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ΕΘΝΩΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ — A CASE FOR TRANSLATING ΕΘΝΗ IN ROMANS CONSISTENTLY AS 'NATIONS'¹

Сажетак: „Стара перспектива“ разумевања Павла инсистирала је на томе да се термин *ἔθνη* тумачи као „пагани“. У Рим 11, 13 себе је и потврдио као „апостола пагана“. С друге стране, библијски текстови показују да баш и не може да се говори о строгом придржавању разграничења мисије у духу Дап 15, јер су Павлове цркве редовно посећивали изасланици „јерусалимских апостола“. Павле, Јеврејин, има разлога и да отпочне сваку нову мисијску делатност у синагогама и зато што је своје сународнике желео да евангелизује прве (Рим 9, 1–3). Из ових се промишљања у раду евалуира значење речи *ἔθνη* за Павла, те се заступа теза да је *ἔθνῶν ἀπόστολος* из Рим 11, 13 заправо реторички елемент за уверавање интерлокутора из паганства, да је Бог веран и да није напустио свој народ. Теза се потврђује евалуацијом свих коришћења *ἔθνη* у Посланици Римљанима. Из тога се види да је Павле тај појам свугде додатно одређивао, те да би га, осим у 11, 13, требало преводити неутрално као „(сви) народи“. Такво је читање на трагу помирења међу народима, што је — могуће је — већ и Павлов први циљ за заједнице у Риму. ► *Кључне речи:* Римљанима, *ἔθνη*, пагани, Израил, Јевреји, апостол пагана, помирење.

INTRODUCTION

20th century Pauline theology made a case for Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. Historical reconstructions went as far as postulating a great divide between Pauline and Jesus' Christianity. Paul, being himself a Hellenist, allegedly turned his back on the Jewish tradition and religion, and founded a new faith which is directed towards the Hellenists of

¹ This paper was presented in Szeged, in August 2014 in the conference of the Eastern European Liaison of SNTS preceding the 69th meeting of SNTS. Comments made by colleagues at this occasion have made this paper better, for which I am grateful. I also appreciate Melody Wachsmuth's helpful corrections of the English.

the Roman Empire. Luckily for these historians, the great apostle called himself ἔθνῶν ἀπόστολος (11, 13). There must be no doubt that ἔθνη means ‘the Gentiles.’

In this paper, an appendix proposal from *Paul’s Territoriality and Mission Strategy: Searching for the Geographical Awareness Paradigm behind Romans*² will be taken up and supported by more substantial exegetical evidence. There, it has been conveyed that Paul’s geographical awareness³ suggests a rereading of ἔθνη as ‘nations’ rather than ‘Gentiles’ — at least in Romans although all modern translations have taken this path. Paul’s use of ἔθνη in Romans is more intriguing than meets the eye.

The old paradigm of understanding Paul insists that Paul used ἔθνη from a Jewish territoriality although it also claims that Paul abandoned his Jewish faith, affirming himself as an apostle to the Gentiles in Rom 11, 13. This paradigm fails to see that as a Hellenist, Paul would have had reason to abandon this Jewish understanding of the term. On the other hand, while Acts 15 may be called in to support a divide between Peter (and the Jerusalem apostles) and Paul, church council decisions were not eagerly implemented let alone strictly observed by either side. ‘Paul’s churches’ were generally visited ‘from Jerusalem,’ and there is no reason for Paul, probably a Pharisee, to shun a mission to the Jews or his well-documented strategy to start evangelising a city in the synagogue. If anything, he would have sought to persuade his own first. Taking into account such deliberations, in this paper it is maintained that ἔθνῶν ἀπόστολος of Rom 11, 13 is used by Paul as a rhetorical element for the opposite purpose. The interlocutors’ catch-phrase, which on the one hand was meant to discredit him with his people, on the other hand could have been adopted to celebrate him in the camp of his non-Jewish supporters. This means that in order to convey an unpleasant situation,⁴ Paul used ἔθνη as Jews suggested, but only here and only to drive home a point. If Gentiles considered him their apostle, i.e. apostle of the Gentiles, then they needed to know that in his view and in his apostolic mission in particular, ἔθνη must include the Jews.

From this isolated reference in 11, 13, which indeed should be translated ‘apostle to the *Gentiles*,’ however, all other occurrences of ἔθνη in Romans tend to be translated as ‘Gentiles.’ As far as I can trace, in all major languages, even in Stern’s *Jewish New Testament*⁵ and also in Roman Catholic translations, the trend is evident. This, however, in view of the newer scholarship in Romans, is misleading, and has had enormous potential to divide Christians and Jews, (as Haaker said on another occasion, it is ‘antijüdisch ausschlichtbar’)⁶ instead of healing the schism, which

² Ksenija Magda, *Paul’s Territoriality and Mission Strategy* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

³ The term is borrowed from Robert Sack, *Homo Geographicus* (Baltimore–London: Johns Hopkins, 1997).

⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 691.

⁵ *Jewish New Testament: A Translation of the New Testament That Expresses Its Jewishness*, Transl. David H. Stern (Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995⁶).

⁶ Klaus Haaker, “‘Ende des Gesetzes’ und kein Ende”, in *Ja und Nein: Christliche Theologie im Angesicht Israels*, FS Wolfgang Schrage (Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 1998), 137.

was Paul's main concern in Romans. Possibly, at the time, Paul's mission may have looked as primarily to the Gentiles, but that, as Romans 9–11 clearly point out, is the result of the Jews' limited response and not of Paul's voluntary programmatic neglect of his own people.

The agenda of this paper is two-fold. The first part revisits and evaluates the occurrences of ἔθνη in Romans to point to the fact that 'nations' should be the preferred translation. It is clear that when Paul wants the Jew-Gentile distinction, he modifies the word. The second part investigates how the message of Romans is different if ἔθνη is consistently translated as 'nations,' taking into account Paul's own modifications added to the neutral term when he needed it to mean 'Gentiles.'

1. THE MEANING OF ΕΘΝΗ IN ROMANS

National diversity of the Roman church(es) where both Jews and Gentiles were included, is generally undisputed, even if, at the time of Paul's writing, there were separate churches of Jews and Gentiles in Rome.⁷ Some speak of a Jewish minority although it is unclear why, considering it was a city with at least ten synagogues and probably a primary Christian outreach from Jews to Jews.⁸ Yet not even this can alter the fact of an inclusive address. Paul is writing to them all: 'including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ' (Rom 1, 6) must include Gentiles and Jews.⁹ Thus ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν among whom the Romans belong (Rom 1, 13) must include the Christian Jews in Rome but also Jews who belong to Christ and live somewhere else. The universality of Paul's introduction to Romans is sufficiently supported by Paul's kosmos-language: 'throughout the world' (1, 8), 'Greeks and Barbarians' (1, 14), but also 'Jew and Greek' phrases (1, 16; 2, 9, 10; 3, 9). Also, the theme of Romans is commonly recognized as universal in 1, 16–17¹⁰ as is the expected outcome of Paul's gospel: *All* who believe will be saved (1, 17). Considering the context of 1, 5, ἔθνη would be more fittingly translated as 'all the nations including the Jews.' If in Romans 1, 1–17 Paul proposed the need for a global Christian

⁷ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, II (Dallas: Word, 1988), 669; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 691; Peter Lampe, "The Roman Christians of Rom 16", in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Edinburgh: Clark, 1991), 216–230; 224f. Also: Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the first two centuries* (London: T & T Clark, 2003); original: *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987); Paul Sevier Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle of Romans* (London: S. C. M. Press, 1971); Dunn, *Romans*, II, 838–839.

⁸ Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten*, 216–230.

⁹ As suggested by Francis Watson, "The two Roman congregations", in *The Romans Debate, The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 203–215; 203ff.

¹⁰ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 68; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 23; Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (London et al.: Doubleday, 1993), 254; Dunn, *Romans*, I, 40.

mission to all the nations, it needs to be noted that he writes to the Romans, who are Christians already, probably because he needed their support for his mission to Spain.¹¹ However, in defending the mission to the ἔθνη, Paul also insists on the affirmation of the promises to the Jews and envisions the salvation of ‘all Israel’ (Rom 11, 26) as a natural outcome of his mission as well.

Most commentators, such as Dunn, Käsemann, or B. Witherington III as well as the popular translations of the New Testament, render ἔθνη as *Gentiles*. However, equally they often slip into universality in other places, as Romans requires it. For instance, Witherington claims that ἔθνη must be read as *non-Jewish peoples* in 1, 5.¹² His position is clearly dependent on the presupposition that Paul is called by Christ to be the apostle to the non-Jews. But, regardless of Witherington’s apodictic proposal for 1, 5 and attempt to explain away a Jewish readership for Romans, he himself admits that the greeting in 1, 7 ‘includes probably’ the Jewish people.¹³ Therefore, Paul’s introduction to the letter (1, 1–17) must be seen as governed by the phrase ‘all nations’ in 1, 5, and not, as some suggest ‘all Gentiles.’

In his book *Paul and the Nations*, James Scott makes an exhaustive case for ἔθνη as inclusive of all nations and the Jews, elaborating on the article in *TDNT* by K. L. Schmidt. He demonstrates that even in the *LXX* the basic meaning of ἔθνη is neutral.¹⁴ So even from a Jewish territoriality, Paul, who in his theological thought relies more often on the *LXX*, could be equally ambiguous.¹⁵

The first instance of ἔθνη in Romans is in 1, 5. ‘We’ were given mercy and apostleship to bring ‘all the *Gentiles/nations* to the obedience of faith. Commentators have problems with this text, particularly when they presuppose Paul as only the Gentile apostle. Necessarily in this case, the ‘we’ is disregarded¹⁶ or diminished by calling it ‘epistolary plural.’¹⁷ Dunn, however, points out that this plural must be intentional, as Paul is particularly watchful about apostleship claims, especially in Romans. For Dunn this means the obvious: Paul ‘does not regard himself as the sole apostle to

¹¹ Ksenija Magda, “Unity as a Prerequisite for a Christian Mission: A Missional Reading of Romans 15:1–12”, *Kairos* № 1 (2008): 39–52.

¹² Ben Witherington, Darlene Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 29 ‘all non-Jewish peoples’ cf. 35: ‘... all the peoples including, of course, the Romans.’

¹³ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁴ James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995). So also Karl Ludwig Schmidt in *TDNT*, II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 364–372.

¹⁵ Also Martin Hengel, Roland Deines, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon* (Edinburgh — New York: T & T Clark, 2002), 108. Also, Moisés Silva’s overview, “Old Testament in Paul”, in *Dictionary of Pauls and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Westmont, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 630–642, 631.

¹⁶ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London et al.: Oxford University Press, 1968⁶), 31; and probably in his tradition Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 14; or even Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Westminster: John Knox, 1994), 19. Also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 238.

¹⁷ Charles E. B. Cranefield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 65.

the Gentiles.¹⁸ One can support Dunn's view from the liberal perspective on Romans: Paul intrudes on foreign territory which was already evangelized by other apostles who were Jewish. But Dunn also demands that there are other apostles to 'the Gentiles.' Does Dunn mean that others intruded on Paul's Gentile territory? Steve Mosher reads, rather, that Paul means evangelism in general terms, and not just to the 'Gentiles.'¹⁹ Thus 'we have received ... apostleship' is understood as including Paul among 'all the apostles' among whom he is 'one abnormally born' (NIV, 1 Cor 15, 8) to all the nations including the Jews. Paul would affirm the apostles who worked among the Romans, and possibly Peter among them. It seems that in 1, 5, ἔθνη is best translated as nations inclusive of the Jews.

Universality of mission is also reflected in the phrase 'Jew first and also to the Greek' (1, 16 and in other places). This Jewish phrase expresses the totality of the world.²⁰ Some maintained that the phrase 'to Greeks and to barbarians' in 1, 14 is Paul's Hellenistic subconscious slip of the tongue, as this Gentile idiom 'now represent the whole cosmos.'²¹ But Barth concludes, however, that 'Jew first and also the Greek' expresses universality from Paul's Jewish view, whereas 'to Greeks and to barbarians' must refer to Paul's Gentile mission.²² This is an interesting proposal which, unfortunately, comes with a context. Would Paul claim that he is indebted to 'Greeks and Barbarians,' to the 'wise and ignorant,' and make this his reason to also evangelize the Romans!?²³ K. Stendahl warned already that '[t]hat is an odd way of addressing the Romans if you want to be listened to.'²⁴ When Käsemann insists that in 1, 14, Paul means the Gentile world as an apostle to the *Gentiles* and considers them his mission field, he can do so only from the claim that Paul abandoned Judaism.²⁵ But there are additional problems. By the time of Paul, the Hellenist world description (in the form of '*Greek and Barbarian*') was remodelled into the well-known 'Roman and Barbarian.'²⁶ 'Barbarian' referred to 'ignorant,' non-Roman nations whose languages they could not understand. Writing from Greece, Paul would only offend using 'Greek and barbarian.' There is also the lack of attention to the fact that 'Greek and Barbarian,' while it may distinguish between the cultivated and uncultivated nations, still connotes inclusiveness of *all* the nations. How could

¹⁸ Dunn, *Romans*, I, 16.

¹⁹ Steve Mosher, *God's Power, Jesus' Faith and World Mission* (Scottsdale: Harold Press, 1996), 20ff may go too far in proposing that Paul includes not only the other apostles, but also the Romans into the mercy of apostleship; in a similar manner Charles Kingsley Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1959), 21 claims that all Christians are included.

²⁰ For instance, Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 40.

²¹ Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 22; see also Windish in *TDNT*, I, 546–553.

²² Karl Barth, *Kurze Erklärung des Römerbriefs* (München: Christien Kaiser Verlag, 1964), 20.

²³ Even Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 37. Barrett sees them as citizens and uncultivated but offers no explanation; A *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 26.

²⁴ Krister Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 16.

²⁵ Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 20.

²⁶ A discussion to that effect in Cicero *De Republica* 1.58.

a Roman audience have heard it as excluding the Jews? Historically, the Jews were to be counted with ‘the Greeks’ — at least from a Roman perspective. They had a centuries long Hellenist history. They may have been peculiar, but for the most part, they were Hellenised. Even fishermen, like Peter or John, knew some Greek, as is evident from their New Testament works. There were Jewish patriots who loudly objected to such a classification, but to Rome that played no significant role.

If Romans is read taking the phrase at its geographical face value — particularly against 15, 19 and Col 3, 11 — a global and integrated scope of Paul’s missionary vision can be observed. It is a vision to move the gospel ‘from Jerusalem’ as promise to the Jews first (1, 2), towards the ends of the world, which, at that time most naturally meant Spain.²⁷ This promise to the Jews is now fulfilled in Christ’s death and resurrection — therefore Christ is ‘descended from David according to the flesh’ (1, 3) but more importantly he is now ‘our Lord’ (1, 4b). ‘Lord’ was the world’s title for Caesar, the ruler of the whole world, as was pointed out by Crossan and Reid²⁸ and also by N. T. Wright.²⁹ Romans 1, 14 is thus best understood at its face value as the universal term which includes Paul’s missionary interest in the entire world and not only in a *Gentile* mission.

We may also include the relationship between Rom 1, 14 and the term ‘Jew first and also the Greek’ in Romans 1–3 — commonly considered Paul’s Jewish geographical language in Romans.³⁰ There are several reasons why ‘Jew first and Greek’ should be seen as dependent on the universality of 1, 14 and not vice versa to understand 1, 14 as Jewish particularity, as Barth proposed. First, theologically, Rom 1, 14–15 is not often linked with the theme announcement in 1, 16–17.³¹ Yet, most commentators agree that 1, 16–17 sets the theme for Romans, and secondly, Achtemeier draws grammatical connections between 1, 15 and 1, 16ff which suggests that the theme verses also need to include 1, 14.³² Thirdly, several other points of reference between 1, 13–15 and 1, 16–17 have been proposed. The prominent word of this section is ‘to proclaim the gospel’ in 1, 15. Its meaning in Romans has been

²⁷ E. g. Strabo, *Geogr.* I.1.4.

²⁸ John Dominic Crossan, Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus’ Apostle Opposed Rome’s Empire with God’s Kingdom* (New York: Harper Collins — London: SPCK, 2005), 9.

²⁹ Nicholas Thomas Wright, “Paul and Caesar: A New Reading of Romans”, in *A Royal Priesthood: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically*, eds. Robe Craig Bartholomew et al. (Carlisle: Pasternoster Press, 2002), 173–193.

³⁰ Dunn, *Romans*, I, 40 calls it ‘the Jewish equivalent to the Gentile categorization of the world given in v. 14.’

³¹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 63–64.

³² Traditionally held view, Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 35 calls it ‘the theme of the epistle;’ also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 253; Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*. (Leicester: Intervarsity, 1985), 73–75; also Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 27 but notices that 1, 16–17 can as well function as introduction to 1, 18ff. Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 35, appeals that Rom 1, 16–17 cannot be seen independent from 1, 18f and rather considers 1, 15 as Paul’s theme, which suits us here as well.

widely discussed. Given the prominence of the Gospel ministry in Paul's life, his effort for church unity and the love he still maintained for his own people, it is unlikely Paul would mean his ecclesiastic territorial aspirations in 1, 5;³³ that is, to instruct the Romans that they are not a church because they existed without an apostolic foundation.³⁴ Such notions undermine the urgency of the gospel's arrival to all nations (Rom 10, 14–15), and provide no reason for the peculiar 'we' of apostleship in 1, 5. They are in direct contradiction with Paul's note to the Philippians: 'The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice (1, 18)' In other places Paul recognises the Romans as evangelized and as brothers and sisters in Christ. In 1, 11–12 he promised them pastoral care and 'mutual' encouragement. Thus 'evangelize' in 1, 15 is best understood in the broader sense as work which Paul has set out to fulfil in the world (not just in Rome) and as Dunn argued, broader than just 'first time preaching.'³⁵ Käsemann noticed that *εὐαγγελίσασθαι* (1, 15) is probably used by Paul as the catch-phrase, introducing not just Paul's theme, but the occasion of his writing: all nations need Christ and need to hear the gospel.³⁶ Paul is on his way to evangelise Spain, rather than Rome, where the name of Christ is not yet known (15, 20). He wants the Romans to be aware of this global need and contribute through support. If this is so, the phrase 'Jew first and Greek' which follows in 1, 17 is also dependent on 1, 15 and thus interacts with the idea of 'Greek and Barbarian' to delineate Paul's global vision. But why would Paul exchange one universal term for another? And why would he add *πρῶτον* to this common Jewish universality phrase?

The immediate idea in Rom 1, 17 is that of Jewishness and priority. Ever since Marcion, *πρῶτον* was understood as taking away from the importance of the non-Jews³⁷ suggesting the Jews had some intrinsic advantage over non-Jews. This contradicts the rest of Rom 1–8, which sounds at times more like an anti-Jewish polemic. So Marcion discharged the *πρῶτον*. Käsemann found that Marcion's intervention was likely followed by certain textual variants.³⁸ Only on account of such variants could Lietzmann see *πρῶτον* as an interpolation and called it 'faktisch wertlose Konzession an das Volk Gottes' which is rejected by the 'Mehrheit der Zeugen.' He juxtaposed 1Cor 1, 24 to Rom 1, 17 to support his claim, as this verse does not single out Jewish priority.³⁹ However, there are good textual-critical and contextual

³³ Dunn, *Romans*, II, 33–34. If Dunn is right, his cause would be excluding the Jews from his territoriality which is in direct contradiction then to the 'Jew first and Gentile' phrase.

³⁴ Günter Klein, "Paul's Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans", in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 29–43; 39; for a discussion Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 18–19; critiqued by Dunn, *Romans*, I, 34.

³⁵ Dunn, *Romans*, I, 33–34; also Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 62–63.

³⁶ Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 20–21; also Dunn, *Romans*, I, 36.

³⁷ Tertullian, *Contra Marcione*, Ante-Nicene Christian Library, Vol. 7 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1868), V.13.

³⁸ Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 23.

³⁹ Hans D. Lietzmann, *An die Römer* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1971), 30.

reasons why *πρῶτον* should remain genuinely Pauline, and 1Cor 1, 24 can only be considered parallel which lacks the *πρῶτον* for contextual reasons.

Contrary to Lietzmann, Käsemann rightly points to ‘the definitive salvation historical perspective’ of the phrase. In 2Cor 8, 5 for instance, he sees *πρῶτον* used consecutively. ‘Jew first’ should mean having historical precedence in salvation.⁴⁰ However, Käsemann unnecessarily adds that ‘we should not weaken the phrase by speaking of advantage rather than precedence.’⁴¹ Advantage, it seems to me, is a broader term than precedence as precedence is only one aspect of advantage. Thus, talking about Jewish ‘advantage’ adds to the *πρῶτον*, rather than weakening it. Paul may speak about advantage for the Jews in Romans 3, 1–2; 9, 4–5. Yet this is at odds with the universal context of the verse, i.e. Paul’s emphatic discussion about the equal sinfulness of all nations works against advantage and for precedence. All are in equal need of salvation in Christ (3, 9–20). Similarly, *τὸ περισσόν* in 3, 1 is better understood as ‘benefit’ or ‘profit’ rather than ‘advantage.’⁴² Paul would mean that the Jews had the benefit of precedence in salvation history, yet they have no advantage in their standing before God. Already in 2, 9, Paul explained that God’s wrath threatens everyone, regardless of who they are. So *πρῶτον* should be kept in the text, but it should be understood within the context of the history of salvation of all nations.

Finally, it must be noticed that the full phrase ‘Jew first and Greek’ appears almost exclusively in Rom 1–3, three times in a row. The distinction between Israel and *ἔθνη* is nowhere else as differentiating as it is in ‘Jew first and Greek’ in Rom 1–3. ‘Jew and Greek’ as a similar idiom but without the *πρῶτον* appears in Romans only in the conclusion to the initial argument in 3, 9. Variations to the phrase without the *πρῶτον* are rare elsewhere in Paul.⁴³ However, in Romans we find two references to ‘Israel’ as juxtaposed to *ἔθνη* (9, 30–31; 11, 23), again without the *πρῶτον*. This must mean that in the introduction to Romans, Paul has a special agenda concerning the Jews, but it all happens within the proclaimed inclusive universality. Paul’s primary interest is universal within a Roman geography, but within that he has to deal with a Jewish misunderstanding of the Christian mission. In Romans as in the other Pauline letters where similar phrases are used (e.g. Gal 3, 28; Col 3, 11; 1Cor 1, 24; 10, 32; 12, 13), they express inclusiveness of salvation and not a distinction as ‘Jew first and Greek’ would suggest. In Colossians 3, 11, if it is accepted as Pauline, the phrase is even reversed to: ‘There is no Greek or Jew,’ pointing also to inclusion.

⁴⁰ Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 23.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Dunn, *Romans*, I, 130; notices these possibilities of translation and gives parallels (e.g. Prov 14, 24), but gives the term no further prominence. Käsemann insists (in contrast to his translation; *Commentary on Romans*, 77) that ‘the adjectival noun *τὸ περισσόν* denotes surplus’ rather than ‘privilege’ (*Commentary on Romans*, 78). Moo in *The Epistle to the Romans*, 181, suggests ‘in what way does the Jew ‘surpass’ the usual person.’

⁴³ Only twice it appears in other Pauline letters. In Rom 10, 12; Gal 3, 28 comp. to Col 3, 11; 1Cor 1, 24; 10, 32; 12, 13

2. CAN ΕΘΝΗ IN ROMANS BE TRANSLATED AS ‘NATIONS’?

So far, Paul’s universal frame for mission was affirmed and Jews were shown as clearly included in it. Therefore, it should be at least questioned whether *ἔθνη* must be read from a Jewish territoriality. Already from this geographical perspective, the value-neutral translation ‘nations’⁴⁴ should be given priority, not to mention the many otherwise confusing messages which spring from these geographical terms. Now, it will be investigated what happens when, in line with this initial universality, *ἔθνη* is translated in Romans mainly as inclusive.

The following chart shows appearance of *ἔθνη* in Romans in their immediate contexts.⁴⁵

2.1. Chart 1: ἔθνη in Romans Chapter Verse

1 5 δι’ οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ,

13 οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι πολλάκις προεθέμην ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἐκωλύθη ἄχρι τοῦ δεῦρο, ἵνα τινὰ καρπὸν σχῶ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν.

2 14 ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος·

24 τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ δι’ ὑμᾶς βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καθὼς γέγραπται.

3 29: ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον; οὐχὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν; ναὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν, 30 εἴπερ εἷς ὁ θεός, ὃς δικαιοῦσαι περιτομὴν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.

4 17 καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι Πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν τέθεικά σε] κατέναντι οὗ ἐπίστευσεν θεοῦ τοῦ ζῳοποιούντος τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα· 18 ὃς παρ’ ἐλπίδα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι ἐπίστευσεν εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι αὐτὸν πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν κατὰ τὸ εἰρημένον,

9 24 οὗς καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς οὐ μόνον ἐξ Ἰουδαίων ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἐθνῶν;

30 Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὅτι ἔθνη τὰ μὴ διώκοντα δικαιοσύνην κατέλαβεν δικαιοσύνην, δικαιοσύνην δὲ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως· 31 Ἰσραὴλ δὲ διώκων νόμον δικαιοσύνης εἰς νόμον οὐκ ἔφθασεν.

10 19 ἀλλὰ λέγω, μὴ Ἰσραὴλ οὐκ ἔγνω; πρῶτος Μωϋσῆς λέγει, Ἐγὼ παραζηλώσω ὑμᾶς ἐπ’ οὐκ ἔθνει, ἐπ’ ἔθνει ἀσυνέτω παροργιῶ ὑμᾶς.

11 11 Λέγω οὖν, μὴ ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσιν; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τῷ αὐτῶν παραπτώματι ἡ σωτηρία τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, εἰς τὸ παραζηλώσαι αὐτοὺς.

12 εἰ δὲ τὸ παράπτωμα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος κόσμος καὶ τὸ ἥττημα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος ἐθνῶν, πόσῳ μᾶλλον τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῶν.

⁴⁴ German colleagues have warned me that there is no ‘neutral’ term to use in the German as both ‘Volk’ and ‘Nation’ are historically burdened, especially with regards to the Jews. This is a valuable remark that needs more consideration, but does not take away from the fact that ‘Heiden’ is also exclusive, which is our topic here. There may be more need to consider what alternatives German could have.

⁴⁵ I am aware that this is just a beginning and a more detailed investigation into all the Paulines needs to be made for a final claim and conclusion, but this cannot be done in this paper.

13 Ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. ἐφ' ὅσον μὲν οὖν εἰμι ἐγὼ ἔθνῶν ἀπόστολος, τὴν διακονίαν μου δοξάζω,

25 Οὐ γὰρ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο, ἵνα μὴ ἦτε [ἐν] ἑαυτοῖς φρόνιμοι, ὅτι πῶρως ἀπὸ μέρους τῶ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν ἄχρις οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἔθνῶν εἰσέληθῃ, 26 καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται·

15 9 τὰ δὲ ἔθνη ὑπὲρ ἑλέους δοξάσαι τὸν θεόν· καθὼς γέγραπται, Διὰ τοῦτο ἐξομολογήσομαί σοι ἐν ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τῷ ὀνοματί σου ψαλῶ.

10 καὶ πάλιν λέγει, Εὐφράνθητε, ἔθνη, μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ.

11 καὶ πάλιν, Αἰνεῖτε, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, τὸν κύριον, καὶ ἐπαινεσάτωσαν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ λαοί.

12 καὶ πάλιν Ἡσαΐας λέγει, Ἔσται ἡ ρίζα τοῦ Ἰεσσαί, καὶ ὁ ἀνιστάμενος ἀρχεῖν ἔθνῶν

16 εἰς τὸ εἶναι με λειτουργὸν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, ἱεουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα γένηται ἡ προσφορὰ τῶν ν εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ.

18 οὐ γὰρ τολμήσω τι λαλεῖν ὧν οὐ κατειργάσατο Χριστὸς δι' ἐμοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν ἔθνῶν, λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ

27 ἠῤῥόκησαν γάρ, καὶ ὀφειλέται εἰσὶν αὐτῶν· εἰ γὰρ τοῖς πνευματικοῖς αὐτῶν ἐκοινώνησαν τὰ ἔθνη, ὀφείλουσιν καὶ ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς λειτουργήσαι αὐτοῖς

16 4 οἵτινες ὑπὲρ τῆς ψυχῆς μου τὸν ἑαυτῶν τράχηλον ὑπέθηκαν, οἷς οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος εὐχαριστῶ ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τῶν ἔθνῶν,

26 φανερωθέντος δὲ νῦν διὰ τε γραφῶν προφητικῶν κατ' ἐπιταγὴν τοῦ αἰωνίου θεοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη γνωρισθέντος

There seem to be four clusters of *ἔθνη* in Romans: in the introductory part (Rom 1, 5–17 within Rom 1–3) and the concluding section of the letter (Rom 15, 7–13; 16, 25–27) which function as the universal *inclusio*, and in 9–11 where Paul elaborates on Jews' reactions to the Gospel. Interestingly, in this section the term 'Israel' sometimes replaces 'Jews'.⁴⁶ Finally, *ἔθνη* appears in Paul's personal parenthesis 15, 14 — 16, 23.

If the use of *ἔθνη* is considered from the perspective of meaning, most uses are modified to show the inclusion of all or exclusion of the Jews. Only in Rom 9–11, where Paul explains the failure of his mission to the Jews, Paul turns his speech directly to *ἔθνη* as *ἔθνῶν ἀπόστολος* (11, 13). The context clarifies that Paul addresses the non-Jews, because he corrects their misconception about God's dealing with Israel. However, even though this appears as an unmodified *ἔθνη* in the sense of 'Gentiles,' it is clearly a play on words, and Paul's olive tree illustration which follows expects Jewish inclusion! It is therefore possible to translate *ἔθνη* as nations without missing meaning practically in all but one place in Romans as Chart 2 shows.

⁴⁶ It may be worthwhile considering that there is more at stake when Paul speaks of Israel rather than Jews, as has been argued in Irena Petrović, Ksenija Magda, "Globalna kršćanska misija i povratak Efrajima: Neke egzegetske mogućnosti za tumačenje Rimljanima 11, 25–26", *Nova prisutnost* № 2 (2018): 297–312. The text in Croatian elaborates on the possibility that Paul differentiates between the partial salvation of the Jews (the Southern tribes) and the full salvation of Israel (Ephraim and Juda) at the end of times.

Chart 2

Meaning	Meaning	Meaning
Clearly nations (general modifications)	Nations possible; juxtaposed to Jews	Clearly Gentiles (not modified)
1, 5 δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολήν εἰς ὑπακοήν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ,	2, 14 ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσὶν νόμος·	11, 13 Ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. ἐφ' ὅσον μὲν οὖν εἰμι ἐγὼ ἔθνῶν ἀπόστολος, τὴν διακονίαν μου δοξάζω,
1, 13 οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι πολλάκις προεθέμην ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἐκωλύθη ἄχρι τοῦ δεῦρο, ἵνα τινὰ καρπὸν σχῶ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν.	2, 24 τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ δι' ὑμᾶς βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καθὼς γέγραπται.	
4, 17 καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι Πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν τέθεικά σε] κατέναντι οὗ ἐπίστευσεν θεοῦ τοῦ ζωοποιούντος τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα· 18 ὃς παρ' ἐλπίδα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι ἐπίστευσεν εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι αὐτὸν πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν κατὰ τὸ εἰρημένον,	3, 29 ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον; οὐχὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν; ναὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν, 30 εἶπερ εἷς ὁ θεός, ὃς δικαιοῦσει περιτομὴν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.	
15, 9 τὰ δὲ ἔθνη ὑπὲρ ἐλέους δοξάσαι τὸν θεόν· καθὼς γέγραπται, Διὰ τοῦτο ἐξομολογήσομαί σοι ἐν ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τῷ ὀνοματί σου ψαλῶ.	9, 24 οὓς καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς οὐ μόνον ἐξ Ἰουδαίων ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἐθνῶν;	
15, 11 καὶ πάλιν, Αἰνεῖτε, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, τὸν κύριον, καὶ ἐπαινεσάτωσαν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ λαοί.	9, 30 Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὅτι ἔθνη τὰ μὴ διώκοντα δικαιοσύνην κατέλαβεν δικαιοσύνην, δικαιοσύνην δὲ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως· 31 Ἰσραὴλ δὲ διώκων νόμον δικαιοσύνης εἰς νόμον οὐκ ἔφθασεν.	

<p>15, 12 και πάλιν Ἡσαΐας λέγει, Ἔσται ἡ ρίζα τοῦ Ἰεσσαί, καὶ ὁ ἀνιστάμενος ἄρχειν ἐθνῶν· ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἔθνη ἔλπιουσιν.</p>	<p>10, 11 Λέγω οὖν, μὴ ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσιν; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τῷ αὐτῶν παραπτώματι ἡ σωτηρία τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, εἰς τὸ παραζηλώσαι αὐτούς.</p>	
<p>15, 16 εἰς τὸ εἶναί με λειτουργὸν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, ἱεουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα γένηται ἡ προσφορὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ.</p>	<p>10, 19 ἀλλὰ λέγω, μὴ Ἰσραὴλ οὐκ ἔγνω; πρῶτος Μωϋσῆς λέγει, Ἐγὼ παραζηλώσω ὑμᾶς ἐπ' οὐκ ἔθνει, ἐπ' ἔθνει ἀσυνέτω παροργιῷ ὑμᾶς.</p>	
<p>15, 18 οὐ γὰρ τολμήσω τι λαλεῖν ὧν οὐ κατειργάσατο Χριστὸς δι' ἐμοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν ἐθνῶν, λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ</p>	<p>11, 12 εἰ δὲ τὸ παράπτωμα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος κόσμος καὶ τὸ ἥττημα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος ἐθνῶν, πόσω μᾶλλον τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῶν.</p>	
<p>16, 4 οἵτινες ὑπὲρ τῆς ψυχῆς μου τὸν ἑαυτῶν τράχηλον ὑπέθηκαν, οἷς οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος εὐχαριστῶ ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τῶν ἐθνῶν,</p>	<p>11, 25 Οὐ γὰρ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο, ἵνα μὴ ἦτε [ἐν] ἑαυτοῖς φρόνιμοι, ὅτι πῶρως ἀπὸ μέρους τῷ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν ἄχρισ οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθη, 26 καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται·</p>	
<p>16, 26 φανερωθέντος δὲ νῦν διὰ τε γραφῶν προφητικῶν κατ' ἐπιταγὴν τοῦ αἰωνίου θεοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη γνωρισθέντος</p>	<p>15, 10 καὶ πάλιν λέγει, Εὐφράνθητε, ἔθνη, μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ.</p>	
	<p>15, 27 ηὐδόκησαν γάρ, καὶ ὀφειλέται εἰσὶν αὐτῶν· εἰ γὰρ τοῖς πνευματικοῖς αὐτῶν ἐκοινώνησαν τὰ ἔθνη, ὀφείλουσιν καὶ ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς λειτουργῆσαι αὐτοῖς</p>	

Ἐθνη appears first in Romans 1, 5 and here already it is modified by 'all' to give a clear universal and inclusive reading — 'all the nations.' From a 'Jewish' territoriality, there was no need to specify Gentiles, therefore NIV and others who translate 'all the Gentiles,' miss the point. Translating 'nations' would more easily accommodate the 'Greek and Barbarian' of 1, 14 and help in fitting Paul's apostleship of 1, 5 within the circle of other apostles. Does Paul include his mission to *all the Gentiles* among the mission of the other apostles to the Jews so that together they display the mercy of bringing to the obedience of faith all the 'Gentiles' or all the 'nations'? Reading *ἔθνη* as 'nations' as does KJV, the Croatian Rupčić; and the ESV, seems to be a better fit.

Similarly, the 'other Gentiles' in 1, 13 make (some) sense only if *a priori* the Lutheran paradigm for Paul is applied. If 'Greeks and Barbarians' (1, 14) is a typical Greek description of the world, then 'among the other nations' is a better fit for 1, 13 as well. If we take into account Hengel and Schwemer's suggestion that Paul's mission started in Damascus and encompassed — in Paul's own words Jerusalem — 15, 19,⁴⁷ we may wonder why here he would exclude the Jews. Some Jews have been also among his 'harvest'? Reading *ἔθνη* as 'nations' makes such questions obsolete.

Once we move from the introduction, the next two occurrences refer to Paul's diatribe with a Jew. Still, the contextual scope is universal as the passage deals with the sinfulness of all people (3, 9), but the Jewish interlocutor may have problems with accepting this. Therefore, in Rom 2, 14 *ἔθνη* is better translated neutrally as 'nation.' Paul adds a modification anyway: 'nations which do not have the Law' are, naturally, the Gentiles. But the modification shows that Paul does not expect the readers to understand *ἔθνη* automatically as 'Gentiles.' Translating 'nations' also contributes to the discussion about the identity of Paul's interlocutor. Is the judge in 2, 1–16 any person or would they be Jews? If Paul spoke to the Jews in 2, 14, he would not need a modification for *ἔθνη*. So, translating 'nations' in 2, 14 suggests that in 2, 1–16 means everyone, and underlines that a special Jewish address is needed only in 2, 17. Paul's rhetorical trap in Rom 1, 18–32⁴⁸ with the catalogue of sins was meant for all, not just the Gentiles, but it is easily seen why Paul's Jewish audience would exclude themselves from the 'all'. Therefore, they need to be addressed directly again in 2, 17. Rom 3, 29 within the same broad context means the Gentiles. This text belongs to a passage which addresses the Jew, and hence, assumes Jewish territoriality. However, it is additionally modified by a clear juxtaposition of the Jews and *ἔθνη* — 'other nations'. As Paul moves to the example of Abraham, *ἔθνη* appears twice in Rom 4, 17 and is clearly inclusive. Abraham is the father of all *nations*, as even the NIV admits.

⁴⁷ Martin Hengel, Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paulus zwischen Damaskus und Aniochien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998).

⁴⁸ Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, I, 79. 'The imaginary interlocutor is envisaged not to objecting to what Paul had said but as agreeing with it strongly.'

The mutuality and co-existence of Jews and Gentiles governs the introduction to the letter as it does the conclusion (Rom 15, 7–13). At the end of Romans, *ἔθνη* appears eight times equally inclusively. Again, Paul is concerned with the unity of Jews and Gentiles.⁴⁹ In 15, 7, Paul urges the Roman Christians, Jews and Gentiles alike, to accept each other just as Christ accepted them into the glory of God. Commentators rarely consider Paul's decisive personal intervention (15, 8) λέγω γάρ — 'for I tell you.' Hodge articulates what others presuppose in 1–7: 'The apostle intends to show how it was that Christ had received those to whom he wrote. He has come to minister to the Jews, v. 8, and also to cause the Gentiles to glorify God' v. 9.'⁵⁰ But if *ἔθνη* in 15, 9 is translated as 'nations,' we hear the Abrahamic promise again. Paul claims that Christ has become a servant to the Jews to fulfil the promises to the Jews, but with the purpose for all the nations to praise God together because of this mercy shown in Jesus.⁵¹ Paul continues with quoting Scriptures which paint this biblically well documented vision. Paul's language in 15, 9 is commonly understood 'as usual, concise'⁵² so Paul does not need a main verb to precede the aorist infinitive (*δοξάσαι*).⁵³ On the other hand, Paul may well be using a parallel construction here where *δοξάσαι* as well as *γεγενῆσθαι* would be dependent on λέγω γάρ as infinitive constructions with accusative (ACI):

8 λέγω γάρ

Χριστὸν διάκονον γεγενῆσθαι (ACI)

...

9 τὰ δὲ ἔθνη *δοξάσαι (ACI)*

τὸν θεόν⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Paul 'is simply waving a flag for a truce in the Roman churches, in order to make room for both his 'strong' approach to diet and the 'weak' approach,' Mark Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14.1–15.13 in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 198; 'These verses stress the mutual acceptance of Jews and Gentiles in the Christian community,' Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 705; 'Daß Christus uns angenommen hat, bekundet sich zutiefst und in kosmischer Weite darin, daß Gott sich der Heiden erbarmte. Wo quer durch alles Irdische die Gottlosen zu Gotteskindern warden, kann nichts die Glieder der Gemeinde mehr unüberbrückbar trennen... müssen alle Verschiedenheiten zum Erbauung des Ganzen führen,' Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 368.

⁵⁰ Charles Hodge, *Romans* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), 435.

⁵¹ *The Jewish New Testament* translates: 'For I say that the Messiah became a servant of the Jewish people in order to show God's truthfulness by making good his promises to the Patriarchs, and in order to show his mercy by causing the Gentiles to glorify God.'

⁵² Hodge, *Romans*, 435.

⁵³ Calvin inserts *δεῖν* which is rightly commented by Hodge as 'unnecessary' and not suitable for the context *Romans*, 435.

⁵⁴ As does Hodge, *Romans*, 435, but he is so preoccupied with the Jew-Gentile distinction that implications of this translation stay unnoticed. In agreement with Ross Wagner, "The Christ, servant of Jew and Gentile: A fresh approach to Rom 15: 8–9", *JBL* 116, № 3 (1997): 473–485. I agree with Wagner's second diagram (p. 480) which, he believes, 'improves' the traditional reading. I disagree with his solution (p. 481) of making *περιτομή* and *τὰ ἔθνη* dependent on *διάκονος* primarily because *τὰ ἔθνη* is either

There is no parallelism between Jews and ἔθνη in this case. Christ was sent to the Jews because of God's faithfulness to his promise. That is the first part of Paul's λέγω γάρ. But Paul's other claim is: Moreover⁵⁵ (all) the nations praise God because of this mercy (the Jews cannot be an exception). If we understand 15, 9a as '(all) the nations' the other occurrences of ἔθνη in the catena are better translated by nations as well. Paul's intent of a universal eschatological worship of God is clearly defined in 15, 10 — *Εὐφράνθητε, ἔθνη, μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ*, and 15, 11 — *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη* with the parallel *πάντες οἱ λαοί*. If we ever considered *λαός* as the exclusive designation for the elect people of God in the *LXX*,⁵⁶ Ps 117, 1 challenged it.⁵⁷

Nothing, then, is lost if all instances of ἔθνη in Rom 15, 7–13 are translated as nations. In the worst-case scenario, the reader is left with the benefit of choice which, anyway, was already given to readers of the *LXX*. When ἔθνη is translated as 'nations,' it underlines Paul's emphasis on the unity of humankind expressed in Christ's new world order: All the nations, Jews including, will praise God in Christ, who is also the fulfilment of the incipient promise given to Abraham (15, 8–9). So, Romans ends that 'the mystery... is made known *εἰς ὑπακοήν πίστεως εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη* (16, 26), i.e. for the purpose of obedience of all the nations.

The last concentration of ἔθνη in Rom 15 is found around Paul's description of his mission strategy. It is the other end of the *inclusio* which started with Paul's missionary intent in 1, 14–17. The first occurrence in 15, 16 is omitted by Vaticanus. This gives an interesting slant to our discussion. Vaticanus does not religionsgeschichtlich straitjacket Paul into an exclusive ministry to the non-Jews. 'I am a servant of Christ Jesus,' Paul claims, and, for all that is known about Paul's ministry, it concerns the Jews as well as the Gentiles. 'Of the nations' is redundant in this theology. Within this universal frame the other occurrence in 15, 16 'so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit' (NRSV) nothing is lost if ἔθνη again is translated as 'nations.' On the contrary, Paul's whole ministry is holy. Both the Jews and Gentiles he reached are his holy offering to God. After all, for Paul the mission began in Jerusalem (15, 19). 15, 18 echoes the obedience of faith among *all* the nations of Rom 1, 5 and 'nations' should be considered a

nominative or accusative plural and not, which such reading would presuppose, a genitive. If we see it as an accusative, it could be subject to *δοξάσαι* in an infinitive construction dependent on *λέγω γάρ*. On the other hand, *περιτομῆς* is clearly a genitive dependent on *διάκονος/Χριστός*. The absolute infinitive of which *Χριστός* is the subject and *γεγενῆσθαι* is the verb would also be dependent on *λέγω γάρ*.

⁵⁵ If we take the lead of Stern's suggestion for Rom 10, 6 that *δέ* need not be aversive; *Jewish New Testament*, xiv.

⁵⁶ *TDNT*, II 366.

⁵⁷ The argument that these and similar verses are calling upon Gentiles because it is clear that the Jewish people should be (and are) praising the Lord anyhow, is not persuasive, because it could be extended to all humans. Calling Paul an 'apostle to the Gentiles' closes to us important issues in his self-understanding and world-view. Interesting in this regard is Schlier's translations of ἔθνη most times as *Völker* whereas in 15, 16 he translates 'Heidenwelt', Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 430.

better translation. Finally, 15, 27 again clearly juxtaposes Jews and Gentiles and the neutral translation as ‘nations’ would only point to the universal context. Paul ends his letter by affirming the universality of his mission — to bring all the nations (16, 28) to the obedience of faith. Romans 1, 5 and 16, 28 can be considered two ends of an *inclusio*, offering a framework within which all other instances of translation of ἔθνη must be considered. So, in conclusion it can be said that in Romans, Paul uses ἔθνη mostly neutrally, unless he modifies it by juxtaposing it to the Jews.

2.2. Ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος

The only really problematic instance for our proposition is found in Paul’s self-designation in Rom 11, 13 — ‘I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles.’ Rom 11 brings several clear occasions where the translation ‘Gentiles’ is preferable (11, 11; 11, 12; 11, 13; 11, 25) because of Paul’s additional designations. In 11, 11 Paul called the Jews, God’s λαός and differentiated them from the ἔθνη, which is common in the LXX. But, as Paul featured this distinction by using different words for Jews and for Gentiles, it is safe suggesting that in all the instances ἔθνη can be rendered as ‘nations’ and that Paul used the term neutrally and from a Hellenistic or Roman territoriality. Jewish transgression has brought ‘riches for the world’ (11, 12), yet the ‘world’ includes the Jews.

However, Romans 11, 13 is different. There is no modification when Paul addresses the non-Jews of Rome, or designates himself as the ‘apostle to the Gentiles.’ This seems clear enough from the language, but the context exposes a different rhetorical flair. Evidently, there was the option that Gentiles were boasting over the Jews and believing that God abandoned his promises to Israel. Dunn recognizes the diatribe of this section — with the Gentile interlocutor.⁵⁸ In the discussion on how branches are engrafted on the olive tree, Paul rejects this boasting, insisting that the Jews continue to belong within God’s plan of salvation, as he included them in his mission in Rom 10. Romans 11, 13 can therefore be read as irony.⁵⁹ Paul appeals to a Gentile audience who enthusiastically took pride in him as their apostle by banning the Jews from salvation. Is it not for this error that Romans 9–11 had to be added to the letter in an affirmation of the faithfulness of God to Israel, although things looked grave for the Jews at that moment? Romans 1–8 cannot stand if God was unfaithful to Israel and changed his mind. Who could trust him then? Such consideration must make Paul an apostle to all nations, even when the Gentiles claim him as only theirs, and when Jews had given him up as an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul is persuaded that the branches of the original olive tree will fit the root once again, because God is faithful. Paul’s mission is therefore necessarily inclusive.

⁵⁸ Dunn, *Romans*, II, 673.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

3. WHAT IS GAINED FROM TRANSLATING ΕΘΝΗ AS NATIONS?

So, if there is a general consensus that ἔθνη means 'nations' in Romans, and that Paul presupposes this meaning by adding modifiers to make a distinction between Jews and Gentiles, is anything gained by this neutral translation? For one, it becomes evident that the Liberal agenda of the 20th century has unnecessarily sharpened the antagonism between Christians and Jews. Translating ἔθνη as nations in Romans is a tiny step with massive consequences to bridge the antagonistic rhetorical abyss. Translations which underline the universality, community and acceptance of Jew and non-Jew within God's grand salvation plan is full of potential for reconciliation. Through Christ, God's salvation has been completed as a promise kept to Israel and to Abraham. By God's Spirit of truth and power those who believe can grow to fulfil God's will; and not just in the one nation but in all. Paul is no apostle to the Gentiles because he abandoned his people. He did not give up his own to replace them with a new, Gentile 'Israel.' Paul's own pain concerning the inefficiency of his ministry to the Jews (9, 1–3) is even amplified in Romans but so is also his hope that God's chosen people are now only 'hardened' until the final chapter of God's universal salvation story is unlocked. There comes a time when they will fully join in with the other nations in the universal praise of God (15, 7–13).

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ΕΘΝΩΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ — EIN PLÄDOYER GEGEN EINE ÜBERSETZUNG VON ΕΘΝΗ ALS 'HEIDEN' IM RÖMERBRIEF

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Zusammenfassung: 'Die alte Perspektive' zum Verständnis der paulinischen Theologie insistiert, dass der Termin *ἔθνη*, aus der jüdischen Territorialität, als 'Heiden' übersetzt wird, und das obwohl sie versteht, dass Paulus sich von seinem jüdischen Glauben abgewandt hat. Schließlich hat er sich selber als 'Apostel der Heiden' in Römer 11, 13 identifiziert. Sie sieht aber nicht, daß ein derartiger Hellenist vielleicht auch die jüdische Territorialität verlassen hat. Auf der anderen Seite, kann nicht behauptet werden, dass das Abkommen in Apg 15, unbedingt eingehalten wurde — d.h. biblische Quellen zeigen, daß sowohl die 'Jerusalemer' ihre Abgesandte in Paulus Gemeinden schickten, und dass Paulus von seiner Strategie, zuerst in den Synagogen zu predigen, nicht unbedingt abkam. Es ist zu erwarten, dass aus welchen Gründen auch immer, er die Seinen als erste evangelisieren wollte (Röm 9, 1–3). Von diesen Vorausgedanken befasst sich diese Arbeit mit der These, daß Paulus *ἔθνῶν ἀπόστολος* in Römer 11, 13 als eine rhetorische Figur gebraucht, die seinen heidnischen Interlokutor bewegen soll zu verstehen, dass Gott sein Volk nicht aufgegeben hat. Die These wird durch eine Wortuntersuchung von *ἔθνη* unterstützt, die zeigt, dass eigentlich Paulus dieses Wort hellenistisch neutral benutzt als 'Völker' und nicht abwertend als 'Heiden'. Daraus folgt, dass es besser wäre alle Stellen von *ἔθνη* neutral zu übersetzen, was zu einer jüdisch-heidnischen Versöhnung beitragen könnte. Das, aber, war auch Paulus Agenda schon für die Gemeinden in Rom. ► *Stichworte:* Römerbrief, Übersetzung, *ἔθνη*, Heiden, Israel, Heidenapostel, Versöhnung.