

Response to Stuart Dauermann
Martin Goldsmith, European Board member, Jews for Jesus

Let me first say what a pleasure it has been to read Stuart's very helpful paper. I have much appreciated his excellent use of language, his careful exegesis and particularly that he avoids using Romans 1.16 merely as a proof text. It has been good to be reminded that this verse follows naturally from the fundamental teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures that God's choice of Israel as his people is never exclusive or particularistic. It was clearly assumed that God's covenant promises and redemption belong first to Abraham and his descendants. But Israel's obedience to God's covenant would also draw the nations in to Zion and thus also to God himself like bees to honey or moths to the light. And then Israel too would be renewed in the light of God.

Stuart rightly looks back to the call of Abraham in Gen.12.3 with its promise that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you". Of course this purpose of God also goes right back to creation which demonstrates that God created all people and therefore he should be Lord of all (eg Ps.24.1,2). And "all" must include both Israel and all the nations. Incidentally, we need to resist the frequently mouthed glib assertion that Pentecost was the birthday of the church!

Stuart starts his paper by rightly showing that even among conservative evangelical Jewish believers there are various understandings of Rom.1.16. He strongly affirms that it is vitally important that we come to a united position on the meaning of the primacy of God's purposes for our Jewish people. Unity is obviously always a source of strength, but we live with loving disagreement on many very important biblical topics. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves whether our variant understandings even of Rom.1.16 may not complement each other and serve one another in our search for the fulness of truth.

To us as Jewish believers Romans 1.16 presents us with a vital truth which we believe to be essential for other followers of Jesus too. Having served as a missionary in parts of South East Asia where there were no Jews (except me!), I have come to see that some times the truth of Rom.1.16 may not be relevant in every situation. For those I worked with the priority was evangelism among other peoples, among Muslims, Buddhists etc. In theory they might note the teaching of Rom.1.16 and therefore have a love in theory for us as Jews, but in practice other biblical truths and demands take precedence.

I was interested in Stuart's inevitably brief discussion of Paul's purpose in writing Romans. In Longenecker's Word commentary on Galatians he assumes that Romans and Galatians were written particularly to undermine any teaching that the Torah remains essential in the Christian life. Table fellowship between Jew and Gentile therefore becomes a central issue. N.T.Wright also stresses the central significance of table fellowship as the mark of Christian love and unity. Perhaps it would be good to give more weight also to the necessity of Paul's teaching for evangelism. It is clear in Romans 15 that Paul was wanting to go even to Spain to evangelise the Gentiles there. He wanted to use Rome as a support base for this further evangelism. He therefore wanted to show that his call to evangelise Gentiles was in accordance with God's revealed word in the Hebrew Scriptures. If justification and relationship with God is through observance of Torah, then it is for the Jews – Torah was given to Israel, not to the Gentiles. But if relationship with God comes through faith in Jesus, it is open for all people (cf.Rom.3.28 ff).

But Paul still wants to underline the enduring validity of the Torah and God's covenant with Israel. We observe his passionate belief in Israel's enduring calling as God's chosen people in

Rom.9-11. In this I very much support Stuart's emphasis on the fact that Paul is here underlining the faithfulness of God and thus assuring his readers of the vindication of God – it is so easy for us to be anthropocentric in our faith and theology.

Stuart rightly refers to the fact that many of us as Jewish believers tend to show the primacy of God's purposes for Israel from the Book of Acts. Clearly Acts does show the sequence of Jewish evangelism first (Acts 1-7), the double bridge to the Gentiles in the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) and then the wider outreach to Gentiles also, starting with the conversion of the apostle to the Gentiles and then the conversion of the first real Gentile Cornelius. It should also be noted that Paul's dramatic turning to the Gentiles in Acts 13.46 is followed immediately by Paul preaching the gospel in the synagogue as was his usual custom (Acts 14.1ff). As a result both Jews and Gentiles turned to Jesus the Messiah. As Stuart emphasizes, Paul strongly believes in God's ultimate purpose that not only the fulness of the Gentiles should believe, but also that "all Israel will be saved". The broken branches of unbelieving Israel will be brought back into the tree together with the Gentile branches which have been incorporated. What a future for all humanity! We dedicate ourselves anew to pray and work accordingly.

Thank you to Stuart for inspiring us with a most helpful and stimulating paper!

Martin Goldsmith
e.v.goldsmith@ntlworld.com