “Not-my-people,” declared that Israel was not Yahweh’s people and he was not their God. Yet in the faithfulness of God, he promised to reverse their names—restoring his people, renewing his covenant with them, and outpouring his love for them. While the immediate context of Hosea points to the redemption of Israel, Paul in Romans recognizes that Hosea’s passage points to a greater fulfillment—reconciliation of the Gentiles. Although neither Jews nor Gentiles have an intrinsic right to be objects of God’s loving concern, Paul finds in Hosea that God sovereignly calls out his elect to be a special people to himself.

I. Romans 9:25 / Hosea 2:23

In the first half of Paul’s reference to Hosea in Rom 9:25, he paraphrases Hos 2:23.¹ After omitting 2:23aa, Paul switches aβ and βα, and then also omits bβ. The LXX translates 2:23ba very literally, reading *הַתִּי אֶל לֹא-אֶמְרָן עַמִּי אֲנִי אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱמַר / και ἐρῶ τῷ οὐ-λαῶ-μου λαός μου εἶ σύ* (And I will say to Not-my-people, you are my people). Likewise for aβ, *הַמִּתְחַנֵּן אֶל-תִּתְחַנֵּן / και ἐλέησω τὴν οὐκ-ἠλεημένην* (And I will have mercy on No-mercy). Paul switches these phrases to *καλέσω τὸν οὐ λαόν μου λαόν μου και τὴν οὐκ ἠγαπημένην ἠγαπημένην* (I will call the not my people ‘my people’ and the not loved ‘loved’).

I. A. “I will sow her”

First, the beginning of the verse, *רָרַבָּ לִי לְיַתְחַנֵּן* (And I will sow her for myself in the

¹ Romans 9:25 does not match Hos 2:23 in any manuscripts of the MT, LXX, or any other ancient version, although his paraphrase does keep the sense. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 573. Note that Hos 2:23 in English translations is enumerated Hos 2:25 in the MT and LXX. Likewise, Hos 1:10 is marked as 2:1. For simplicity, all verse references used here will be those usually found in English versions.

land) has caused great confusion as to the referent. Some have suggested יהר as the original suffix, which would refer to the son Jezreel, but no manuscript evidence exists. Others think הָ is original, but a protasis referring to Jezreel has been lost.² Instead, the feminine suffix is almost certainly original. Most likely Hosea's wife, discussed elsewhere in the passage, is the antecedent to "her," but regardless it refers symbolically to the nation of Israel.³ In the context of Hosea, being sown in the land represented return from exile. This return deals with the northern tribes, and specifically of the population of the Jezreel Valley, which was deported by Tiglath-pileser III in 733.⁴ Since Paul is using Hos 2:23 in reference to Gentiles, he omits the part of the verse which addresses the return of the nation of Israel to their land.⁵

I. B. Calling

Turning to Rom 9:25, Paul opens his paraphrase with καλέσω rather than ἐρῶ, introducing the theme of election. εἶπον in the LXX is the generic "speak, say" word in Greek, whereas καλέω means more specifically to call, name, or invite. Particularly in Paul, it often means to "choose for receipt of a special benefit or experience," those chosen by God effectively for salvation.⁶ The change, which was certainly Paul's addition, plays on the double meaning of καλέω, both to name and elect.⁷ The insertion of "call" emphasizes the salvific meaning present

² The BHS apparatus suggests יהר, and is followed by some English translations such as the NRSV. A lost protasis is proposed by Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea*, trans. Gary Stansell, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 54. Either fits with the reference to Jezreel in 2:22, and connects the reversal of all three children's names. But there are other plausible options, and a non-extant original reading is not necessary.

³ Thomas Edward McComiskey agrees with this position ("Hosea," in *The Minor Prophets* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992], 1:48). He writes, "'Her' indicates that Hosea continues to think of Israel as Yahweh's betrothed."

⁴ Wolff, *Hosea*, 54. McComiskey takes the opposite view, claiming פְּרָצָה refers to "earth," not "land," and Hosea is not speaking of an exilic return. "Hosea," 48.

⁵ If McComiskey is right that the "refructification" imagery is a "clear polemic" against the Baal cult, this would give Paul another reason to omit it, as it would not be relevant to his readers ("Hosea," 48).

⁶ See BDAG, 286-87, 502-4.

⁷ Scholars agree that the change came from Paul, and was not found in his text. See Mark A. Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 647; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 547; James D.

already in Hosea.

καλέω also appears at least once, and possibly twice, in Rom 9:26. Some text variants replace ἐρρέθη αὐτοῖς (it will be said to them) with εαν κληθῶσονται (they will be called), although the former is preferable.⁸ Later in the verse, however, Paul certainly uses καλέω, following the LXX. The Greek translators change יְהוָה לְבָנֵי אֱלֹהִים (it will be said to them, ‘children of the living God’), into ἐκεῖ κληθήσονται υἱοὶ θεοῦ ζῶντος (there they will be called children of the living God).⁹ The change probably does not indicate that the LXX wanted to emphasize the salvific election of God, but it does show that in the second C. BC, scholars understood Hosea to refer to God calling out a people for himself. Hence, the text fits well with Paul’s usage of it.

Paul emphasizes that God not only calls by name, but that he is effectually calling the Gentiles into salvation. Both Jew and Gentile are invited to respond and become children of God.¹⁰ As Herman Ridderbos points out, neither Jew nor Gentile became God’s people by their own doing, but even their faith “is the fruit of the effectual, divine call.”¹¹ The aspect of being called out, begun in Hosea but made explicit in Rom 9:25-26, is key to Paul’s discussion of predestination and God’s gracious election throughout Rom 9.

I. C. Love and Mercy

G. Dunn, *Romans*, WBC 38A, 38B (Dallas: Word, 1988), 2:571; and Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 621. Unlike v.26, all see v.25 as connected to effectual calling in v.24. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 573, also says Paul is using the double-meaning of καλέω.

⁸ The variants have similar textual support. The text is retained by ⳨ (IV C.), A (V), D (V), ⳨, Vulgate, Syriac, and some late medieval Greek manuscripts. The latter variant is supported by ⳨⁴⁶ (c.200), 5th C. Latin manuscripts b and d, the Syriac Peschitta, and other medieval Greek. B (IV) and the Latin of Irenaeus (c. 395) also drop αὐτοῖς. εαν κληθῶσονται is the more difficult reading, but since Paul otherwise quotes the LXX exactly, ἐρρέθη αὐτοῖς is a little more likely. Schreiner agrees (*Romans*, 530), and Seifrid gives an extended defense of this view (“Romans,” 647). Surprisingly, it was not considered uncertain enough for discussion in Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: American Bible Society, 1994).

⁹ See below for discussion on the interesting way Hos 2:23 in the LXX changes אֱלֹהִים into not only two different verbs, but also seemingly unusual tenses.

¹⁰ N.T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 10:643.

¹¹ Herman Ridderbos, *Paul. An Outline of his Theology*, trans. John Richard DeWitt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 236.

Paul makes another interesting change at the end of v.25, replacing ἐλεέω in the LXX with ἀγαπάω. ἐλεέω is usually translated, “show mercy,” while ἀγαπάω is a wider word expressing genuine love or interest in another’s well-being.¹² The Hebrew חַנּוּן (show mercy) is roughly equivalent to ἐλεέω. Thus, some interpreters deny that Paul refers to Hosea’s daughter (No-mercy) at all. They claim Paul instead omitted that portion of text at the beginning and added in a reference to loving someone who is not loved, seen as Hosea’s wife, to the end of the quote.¹³ But even elsewhere in Hosea, the LXX uses ἀγαπάω to translate חַנּוּן,¹⁴ and the parallel to the beginning of Hos 2:23 is clear.¹⁵ Hence, Paul simply makes a free translation of the MT, and is referring to Hosea’s daughter.

While not altering the referent, Paul’s change to ἀγαπάω may have some significance, however. God’s faithful love for his people runs throughout the book of Hosea, as he takes back his people despite their unfaithfulness to him. While not certain, it does seem likely that by ἀγαπάω Paul intends to refer to the entire message of the book of Hosea.¹⁶ The NT also uses ἀγαπάω more to refer to God’s covenant—and even sacrificial—love for his elect, and as such it emphasizes Hosea’s point that God is the one acting to redeem his people.

I. D. “And he will say, ‘My God.’”

Finally, at the end of Hos 2:23, the prophet also goes on with another clause that Paul

¹² BDAG 315, 5-6.

¹³ This is the position of Seifrid, “Romans,” 647.

¹⁴ See H. Simian-Yofre and U. Dahmen for the ways חַנּוּן is translated in the LXX (“חַנּוּן,” *TDOT* 13:437-54). In the piel, as here, ἐλεέω is most common. The LXX usually translates the qal stem as ἀγαπάω.

¹⁵ Calvin and Hodge both seem unaware of any alternative view. See John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul The Apostle to the Romans and Thessalonians*, trans. R. Mackenzie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 214; Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans*, Geneva (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), 326.

Schreiner suggests ἀγαπάω was in Paul’s copy of the LXX (*Romans*, 527), which Moo also considers likely (*Romans*, 612). Better is Dunn, who says Paul translated ἀγαπάω himself, and the LXX variant in Vaticanus B is a later Christian insertion. Dunn’s reason for Paul’s change—that he wanted to keep mercy only used in a positive sense—seems highly unlikely however. (*Romans*, 2:571).

¹⁶ Seifrid, “Romans,” 647; Dunn, *Romans*, 571.

does not carry into Rom 9:25. After God makes a promise to לֹא עַמִּי (Not-my-people), Hosea's son answers. וְהוּא יֹאמֵר אֱלֹהֵי (And he will say, "My God").¹⁷ Mark Seifrid points out that by omitting Not-my-people's response, Paul focuses entirely on the work of God. While Hosea records the reaction God's people will have to his redemption, Paul narrows in on the sovereign election of God found there.

II. Romans 9:26 / Hosea 1:10

In contrast to the loose paraphrase of Rom 9:25, Paul copies the seventeen straight words of Hos 1:10b in the LXX into v.26. However, there is a slight change from the MT to LXX, and Paul omits the first half of the verse. וְהָיָה בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-יֹאמַר לָהֶם לֹא-עַמִּי אַתֶּם לָהֶם בְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵי / καὶ ἔσται ἐν τῷ τόπῳ οὗ ἐρρέθη αὐτοῖς οὗ λαός μου ὑμεῖς ἐκεῖ κληθήσονται υἱοὶ θεοῦ ζῶντος (And it will be in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'children of the living God').

II. A. Sand of the Sea

As Paul quotes Hosea 1:10, surprisingly he omits the first half of the verse, וְהָיָה מִסְפַּר בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּחֹזֶל הַיָּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִמָּד וְלֹא יִסְפָּר (And the number of the children of Israel will be like the sand of the sea which cannot be measured or numbered). The sentence shows the tremendous extent of God's redemptive work, that he will not only restore and bring back his people but that he will abundantly multiply his blessings. The context seems to fit very well with Paul's message in Romans, that the covenant is no longer limited to Jews, but Gentiles will flood into the church. Hosea 1:10a also stands in sharp contrast to the quote from Isaiah that Paul uses next in Rom 9:27, as "the sand of the sea" is there used negatively. Although Israel was as many

¹⁷ The LXX, normally very wooden to the MT in this passage, does expand it here. Instead of אֱלֹהֵי (my God), the LXX translates κύριος ὁ θεός μου εἶ σύ (Lord, you are my God).

as the sand of the sea, only a remnant will be saved.

Likely, Hos 1:10a was omitted from Paul's quote simply to avoid repetition. However, by its presence in Hosea, the sentence sheds light on a couple of points. First, Hosea saw that his prophecy was not merely limited to his own people in his own time, but was the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham and Isaac. Particularly in Gen 22, after the near sacrifice of Isaac, God told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the sand of the sea, and that through him all nations of the earth would be blessed.¹⁸ By referring back to that prophecy, Hosea was already pointing to the Gentile fulfillment Paul brings out in Rom 9. Second, the foil with Isaiah in v.27 emphasizes that at the present time, the fullness of Gentiles are being brought into God's family, so that the multitude of cast-off Jews may be envious and also turn to Christ.

II. B. Translations of רָמַסְׁ

Of interest are the two niph'al imperfects, רָמַסְׁ . The first is rendered in the LXX as $\epsilon\rho\rho\acute{\epsilon}\theta\eta$, an aorist passive indicative of $\epsilon\rho\epsilon\acute{\omega}$. The second is $\kappa\lambda\eta\theta\acute{\eta}\sigma\omicron\nu\tau\alpha\iota$, a future passive indicative from $\kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\omega$, as noted above. For the second רָמַסְׁ to be translated as a future passive in both Greek and English makes good sense.¹⁹ However, the first is much more difficult. A Hebrew tense generally associated with ongoing and future action is translated by a Greek one generally associated with completed and past action! There are three options for a Hebrew

¹⁸ This connection is also made by McComiskey, "Hosea," 29.

¹⁹ The Hebrew imperfect also indicates ongoing action in some sense. Hence the idea of being called "children of the living God," is probably best seen not as the one-time proclamation of being a part of the family, but God's ongoing keeping of his people. However, the imperfect can also simply refer to an event that will imminently happen, without ongoing implications after that. See Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (New York: Cambridge U.P., 2003), §3.2.2.

In addition to the tense, both verbs offer the slight difficulty of lacking an explicit subject. Grammatically, it is possible for the third person singular niph'al to be either reflexive or passive, and to refer to some generic message "it will be said," or to something specific. It appears most likely that both verbs are impersonal passives "it was said / it is being said / it will be said," and English translations all understand them this way. McComiskey, "Hosea," 29.

imperfect in this grammatical construction: future, customary, or progressive.²⁰ In the context of Hosea, progressive seems most likely. Thus, Hosea is making the point that the people are now being declared that they are no longer God's people, and they will remain in this state until he calls them "children of the living God." Why the LXX translators chose a perfect indicative remains elusive. Because Paul quotes the LXX verbatim, it is hard to know what significance he makes of the difference between the MT and LXX. Certainly, however, he matches Hosea's idea that the Gentiles have continuously not been God's people, but a change is now taking place.

II. C. The Place

Both the positive and the negative "saying" happened in a location not explicitly defined by the text; although the way we identify this place in Hosea will impact how we understand Paul's reference to it in Romans. There are as many interpretations of the place as interpreters, with options including Jezreel,²¹ Jerusalem,²² all of Palestine,²³ the place of exile,²⁴ and even that Hosea prophesies directly of the Gentiles scattered throughout their various places.²⁵ Jezreel only makes sense if one denies that Hosea is not only referring to the destruction that has already

²⁰ A future "it will be said to them," is linguistically possible, and could fit if Hosea is claiming that Israel will be told they are no longer Yahweh's people in the imminent exile of the ten tribes to Assyria. While possible, the references to Jezreel suggest that Hosea directly refers to the first exile in 733, while also prophesying the one to come, and so the judgment is not exclusively future. Customary, "it was being said to you," would mean Israel had been repeatedly told that they were not God's people, seemingly unlikely since the exile of Jezreel just occurred, and the rest of Israel had not yet experienced judgment. Most English translations seem to avoid the Hebrew problem by following the LXX, and translate with a perfect idea. Arnold and Choi, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §3.2.2.

²¹ Wolff says the place of being cast off and return is the region of Jezreel (*Hosea*, 25-6). Fortunately, Wolff's error actually causes him to get the dating and authorship of Hosea right. He uses this reference to the return of the population of Jezreel as proof that Hosea (minus possible insertions) was written by the prophet before the fall of the northern kingdom in 722, rather than being post-exilic as other critical scholars claim.

²² Jerusalem is the choice of Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 273), who sees this passage as a call for the northern kingdom to return. However, as argued above, Hosea emphasizes God's election (indicative) in this passage, not a command to return (imperative).

²³ Dunn, *Romans*, 2:572.

²⁴ Moo, *Romans*, 613-14.

²⁵ Hodge applies the Hosea verse directly to the Gentiles. It does not apply to a return to the land, or to the church, but that "wherever in the heathen world people were regarded as aliens, now they are called children of God." *Romans*, 327.

taken place in 733, but also predicting the coming exile of the whole northern kingdom. Thus this view should be rejected. Jerusalem makes even less sense in Hosea's original context, as he speaks primarily to Ephraim and not Judah. The place of exile is an interesting possibility, and would be the best place if both niph'al imperfections discussed above are taken as futures, but this is unlikely. Charles Hodge's application directly to the Gentiles, denying any immediate fulfillment, does not seem to do justice to Hosea's focus on Assyrian exile.

The remaining option, which is preferable, is that Hosea speaks of Israel generally as "the place." Hosea is prophesying in Palestine, speaking of widespread destruction that is coming on all God's people who have turned away, and hence all Israel makes most sense. This also has implications for the place of restoration. The immediate fulfillment is merely return from captivity to Palestine, but Hosea also has in mind a full, reunited Israel all coming to the land. Even here in Hosea, Jewish interpretation saw foreshadowed an eschatological gathering in of the Gentiles to Zion along with the return of the Jews.²⁶

Thus, we come to what the place means in Paul's use of Hosea in Rom 9:26. A few continue to see vv.25-26 as referring to Israel, a literal end-times fulfillment of the Jews coming to Christ in Zion rather than Gentile conversion, but the clear contrast with vv.27-28 dismantles that view.²⁷ A second view is that Paul changes the meaning of place, and it means merely all the Gentile nations, from which God will call his people.²⁸ But the "wherever the Gentiles are"

²⁶ Dunn, *Romans*, 2:572. In typical "New Perspective on Judaism" fashion, Dunn perhaps gives Jewish exegetes too much credit for recognizing a Gentile fulfillment and salvation of the nations, especially when connected here to being called, "children of the living God." Nevertheless, his point is valid that it is in some form present here, and other passages do make explicit the Gentiles being gathered into Zion.

²⁷ J. A. Battle, Jr. claims that Rom 9:25-26 is about an eschatological Israel fulfillment. See "Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:25-26," *GTJ* 2 (1981): 117, 127.

²⁸ Hodge, as seen above, sees this as the only fulfillment, ignoring any direct OT fulfillment (*Romans*, 327). Moo takes the same position, writing, "With reference to the Gentiles: it is in the land of exile, the dispersion, that God will call out a people for himself" (*Romans*, 613-14).

interpretation probably overstates the significance of “place,” fueled by a LXX text variant indicating Paul added ἐκεῖ.²⁹ Instead, the “place” in Paul’s quote should not be seen as a geographic reference, but merely that “even there where”³⁰ God’s people are cast off; they will be restored.³¹ In summary, while Hosea immediately focuses on the return from exile, he also foreshadows the promised gathering in of the Gentiles to the land. While Paul deemphasizes the aspect of coming to Palestine, his reference of the Hosea verse to the election of the Gentiles fits within the original scope of Hosea.

II. D. Collective

One of the striking features of Rom 9:25-26 is that the passage not only addresses the calling of individual Gentiles, but that God is calling them out to be his unique people group. In Rom 9:26, as Paul quotes from the LXX of Hosea, he refers to “them,” and “y’all.”³² Plurals appear in both the Hebrew and Greek of Hos 1:10b / Rom 9:26. In Hebrew, אֲנִי (x2), אֲנִי, and אֲנִי are plural, and in Greek, αὐτοῖς, ὑμεῖς, κληθήσονται, and υἱοὶ. The plurals bring out an emphasis, not only on the mass of people, but of a special collection, as seen in context of the

²⁹ Some LXX manuscripts do not include ἐκεῖ. But the textual support suggests that ἐκεῖ is original and was in Paul’s version. Additionally, Paul copies the rest of the verse verbatim, and it seems unlikely that he would add in a word that only created more confusion. Fitzmyer agrees to this conclusion, although he goes further to say that ἐκεῖ has no significance to Paul and is merely a part of the quote (*Romans*, 573).

³⁰ A couple of other textual issues relating to the “where” are relatively clear, and unlikely to affect exegesis. The genitive relative pronoun οὗ is replaced by the dative ᾧ in ⳨ (IV C.) and the Latin translation of Irenaeus (c.395). Schreiner remarks, “The replacement of οὗ with ᾧ is so awkward that it can probably be considered a mistake in which the last letter of τόπω was repeated” (*Romans*, 530). However, while the genitive case is the most natural in context, Schreiner overemphasizes the awkwardness of ᾧ. While true that “the case of the RP, unlike its gender and number, usually has no relation to that of the antecedent, since it is normally determined by the function that it has in its own clause,” sometimes direct attraction occurs, and the case of the relative pronoun is attracted by the antecedent. Especially in this instance, when the relative pronoun is surrounded by datives, it seems quite possible that ᾧ is original and was attracted to the case of its antecedent. While the textual decision remains uncertain, English translation is not altered. See Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 150-1.

A second variant omits ὑμεῖς, supported by ⳨⁴⁶ (c.200), the Syriac Peschitta, and the Latin of Irenaeus (c.395). It is quite unlikely, and merely makes the subject implied instead of explicit.

³¹ See Schreiner, *Romans*, 528; Dunn, *Romans*, 2:572.

³² “Y o u” is more standard for emphasizing a second person plural in academic English, since Yankees are silly and use the same word for second person singular and plural pronouns. But “y’all” is a real English word, and therefore preferable to the artificial convention “y o u”.

collective singular references. All the Gentiles Paul is referring to are identified in Hos 2:23 / Rom 9:25 with the persons of אֱלֹהֵי הַגִּוִּיִּם and אֱלֹהֵי עַמִּי, as well as הִיא (her) which referred to Israel (and possibly Gomer).

Finally, the strongest collective sense appears in the way the words אָמָּ / *λαός* (people) is used. As George Guthrie points out, the biblical conception of being a people meant an exclusive and well-defined community. In modern usage “‘people’ generally denotes and aggregate number of individuals. It tends to lack identity.” But in the New Testament, a basic notion is a collective people group unified by their belief in the risen Lord.³³ Hosea and Paul use “people” to show that God is calling out for himself not merely a collection of individuals, but a cohesive community united by faith in him. God’s people are a family, and even the Gentiles are invited to join.

II. E. Sonship

Turning now to the end of Hos 1:10 / Rom 9:26, God does more than create a people for himself; he calls them his children. In Hos 2:23 God calls אֱלֹהֵי עַמִּי “my people,” but here he says, “children of the living God.” This means much more than just being God’s people again and restored to the covenant; instead Hosea is saying that God will pour out his tremendous blessings and increase, reflecting both intimacy and protection by his power.³⁴ Those who are children of God are distinct in the way they have been personally called out from the nations to be the special object of God’s affection. When Paul speaks of believers as children of God, he is not doing something completely new. Instead, the promise of sonship is found here in Hosea.³⁵

³³ George Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1981), 750.

³⁴ Wolff, *Hosea*, 27. Wolff says Hosea may have coined the term “living God” here, and he was definitely the first to use the whole phrase, “children of the living God.”

³⁵ See Ridderbos, *Paul*, 198-9, for a discussion on how the OT points to the idea of sonship of believers in the NT. As Seifrid mentions, sonship is Paul’s primary category for talking about salvation, and so the quote was very convenient for him (“Romans,” 648).

While the people God calls is collective, and many have interpreted sonship the same way, with the nation of Israel as the son (singular) of God, Hosea emphasizes a different point here.³⁶ The plural *בְּנֵי* shows that Hosea sees believers, individually, as children of God. Hence, when Paul uses the same sense in the NT, he is only making more explicit what Hosea understood before. What makes Paul original is that he applies the language of sonship to Gentiles. While Jews had been called children before, and the Gentiles were foreshadowed by Hosea's prophecy, not until this last dispensation were the Gentiles also welcomed into the most intimate of relationships with Yahweh.

III. A. The relation of Rom 9:25-26 and vv.27-28

The implications Paul makes about Gentiles in Rom 9:25-26 also stand out more when viewed in context of vv.27-28. In v.24, Paul introduces that God has effectually called his people from both Jews and Gentiles, and then he breaks down both groups—vv.25-26 describing the calling of the Gentiles, and vv.27-28 the salvation of the Jews.³⁷

Two different contrasts appear between vv.25-26 and vv.27-28. First, as mentioned above, the vivid picture of Israel being as the sand of the sea appears in Hos 1:10, and is used positively by Paul to show the multitude of the Gentiles who are being saved. In contrast, the same sand metaphor appears also in Isa 10:22, and is used by Paul to show the relative few, the remnant, of the Jews who are being saved. Second, while the entire section written concerning the Gentiles is positive, the negatives of not being God's people and not being loved marvelously

³⁶ Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 302, sees "children of the living God" as exclusively "collective, and not individual" in this passage. While a collective sense appears elsewhere in the OT, it is not the case here. Ridderbos recognizes some OT texts speak of sonship in a different sense, mentioning the theocratic promise to David in 2 Sam 7:14, but says that all of the OT and NT passages ultimately have the same fulfillment here in Rom 9:26 (*Paul*, 198).

³⁷ Schreiner, *Romans*, 526, speaks of these two sections as parallels defending the same point for both Jews and Gentiles. However, the contrasting element of the two pairs of verses suggests that on some level they are intended as a foil.

reversed, vv.27-28 are primarily negative. They include a promise of a remnant, but focus on God's sentence of judgment which is about to be carried out.

Further, by reversing the order of "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Rom 1:16), Paul completes the contrast.³⁸ Paul is making a dramatic point about the inclusion of the Gentiles. Hence, the way Rom 9:25-26 speaks of the Gentiles being brought in should be interpreted in light of Paul's overall argument in Rom 9-11 that the Gentiles are being saved now in great numbers in order to provoke the Jews to also come in (Rom 11:25-26).

III. B. "He says in Hosea"

Earlier, Paul's introduction at the beginning of Rom 9:25 was passed over, but here it will be briefly unpacked before turning to an analysis of how Paul used Hosea. The brief introductory line is easy to pass over, but loaded with theological and hermeneutical implications. *ὡς καὶ ἐν τῷ Ὡσηε̅ λέγει* (As indeed he says in Hosea).³⁹ Tracing back through a series of pronouns to v.22, the clear antecedent is *ὁ θεός!*

Paul's main point does not lie here, but he assumes and makes a backhanded implication of the inspiration of scripture. There is no conflict between the divine and human authors. "As God says in the words Hosea wrote," reveals an incredibly high view of scripture.⁴⁰ This serves as the cornerstone of a proper biblical hermeneutic. As Paul quotes from Hosea, the Holy Spirit is really quoting from an earlier book he wrote, knowing and intending when he wrote it in

³⁸ Dunn, *Romans*, 2:572.

³⁹ P^{46} (c.200) and B (IV) omit *ἐν*. Probably the omission is simply due to the wording of v.25 being unusual for introducing a quote. See Schreiner, *Romans*, 530; and Dunn, *Romans*, 2:569.

⁴⁰ See G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 432; and Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 969. Dunn also agrees that God seems to be the antecedent of "he says," but does not much of the point. "The most obvious subject of *λέγει* is the same as the previous verbs; the point is not emphasized, and a vaguer "it says" would be quite acceptable without reducing the force of the scriptural authority cited" (*Romans*, 2:571). Dunn is correct that it is not the point of the passage, but he misses the exciting broader hermeneutical point.

Hosea for the use it has in Romans. Assuming the unifying, divine author of scripture is necessary to properly unpack Paul's use of Hosea.

IV. Paul's Use of Hosea

Finally, the big hermeneutical point must be addressed: in what sense did Paul use Hosea? Three broad categories generally emerge. 1) Paul changed the meaning in the OT text, taking a text that was written for Israel and reinterpreting the church as the new Israel. 2) Paul took the redemptive principle found in Hosea and applied it to his own times. 3) Paul used the literal message of Hosea, with the exact meaning the text had in its OT context.⁴¹ While the "principle" category seems primary, each of the three positions has some truth. A recognition of the common divine author solves many of the difficulties.

The "spiritualizing" perspective of how Paul used Hosea reinterprets Hosea's prophecy, stripping it of most of the original meaning in context and reinterpreting the church as the new Israel. As G. E. Ladd writes, "This leads [Paul] to find in the Old Testament meanings that do not readily appear in the quotations in their Old Testament setting. Thus, he can apply to the church quotations that in the Old Testament refer only to Israel... the people of the Messiah are the true people of God, continuous with the Israel of the Old Testament."⁴² Such a hermeneutic has a number of things in its favor: Paul does elsewhere understand the church as the fulfillment

⁴¹ These three categories come from Battle, "Romans 9:25-26," 118-20. Battle sees less crossover and ambiguity between categories however. According to Battle, the first category contains critics, such as C.H. Dodd and Ernst Kasemann, as well as Ridderbos and others who have a "spiritualizing" hermeneutic. The second category, principle, contains Hodge and others. Battle admits that Zahn and himself are essentially the only people to have held his literal view, which requires that both Hosea and Paul refer to an eschatological conversion of the Jews.

⁴² G. E. Ladd, *New Testament*, 443. Similar comments are made by Ridderbos, *Paul*, 333-40. Schreiner presents something of a combination of this view and that Paul used a common principle. He says these verses serve as evidence that the church replaced Israel as the new people of God in Paul's thought, and also that Paul's use reflects a common pattern of how God has always acted, that Paul applied a principle found in Hosea (*Romans*, 527-8).

of promises to Israel, it acknowledges legitimate differences between how God's election is viewed in the old and new covenants, and it brings to the fore that now Jews and Gentiles are alike in their redemption by God's gracious act and not anything within themselves. On the other hand, those such as Douglas Moo who deny that Hosea's prophecy includes Gentiles in any sense fall into danger in disconnecting Paul's reference from any historical grounding and risk arbitrary exegesis.⁴³ The problem is solved by the divine author. Because God is sovereign over history and is the one giving his Word, certain patterns and types in history are expected. These patterns should not be rejected by dividing the initial fulfillments foreseen by the prophets from later fuller fulfillments, thus disconnecting them from the historical context.

That leads into the second of Battle's hermeneutic categories, that the redemptive theme in Hosea is applied by Paul to the Gentiles, showing that it follows the pattern of how God works. This is probably the broadest and most popular position.⁴⁴ Hodge gives the best summary of this view, writing that Paul's use of the text reflects the principle that what applies to a particular class of people applies to all others of the same character and circumstances.⁴⁵ Therefore the Gentiles, like the Jews, had turned from God into rebellion, but are by grace chosen by him to share in redemption. This perspective recognizes God's built in patterns to history, isolates and emphasizes the principle that God faithfully seeks and calls his undeserving people, and offers organic continuity with the Hosea account. However, while this is the primary way Paul uses the Hosea verses here, it should be noted that does not deny a "literal" indication within Hosea itself pointing to the Gentiles.

⁴³ See Moo, *Romans*, 613. Moo insists that the only way Hosea can apply to Gentiles is through the church representing the new Israel, not through any original context or foreshadowing in Hosea itself.

⁴⁴ Supporters include Wright, "Romans," 10:642-43; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 573; Calvin, *Romans*, 213-14; Dunn, *Romans*, 2:571; and Seifrid, "Romans," 647-48.

⁴⁵ Hodge, *Romans*, 326.

Battle presents the “literal” message Paul copies from Hosea as an eschatological Jewish conversion, although as seen such a Jewish eschatological perspective does not appear in Hosea or in Romans.⁴⁶ Besides that problem, Battle goes astray by ignoring the divine author of scripture, and insisting meaning in Paul is limited to meaning in Hosea, as can be proved by Hosea’s own historical setting. However, the “literal fulfillment” perspective also has some elements that can be redeemed. While primarily focused on Israel, Hosea also includes references that may indicate a future Gentile fulfillment even within the confines of the original writing, as seen particularly through the allusion to Gen 22 discussed above. Thus, when Paul applies Hosea’s text to the Gentiles, he is picking up on a strain in Hosea which was already there foreshadowing the Gentile fulfillment.

In summary, Paul finds a general principle and pattern in Hosea which applies well to the Jews of his own day. Certain elements within Hosea and Romans also make this particularly fitting, such as the connection of the church as the new Israel and hints of a wider Gentile fulfillment found already in the prophet. Not only is the Gentile fulfillment foreshadowed in Hosea, but the major themes used by Rom 9 are present in various forms. The collective aspect, being singled out as God’s special people, not merely as individuals but community, is vivid in both. Likewise, Hosea brings out the glorious doctrine of sonship in perhaps the fullest way found in the OT, which matches perfectly with Paul’s conception of salvation in Romans. The emphasis on God’s gracious choice of underserving people independent of their works appears in Hosea, and is brought out more fully in Rom 9. Finally, God’s sovereign, effectual call of his people appears first in Hosea’s writing, then more in the LXX, and finally reaches a crescendo in

⁴⁶ Battle, “Romans 9:25-26,” 129. Battle claims his view is the only one that fits with an appropriate biblical hermeneutic, which he self-identifies as strict historical-grammatical.

Paul's use of the passage. For Jews and Gentiles, justly deserving to be called לְאֵלֵי־רַחֲמָהּ and לְאֵלֵי־עַמִּי, it is a glorious truth that Yahweh effectually calls, "Children of the living God!"

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