

## PROLEGOMENA TO UNDERSTANDING ROMANS 9:14-15: AN INTERPRETATION OF EXODUS 33:19

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### I. THE TASK AND APPROACH

When a trained *Neutestamentler* dares to offer the scholarly community an interpretation of an OT text, some justification is in order. Having been called to take one of the NT chairs at the University of Munich after the untimely death of Leonhard Goppelt, Ferdinand Hahn gave his *Antrittsvorlesung* on November 5, 1976. In it he discussed the interrelationship of the theological disciplines. He argued—rightly, I think—that “theology does not allow itself to be divided up into different ‘departments’ (*Fächer*); within theological research there are merely points of emphasis (*Arbeitsschwerpunkte*), which are closely intertwined.”<sup>1</sup> The inference he draws from this is “the fundamental fact that the representative of one branch (*Teildisziplin*) of theology is responsible for the whole of theological work and accordingly must also have the right to join the discussion (*Mitsprache-recht*) of the other areas of research. Moreover the scholar will not be able meaningfully to perform the tasks of his own area of emphasis if, in the midst of all his specialization, he does not keep in view the problems of the other areas of emphasis and continually regard them along with his own.”<sup>2</sup> These observations are especially true with reference to the areas of OT and NT studies. Hence my venture into OT exegesis.

My motivation for studying Exod 33:19 was the hope that this will shed more light on Paul’s argument in Rom 9:14-15 where he cites the phrases, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” Among the questions arising from this Pauline text that OT exegesis helps us answer are the following: (1) Are the divine words cited from Exod 33:19 a reference to a specific act of mercy toward Moses, or are they a more general principle guiding all God’s dealings?<sup>3</sup> (2) Is the mercy referred to limited to God’s use of men and nations on the plane of history, or does it have reference to

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<sup>1</sup>F. Hahn, “Exegese, Theologie und Kirche,” *ZTK* 74/1 (1977) 29-30.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Among those who see Moses as the specific object of mercy (in receiving a view of God’s glory; cf. Exod 33:18) are F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883) 352; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 238; W. Sanday and A. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902) 254. Among those who see the enunciation of a general divine principle not referring to Moses himself are J. Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 204; W. S. Plummer, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971) 474; A. Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1935) 300.

eternal salvation as well?<sup>4</sup> (3) When Paul denies that God is unrighteous (v 14) to elect Jacob over Esau before their birth (Rom 9:10-13) does he really support this denial (*gar*, v 15), or does he simply reject the idea out of hand and give no justification of God in election?<sup>5</sup>

Since this paper is an exercise in *OT* exegesis I will only suggest briefly at the end its implications for Paul's meaning in Romans 9. Space requires that a fuller development of these implications be treated in another article. Nevertheless my particular NT interest does affect my approach to Exod 33:19. Since I want to interpret the same text Paul did, my focus will not be on the history of the traditions behind the canonical text<sup>6</sup> but rather on the final form of the text in its present context. But I also want to avoid, as far as I can, reading Paul's theology into Exod 33:19. Thus I agree with August Dillmann when he says, "The use of the expression ['I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion'] in Romans 9:15 cannot determine its meaning in its original [OT] context."<sup>7</sup> Accordingly my primary goal in this paper is to discover the meaning of Exod 33:19 in its present OT context.

## II. THE TEXT

The context of Exod 33:12-34:9 is crucial for understanding 33:19 and therefore merits a careful reading at the outset. Following is my own translation of the Hebrew with the most significant renderings of the LXX in parentheses:

- 33:12a And Moses said to Yahweh, "Behold, you say to me, 'Cause this people to go up' [from Sinai to the promised land; cf. 33:1],  
 12b but you do not make known to me whom you will send with me [cf. 32:34; 33:2; 23:20].  
 12c And you said to me, 'I know you by name (MT *b'ešēm*; LXX *para pantas*; cf. v 17c),  
 12d and also you have found favor in my sight.'  
 13a Now, please, if I have found favor in your sight

<sup>4</sup>Protesting strongly against construing Paul's words to relate to eternal salvation are F. J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Lutterworth, 1961) 249; T. Forster and V. P. Marston, *God's Strategy in Human History* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1973) 64-67. On the other side see especially U. Luz, *Das Geschichtsverständnis Paulus (BEvT 49; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1968) 76 n. 199.*

<sup>5</sup>It is out of vogue today to speak of a "Pauline theodicy" as many older exegetes did: E. Weber, *Das Problem der Heilsgeschichte nach Röm. 9-11. Ein Beitrag zur historischtheologischen Würdigung der paulinischen Theodizee* (Leipzig: Deichert'sche, 1911); E. Kühl, *Zur paulinischen Theodizee* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897); W. Beyschlag, *Die paulinische Theodizee Römer IX-XI* (Halle: Eugen Strien, 1895). Vehemently against the idea that Paul might try to defend God's righteousness by argument is A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1949) 365. Following him explicitly is J. Munck, *Christ and Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967) 43. Somewhat similarly see the commentaries of Lietzmann, Michel and Käsemann.

<sup>6</sup>Therefore while I have consulted I have not been helped in my immediate purpose by W. Beyerlin, *Herkunft und Geschichte der Ältesten Sinaitradition* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1961) and E. Zenger, *Die Sinaitheophanie: Untersuchung zum jüdischen und elohistischen Geschichtswerk* (Würzburg: Echter, 1971), as well as the sections on "Literary and Traditio-Historical Analysis" in B. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) 555-556, 584-586, 604-610.

<sup>7</sup>A. Dillmann, *Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus* (HAT 12; Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1897) 385.

- 13b then cause me to know, please, your way (MT *d<sup>e</sup>rākekā*; LXX *seauton*),
- 13c so that I will know you,
- 13d in order that I might go on finding favor in your sight.
- 13e And behold that this nation is your people” (LXX *hina gnō hoti laos sou to ethnos to mega touto*).
- 14a And he [Yahweh] said, “My presence (MT *pānay*; LXX *autos* = I myself) will go,
- 14b and I will give you [singular] rest.”
- 15a And [Moses] said to him, “If your presence (LXX *autos su*) does not go,
- 15b then do not cause us (LXX me) to go up from this place.
- 16a For how shall it then be known (LXX adds *alēthōs*) that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people?
- 16b Is it not in your going with us that we, I and your people, are distinguished (MT *w<sup>e</sup>nīplēnū*; LXX *endoxasthēsomai*) from every people which is on the face of the earth?” [Cf. 34:10.]
- 17a And Yahweh said to Moses, “Even this word which you spoke I will do,
- 17b because you found favor in my sight
- 17c and I know you by name” [cf. v 12c].
- 18 And he [Moses] said, “Cause me to see your glory.”
- 19a And he [Yahweh] said, “I will cause to pass before your face all my goodness (MT *tūbī*; LXX *doxē mou*).
- 19b And I will proclaim the name Yahweh before you [cf. 34:5 f.].
- 19c And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious (MT *w<sup>e</sup>hannōtī ’et-’āšer ’āhōn*; LXX *kai eleēsō hon an eleō*),
- 19d and I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful” (MT *w<sup>e</sup>rihamtī ’et-’āšer ’arahēm*; LXX *kai oiktirēsō hon an oiktirō*).
- 20a And he [Yahweh] said, “You will not be able to see my face,
- 20b because a man will not see me (LXX *prosōpon mou*) and live.”
- 21 But Yahweh said, “Behold, there is a place by me, and you shall stand on the rock.
- 22 And it shall be that as my glory passes by I will put you in the cleft of the rock and will cover you with my hand until I have passed by;
- 23 and I will remove my hand, and you will see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”
- 34:1-4 (Omitted: Moses ascends Mount Sinai with newly cut tablets to meet Yahweh)
- 5a And Yahweh descended in a cloud and he stood with him there,
- 5b and he proclaimed the name of Yahweh (MT [= 33:19b] *wayyiqrā’ b<sup>e</sup>šēm YHWH*; LXX *ekalesen tō onomati kyriou*).
- 6a And Yahweh passed before his face [cf. 33:19a, 22]
- 6b and proclaimed, “Yahweh, Yahweh (LXX only one *kyrios*), a God merciful and gracious [cf. 33:19c, d], slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (MT *w<sup>e</sup>rab-ḥesed w<sup>e</sup>emet*; LXX *polyeleos kai alēthinos*),
- 7a keeping steadfast love (MT *ḥesed*; LXX *dikaiosynēn*) unto thousands,

- 7b forgiving iniquity, rebellion and sin.  
 7c But he shall not leave completely unpunished (MT *w<sup>e</sup>naqqēh lō' y<sup>e</sup>naqqeh*; LXX *ou kathariei ton enochon*),  
 7d visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons and upon the sons' sons, upon the third and upon the fourth" (LXX adds *genean*).  
 8 And Moses hastened and bowed his head to the ground and worshipped.  
 9a And he said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord,  
 9b then may the Lord go in our midst.  
 9c For it is a stiffnecked people [cf. 33:5],  
 9d but you shall forgive our iniquities and our sins,  
 9e and you shall take us for an inheritance" (MT *ūn<sup>e</sup>ħaltānū*; LXX *esometha soi*).

It is probably pointless to try to decide whether Paul was familiar with this passage in the Hebrew or the Greek, for he no doubt "knew both the Massora and the Greek translation."<sup>8</sup> To be sure, Rom 9:15 is identical to the Greek version of Exod 33:19cd but, as S. R. Driver says, "The quotation (from the LXX) in Rom. 9:15 expresses the sense [of the Hebrew] exactly."<sup>9</sup> What this sense is I will examine more closely below, but first let us orient ourselves in the wider context.

### III. THE CONTEXT OF EXODUS 32-34

Brevard Childs provides a concise description of the larger literary unit in which our text is found. Concerning Exod 32-34 he writes:

First of all, the chapters have been placed within an obvious theological framework of sin and forgiveness. Chapter 32 recounts the breaking of the covenant [the golden calf incident]; ch. 34 relates its restoration. Moreover, these chapters are held together by a series of motifs which are skillfully woven into a unifying pattern. The tablets [of the 10 commandments] are received, smashed in ch. 32, recut, and restored in ch. 34. Moses' intercession for Israel begins in ch. 32, continues in ch. 33, and comes to a climax in ch. 34 [vv. 9, 10]. The theme of the presence of God which is the central theme of ch. 33 joins, on the one hand, to the prior theme of disobedience in ch. 32, and, on the other hand, to the assurance of forgiveness in ch. 34 [vv. 6, 9].<sup>10</sup>

In Exod 32:9-10 God accused Israel of being a stiffnecked people and told Moses, "Let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them." Moses pleaded with God not to destroy the people because, on the one hand, the Egyptians would then gloat over their demise and ascribe evil intent to Yahweh (32:12; cf. Num 14:15-16) and, on the other hand, God swore by his own self to Abraham, Isaac and Israel that their descendants would inherit the promised land (32:13). So God relented from the intention to fully destroy Israel (32:14) and chastised them with slaughter by the sons of Levi (32:25-29).

<sup>8</sup>H. J. Schoeps, *Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961) 32. E. Ellis notes only 13 cases where Paul seems to agree with LXX against MT (*Paul's Use of the Old Testament* [Edinburgh, 1957] 150-152).

<sup>9</sup>S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus* (Cambridge: University Press, 1929) 363.

<sup>10</sup>Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 557-558.

Then again Moses pleads with God to forgive the sin of Israel, "and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (32:32). God responds that each man will bear his own sin (32:33) and that Moses should go ahead and lead the people to the promised land (32:34; 33:1). But Moses still does not have from God the promise he wants, for God says, "I will not go up with you lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiffnecked people. . . . If for a single moment I would go up with you I would consume you" (33:3, 5). Instead of his own presence in their midst God promises that his angel will go before them (32:34; 33:2). Moses is still not satisfied with Yahweh's concession. After the reference to Moses' communion with Yahweh in the tent of meeting outside the camp (33:7-11)<sup>11</sup> Moses takes up his intercession for the people again in 33:12 where our text began.

#### IV. THE CONTEXT OF 33:12-34:9

Exod 33:12-34:9 has a twofold theme. On the one hand there is Moses' prayer that God himself go up to the promised land in the midst of Israel his people (33:12b, 13e, 15-16; 34:9). On the other hand there is Moses' prayer to know God and to see his glory (33:13a-c, 18)—a prayer that is answered in 34:5-7 with the theophany atop Mount Sinai. The relationship between these two themes in 33:12-34:9 is the key to understanding this literary unit.

Moses had pursued God relentlessly on behalf of idolatrous Israel ever since the incident of the golden calf. Now in 33:16 we see what he is truly seeking. His aim is that God himself go up with the people, but not only that. He desires that the people be restored to God's full favor (v 16a) and that God distinguish Israel as his own unique people from all the peoples on the face of the earth (v 16b). In the end God does restore the covenant and he promises to do just what Moses asked (34:10; 33:17).

Moses is aware of what a positive response to his request would involve. He was asking that a stiffnecked and idolatrous nation be distinguished above all the nations as God's own people. It was in a sense an unthinkable request in view of what God had said in 33:5: "You are a stiffnecked people; if for a single moment I should go among you, I would consume you." It is precisely the apparent presumption of Moses' prayer that demanded the second theme of 33:12-34:9—namely, Moses' desire to know God's way and his glory (33:13, 18). In other words the magnitude of his request drives Moses to probe into the very heart of God, as it were, to assure himself that God is in his deepest nature the kind of God who could "pardon our iniquity and our sin and take us for [his] inheritance" (34:9de). Moses is not yet content with God's promise in verse 33:17a: "Even the word that you spoke I will do."<sup>12</sup> He responds with the plea, "Cause me to see

<sup>11</sup>The function of 33:7-11 in its present context is apparently to illustrate the point that God cannot abide in the midst of Israel (33:3, 5). Hence the tent of meeting where he talks with Moses face to face is *outside* the camp. So G. Bush, *Notes, Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus* (Chicago: Henry A. Summer, 1881) 2, 227 and Childs, *Exodus*, 592. Childs sees other functions of the pericope but I think he is not right when he views the worshipful behavior of the people in 33:10 as a "warrant" for Moses' continued intercession for them. Moses never bases his appeal to God on any good quality in the people. On the contrary his final appeal is *grounded* (*gar*, 34:9c) in the unchanged fact that Israel is stiffnecked but God loves to pardon.

<sup>12</sup>Earlier in 33:14 God has already promised: "My presence will go and I will give you rest." Why did Moses "seem to pass roughshod over the concession" (Childs, *Exodus*, 594) in his further request in

your glory." In view of (1) the following verse, which relates the revelation of this glory to God's goodness and his mercy, and (2) its fulfillment in 34:5-7 in terms of God's moral character and (3) the inference Moses draws from it in 34:9, it is impossible to construe Moses' request in 33:18 as an expression of a desire mystically to enjoy God's essence. Rather the request to see God's glory should be understood in this context as a desire to have God confirm his astonishing willingness to show his favor to a stiffnecked, idolatrous people (33:16-17).<sup>13</sup> The confirmation is to consist in a revelation of that glory which is the ground or source of such great mercy.

It is clear then that the theme of God's accompanying Israel and distinguishing her above all the nations and the theme of God's personal revelation to Moses are intimately related. The final proof of this is in 34:9 where, after having received the revelation of God's name (34:5-7), Moses repeats his earlier request that God would go up in their midst. Then, as if to stake everything on the mercy that had just been revealed, he grounds this request with the words "for<sup>14</sup> it is a stiffnecked people." In view of the mercy, grace, love, faithfulness and forgiveness declared in 34:6, Moses is emboldened to call on God to demonstrate his great mercy to Israel precisely because she is in need of mercy as a stiffnecked people. Moses exploits the grace of God to the full and lets it shine in all its freedom in that he appeals to no merit in the people or in himself<sup>15</sup> and to no extenuating circumstances. Rather he expresses his certainty<sup>16</sup> that on the basis of

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33:15-16? Both Childs (p. 595) and J. P. Lange, *Exodus* (New York: Scribner's, 1876) 140, draw attention to the fact that the promise of 33:14 still attaches to the person of Moses (as in 32:10) since the "you" is singular (v 14b). So Moses presses on to procure the blessing for the whole people (cf. "I and your people" in 33:16 twice). In view of this progression of thought God's promise in 33:17 is a full agreement to do all that Moses asked. Now the only thing left is for Moses to look into the depths of God's goodness for the assurance he needed to believe such an amazing concession.

<sup>13</sup>"To bestow a perpetuity of blessing on a people wavering now and again into disobedience, was a problem that seemed to task the highest intelligence, to transcend the ordinary ways of providence and call into exercise some inner and higher reaches of the eternal mind. Moved by a wish to do his duty with intelligence [and, I would add, assurance], Moses ardently desires some insight into this profound mystery and he feels that it touches the very center of the divine nature and involves the sublimest manifestations of his glory. Hence his . . . grandest petition, 'Show me now thy glory.'" J. Hall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (New York: I. K. Funk, 1881) 217.

<sup>14</sup>The Hebrew conjunction *ki* can be used concessively (BDB, 473), but this is not nearly so common as the ground usage. Moreover the LXX renders it with *gar*. Keil and Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 2. 241, also construe the *ki* as a ground. But they are wide of the mark, I think, when they argue on the analogy of Gen 8:21 that God's wrath was mitigated because being stiffnecked was Israel's "natural condition." This interpretation of the ground clause misses the point that in this context grace and mercy are being exalted rather than that the evil deserts of man are being diminished.

<sup>15</sup>Moses does not try to ground God's favor toward him (34:9a; 33:12d, 13a, 17b) in any merit on his part. On the contrary, in 34:9d he reckons himself among those who need forgiveness ("our iniquities and our sins").

<sup>16</sup>The Hebrew grammatical construction here in 34:9de is ambiguous. The verbs "you shall forgive" and "you shall take us for an inheritance" are perfects with *waw* connectives. They may thus continue the imperative sense of v 34b or they may simply state Moses' conviction of what will be. Even if they are to be construed as imperatives (as e. g. in 20:9), nevertheless the preceding context makes plain that the forgiveness requested is a forgiveness of which Moses is confident.

God's promise (33:17) and his revealed nature (34:6-7) the sins of Israel will be forgiven and God will make Israel his own personal inheritance (34:9de). Moses' anxiety, therefore, about the future of Israel is resolved through a personal revelation of God as a God who is merciful and gracious. *Who* God is grounds the assurance of *how* he will act.<sup>17</sup> With this general picture of the OT context before us we may now attempt to determine the specific meaning of Exod 33:19cd.

## V. THE GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY OF EXODUS 33:19CD

J. P. Lange translates Exod 33:19c as "I have been (or am) gracious to whom I will be gracious" and comments on the sentence thus: "It distinguishes two periods of time. . . . Accordingly the Hebrew expression affirms: 'My grace is in such a sense consistent and persistent that wherever I show it, it is based on profound reasons belonging to the past.'" <sup>18</sup> Lange's translator quite rightly calls this translation and comment "singularly infelicitous," for "the two verbs in the Hebrew are both future [i.e., imperfect] (the first made such by the Vav Consecutive), so that Lange's statement that the text 'distinguishes two periods of time' . . . conveys a misrepresentation."<sup>19</sup> It is not necessary that there be any particular reference to time in the imperfect and converted perfect tenses of 33:19cd. This "tense" in Hebrew can refer to past, present or future action; the emphasis falls not on the time but on the incompleteness of the action.<sup>20</sup> Whether we construe the verbs to refer on the one hand to a specific act of grace in the future—say, to Moses in the theophany of 34:5-7—or on the other hand to the general principle by which God always dispenses grace will depend on how we relate verse 19cd to 19b.

Brevard Childs, J. P. Hyatt and S. R. Driver among others have pointed out that to understand the intention of Exod 33:19cd one must recognize that it is an example of the Hebrew formula called *idem per idem*.<sup>21</sup> Other examples of the idiom are 4:13 ("I pray, Lord, send now by the hand you will send"); 16:23 ("Bake what you will bake, boil what you will boil"); 1 Sam 23:13 ("They went about where they went about"); 2 Sam 15:20 ("Shall I make you go with us while I go where I go"); 2 Kgs 8:1 ("Sojourn where you sojourn"). By leaving the action unspecified the force of this idiom is to preserve the freedom of the subject to perform the action in whatever way he pleases. By simply repeating the action without adding any stipulations the *idem per idem* formula makes clear that the way

<sup>17</sup>This does not contradict 33:13bc which says, "Cause me to know, please, your *way* and I will know *you*." If there is a necessary connection between God's person and his acts so that the former grounds the latter, then one can, conversely, know the person of God by attending to his "way." This is in fact the characteristic mode of revelation in the OT. Cf. G. E. Wright, *God Who Acts* (London: SCM, 1952) 11. Biblical theology "is a theology of recital or proclamation of the acts of God, together with the inferences drawn therefrom."

<sup>18</sup>Lange, *Exodus*, 141.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. GKC 67ee cites Exod 33:19cd as examples of perfects with waw consecutives. See 49h for the usage of waw consecutive with perfects.

<sup>20</sup>GKC 107a; 49h.

<sup>21</sup>Childs, *Exodus*, 596; Driver, *Exodus*, 362; J. P. Hyatt, *Commentary on Exodus* (London: Oliphants, 1971) 317.

the action is executed is determined by the will of the subject within the limits of prevailing circumstances. Therefore when God says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful," he is stressing that there are no stipulations outside his own counsel or will that determine the disposal of his mercy and grace. As Childs says, "The circular *idem per idem* formula of the name—I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious—is closely akin to the name in Ex. 3:14—I am who I am—and testifies by its tautology to the freedom of God in making known his self-contained being."<sup>22</sup>

This understanding of the grammatical construction of 33:19cd coheres with the vocabulary of the propositions—namely, the basic meaning of grace and mercy. Against K. W. Neubauer, Walther Zimmerli argues that God's graciousness is always a free gift rather than a kind of social obligation between lord and servant.<sup>23</sup> H. J. Stoebe confirms this view of God's freedom in being gracious by pointing out that while grace is often a response to man's plight and plea (cf. Pss 4:2; 6:3; 9:14; 27:7; 30:11; 41:5; etc.) nevertheless (as the "perhaps" of Amos 5:15 and 2 Sam 12:22 shows) God remains sovereignly free in his decision to bestow grace or not.<sup>24</sup>

Given the nature of Hebrew parallelism and the stereotyped character of the pair "be gracious (*hnn*) and show mercy (*rh̄m*)" (Exod 34:6; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Pss 85:15; 102:8; 110:4; 145:8; 2 Chr 30:9; 2 Kgs 13:23; Isa 27:11; 30:18, etc.), we should not demand a major distinction in meaning between the two halves of Exod 33:19cd.

Nevertheless by way of confirmation one could note the following use of *rh̄m*. In Isa 54:8, 10 and Lam 3:32 "the proclivity of God to show *h̄esed* ('loving kindness') is apparently the precondition of his actual bestowal of mercy (*rh̄m*)."<sup>25</sup> Now this might seem to diminish the freedom of God in the bestowal of his mercy since the concept of *h̄esed* is often construed to grow out of the covenant between God and Israel and thus express mutual obligations of both partners. For example, Bultmann says, "In the OT *h̄esed* denotes an attitude of man or God which arises out of a mutual relationship. . . . The reciprocity of the *h̄esed* obligation is the content of the covenant (I Sam. 20:8)."<sup>26</sup> But in his recent article H. J. Stoebe argues from Deut 7:7-9 as follows: "The observation that *h̄esed* is behavior that results from the covenant is formally correct, but too narrow. Precisely in the older parts of Deuteronomy *b̄rīt* is subordinated to God's oath to the fathers and is thus anchored in a *free decision* of Yahweh and has a promissory character. Even here in Deut. 7:8 the love of God is given precedence and in general 'hb' love' has become equivalent to *h̄esed*."<sup>27</sup> Therefore God's *h̄esed* (and the mercy

<sup>22</sup>Childs, *Exodus*, 596.

<sup>23</sup>TDNT 9, 378. Neubauer's view is found in *Der Stamm ch-n-n im Sprachgebrauch des Alten Testaments* (Diss. Berlin Kirchliche Hochschule, 1964) 55, 145.

<sup>24</sup>E. Jenni, ed., *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (hereafter *THAT*; München: Chr. Kaiser, 1971) 1, 595.

<sup>25</sup>*THAT*, 2, 766.

<sup>26</sup>TDNT, 2, 479. Similarly see N. Glueck, *Das Wort h̄esed im alttestamentlichen Sprachgebrauche* (BZAW 47, 1927) 38.

<sup>27</sup>*THAT*, 1, 615 (italics mine).

that flows from it), understood in its most fundamental sense, precedes and grounds the covenant rather than vice versa.<sup>28</sup> It is that which moved God in his sovereign freedom to graciously initiate a relationship with Israel. If this *hesed* is the only precondition of God's "bestowing mercy" (*ḥm*) then it too, along with the bestowal of grace (*ḥnn*), is owing solely to the sovereignty of God.

Therefore both the grammar (*idem per idem*) and the vocabulary (grace and mercy) of Exod 33:19cd cohere to stress that in dispensing mercy and grace God is dependent on nothing but his own free and sovereign choice.<sup>29</sup>

## VI. THE GLORY, GOODNESS AND NAME OF YAHWEH IN RELATION TO EXODUS 33:19CD

We turn now to the relationship between Exod 33:19cd and the preceding clauses of vv 18 and 19: "And [Moses] said, 'Cause me to see your glory.' And [Yahweh] said, 'I will cause to pass before your face all my goodness, and I will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful.'" The commentators are divided on how to construe the relationship between the revelation of God's name (v 19b) and the declaration that he will be gracious to whom he will be gracious (v 19c). Keil and Delitzsch represent one group when they assert, "The words . . . *w<sup>e</sup>ḥannōti* [19cd], although only connected with the previous clause by the copulative *waw* are to be understood in a causative sense, as expressing the reason why Moses' request was granted, viz. that it was an act of unconditional grace and compassion on the part of God, to which no man, not even Moses, could lay any just claim."<sup>30</sup> Brevard Childs and George Bush argue persuasively against this interpretation, replacing it with the view that v 19cd does not ground the revelation of God's name to Moses but rather interprets the essence of the name. There are basically two arguments. First, Childs points out the parallel between the *idem per idem* formula here and the same formula in 3:14 where it interprets the name of Yahweh.<sup>31</sup> Second, and this seems to me decisive, Bush points out that the very same pair of words ("be gracious" and "show mercy") used in v 19cd is used in 34:6 as an explication of the name of Yahweh: "And Yahweh passed before his face and proclaimed: 'Yahweh, Yahweh, a God *merciful and gracious*. . .'" Bush is therefore correct in concluding that "the meaning [of 33:19b-d] is: 'I will proclaim myself in passing by thee as the Lord whose prerogative it is to be gracious to whom I will be gracious and to have mercy upon whom I will have mercy. This shall be the substance of what I will proclaim respecting the import of that great and fearful name.'" The clause [v. 19cd] thus un-

<sup>28</sup>D. P. Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible* (Pasadena: unpublished syllabus, rev. 1973) xi3A.

<sup>29</sup>In view of this interpretation I find Driver's comment on Exod 33:19 unintelligible: "In virtue of the graciousness implicit in his name (34:6f), He will show grace and mercy to such as deserve it[!]" (*Exodus*, 362; italics mine). Similarly G. Beer, *Exodus* (HAT 3; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1939) 159: "Was hier von Mose, gilt allgemein vom *genealen* Menschen" (italics mine).

<sup>30</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 2. 237. So also M. Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 258, and Beer, *Exodus*, 159.

<sup>31</sup>Childs, *Exodus*, 596, 63.

derstood is therefore a mere brief compend of the more expanded declaration in ch. 34:6, 7.”<sup>32</sup>

The parallels between the promise of theophany in 33:19 ff. and its fulfillment in 34:5-7 can be taken a step farther.<sup>33</sup> Not only does the pair “grace” and “mercy” define Yahweh’s name in 33:19 and 34:6, but even the indefiniteness of the *idem per idem* formula of 33:19 is preserved in the peculiar content of the formulation<sup>34</sup> of God’s character in 34:6-7. Its peculiarity and indefiniteness is seen when we contrast it with its close parallel in 20:5-6.

20:5-6

I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of *those who hate me*, but showing steadfast love to thousands, *to those who love me and keep my commandments*.

34:6-7

Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love to thousands, forgiving iniquity and rebellion and sin, but he shall not leave completely unpunished,<sup>35</sup> visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons and upon the sons’ sons, upon the third and upon the fourth generation.

The two basic differences between these two versions are ones that link 34:6-7 very closely to 33:19cd. First, the order: Unlike 20:5-6, in 34:6-7 the declaration of grace *precedes* that of judgment and expands it sixfold, thus putting the stress on grace. This recalls 33:19cd where *only* grace and mercy are mentioned (it does not say “I will visit iniquity upon whom I will visit iniquity”). Second, 34:6-7 omits all reference to the character of those who are shown mercy and those who are punished.<sup>36</sup> Exod 20:4-5 specifies these as “those who love me” and “those who

<sup>32</sup>Bush, *Notes*, 239. Also defending the view that sees 33:19cd as an explanation of the name of Yahweh are Dillmann, *Exodus*, 385, and Stoebe, *THAT*, 1. 595.

<sup>33</sup>Concerning 34:6-7 Childs (*Exodus*, 612) says, “In the present context the actual theophany is portrayed as a fulfillment of Moses’ request in the previous chapter to see God’s glory (33:17ff). The repetition of the key words ‘pass by’ and ‘proclaim the name’ establishes the author’s intention.”

<sup>34</sup>For the frequent stereotyped usage of the name formula see Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 112:4; 116:5; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:3; 2 Chr 30:9.

<sup>35</sup>The translation of the phrase *w<sup>e</sup>naqqeh lo’ y<sup>e</sup>naqqeh* (literally “clearing he shall not clear”) is disputed. The usual translation is “but he will by no means clear the guilty” (RSV). The ambiguity lies in the grammatical construction itself. Concerning this GKC 113n says, “The infinitive absolute [is] used *before* the verb to *strengthen* the verbal idea, i.e. to emphasize in this way either the certainty . . . or the . . . completeness of an occurrence.” The usual translation of our phrase here construes it to negate the *uncertainty* of retribution. My translation construes it to negate the *completeness* of absolution. GKC cites Judg 1:28 (“they did not utterly drive them out”) and Amos 9:8 (“I will not utterly destroy”), which illustrate the negated completeness idea. Dillmann (*Exodus*, 387) translates the phrase in Exod 34:7 “aber ganz unbestraft nicht lassend.” Bush (*Notes*, 247) develops a long and, to my mind, persuasive argument for my translation using the close analogies in Jer 30:11; 49:12; 25:29; Isa 30:19. He illustrates his view as follows: “Though prone to pardon, yet it was to be known that Yahweh could and would punish, whenever his wisdom saw that the occasion required, even in those cases where, on the whole, his mercy was predominant. Thus in the case of David, while his great sin was forgiven . . . , yet in ‘clearing he was not wholly cleared.’ A series of chastisements and afflictions followed him to his dying day, that he might learn how bitter and evil a thing it was to turn away from God as he had rashly done.”

<sup>36</sup>In the usual English translation, “he will by no means clear *the guilty*” obscures the indefiniteness of the Hebrew construction, which has no counterpart to “guilty.” The LXX also does this.

hate me," but 34:6-7 remains indefinite (compare Ps 99:8). This indefiniteness corresponds perfectly to the indefiniteness of the *idem per idem* formula of 33:19cd. These parallels thus provide further confirmation of Bush's comment that 33:19cd "is a mere brief compend of the more expanded declaration in ch. 34:6, 7" (see above). Accordingly there is good ground for construing 33:19cd as an explication of the name of Yahweh (v 19b)—that is, of "his self, his real person."<sup>37</sup>

Continuing our effort to understand the relationships between the propositions in 33:18, 19 we now pose the question how the name of Yahweh (v 19b), which has been defined as his sovereign freedom in dispensing grace (33:19cd; 34:6-7), relates to the "goodness" of Yahweh in v 19a and the "glory" of Yahweh that Moses asked to see (v 18) and that Yahweh promises will pass by (v 22a). The texts we must keep before us are the following:

33:18-19

And [Moses] said, "Cause me, please, to see your glory." And [Yahweh] said, "I will cause to pass before your face all my goodness, and I will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful."

34:5-6

And Yahweh descended in a cloud and stood with him there and he<sup>38</sup> proclaimed the name of Yahweh. And Yahweh passed before his face and proclaimed: "Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love unto thousands, forgiving iniquity, rebellion and sin. . . ."

At least two facts suggest that the "goodness" of Yahweh in 33:19a is a moral rather than an aesthetic<sup>39</sup> ("goodliness") term and that as such it is virtually tantamount to Yahweh's name in this context. First, the immediate sequence between "I will show my goodness" and "I will proclaim my name" leads us to think that God's "goodness" is part of this "proclamation" and thus not a visible

<sup>37</sup>On the relation between the name and the self in the OT see B. W. Anderson, "God, Names of," *IDB*, 2. 407-417. "It could be said soberly of anyone that his name is his very self" (p. 408). Cf. Exod 34:14. See also *TDNT*, 5. 257: "The name stands for the person." Cf. Pss 7:17; 9:10; 18:49; Isa 25:1; 26:8; 56:6; Mal 3:16; etc. *THAT*, 2. 956: "Der Name Yahweh als Wechsel Begriff für Yahweh" (sec. 4d).

<sup>38</sup>If v 5 is viewed in isolation it is not clear whether this "he" is Moses or Yahweh. But in view of the same Hebrew phrase in 33:19b I agree with Childs (*Exodus*, 611) that "v. 5 now receives its clearest interpretation from what follows in v. 6. Clearly God is the one who pronounces the divine name." In agreement with this: *TDNT*, 5. 260; *THAT*, 2. 950. Dillmann (*Exodus*, 387) thinks Moses is the subject in 34:5.

<sup>39</sup>Bush (*Notes*, 237-238), Driver (*Exodus*, 362), Dillmann (*Exodus*, 385) and others construe *tûbî* as "beauty" or "goodliness," as for example in Gen 39:6; Exod 2:2; etc. They argue that (1) a moral attribute could not be said to "pass by" (33:19a); (2) the LXX renders *tûbî* with *doxê* and thus shows it was considered to be a visible display of beauty; (3) Moses' request was to see God's glory and so since the request was for the visible, we may expect the answer to grant the visible. This first objection is probably overly literal. The hipil of 'br (v 19a) is often used of nonsensible objects (sin, 2 Sam 12:13; time, Jer 46:17; mischief, Est 8:3; reproach, Ps 119:39). All the sentence needs to mean is: "I will cause you to perceive in a direct way how good I am." With regard to the relationship between "glory" and "goodness" see below. Childs (*Exodus*, 596), Hall (*Exodus*, 217) and Hyatt (*Exodus*, 317) construe *tûbî* as moral rather than aesthetic.

manifestation. Second, one of the closest parallels between the promise of 33:19 and the fulfillment of 34:6 is 33:19ab = 34:6ab:

33:19ab	34:6ab
<p>"I will cause to <i>pass before</i> your <i>face</i> all my goodness ————— and I will <i>proclaim</i> the name of <i>Yahweh</i>. . . ."</p>	<p>Yahweh <i>passed before</i> his <i>face</i>  and <i>proclaimed</i> <i>Yahweh, Yahweh</i>. . . .</p>

In this parallel Yahweh himself has taken the place of the promised goodness, but nothing is said here of a visible appearance of Yahweh.<sup>40</sup> Instead he "passes by" in the sense that his character or essential nature is made known to Moses in a personal encounter (v 5) and in the proclamation of his name. Herein, then, consists the "passing by" of God's goodness—namely, in the revelation of his person or his name in terms of mercy, grace, steadfast love and forgiveness (v 6). This is confirmed by numerous texts where God's "goodness" consists in his steadfast love and mercy: Ps 86:5; 145:9; Isa 63:7, and many others.

How then, we may ask next, does the name of God, revealed in the "passing by" of his goodness and the revelation of his free grace, relate to his glory, which Moses asked to see in 33:18? I argued earlier that Moses' request in 33:18 was prompted by the amazing willingness of God, expressed in 33:17, to take a stiff-necked, idolatrous people and distinguish them as those on whom his favor rests (33:16). Therefore while Moses' plea to see God's glory probably included a hope for some visible manifestation (cf. 33:20-23),<sup>41</sup> nevertheless what was clearly at the heart of Moses' request was a longing to know the glory of God's character from which flowed the mercy that he had just been promised. As the succeeding verses show it is precisely this moral aspect of God's glory that is revealed to Moses (33:19; 34:6, 7), while the visible aspect is minimized (33:20-23). Therefore when we consider carefully the larger context of 33:12-34:9 we are inclined to construe the manifestation of God's glory as embracing the "passing by" of his goodness and the proclamation of his name.

A broad lexical study of the name (*šēm*) and glory (*kābôd*) of God in the OT

<sup>40</sup>Exod 33:20-23, which begins (v 20a) and ends (v 23c) with God's refusal to show Moses his "face" and which speaks of God covering Moses with his hand in the cleft of the rock as his glory passes by (v 22), is almost wholly neglected in the fulfillment scene of 34:5-7. The emphasis shifts completely from a dazzling vision of God's "back" to revelatory encounter through God's personal word. Childs (*Exodus*, 595) probably rightly suggests that another tradition is being used in 33:20-23. The function of it in the present context, judging from the repeated "you shall not see my face," is to stress that while God is granting a profound revelation of himself to Moses yet there remains an intensity of glory that would consume a man if he saw its fullness. Thus the passage functions as a warning against presumption.

<sup>41</sup>Bush's comment here is typically well-balanced and worth citing at length (*Notes*, 238): "The most gorgeous and dazzling exhibition of a merely *sensible glory* would leave the mind unsatisfied, except so far as it could be regarded as a kind of outward reflection of mental and moral attributes of corresponding character. . . . A glorious though partial disclosure should indeed be made to his sight; but he should withal be enabled by means of a supernatural illumination to pierce beyond the sensuous imagery and comprehend its interior meaning. He should have a mental perception of those divine perfections which were so illustriously displayed in connection with the sublime spectacle of the Shekinah. . . ."

supports this conclusion. Jonathan Edwards in his *Dissertation concerning the End for which God Created the World* (first published in 1765) demonstrated clearly that “God’s name and his glory, at least very often, signify the same thing in Scripture.”<sup>42</sup> A. S. van der Woude comes to the same conclusion.<sup>43</sup>

## VII. CONCLUSION

Exod 33:19cd (“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion”), as a brief, preliminary declaration of the verbal theophany that follows in 34:6-7, constitutes a manifestation of God’s glory (33:18), a “passing by” of his goodness (33:19a) and a proclamation of his name (33:19b). These three realities overlap in the present context so that we can say that God’s glory and his name consist fundamentally in his propensity to show mercy and his sovereign freedom in its distribution.<sup>44</sup> Or, to put it more precisely, it is the glory of God and his essential nature mainly to dispense mercy (but also wrath, 34:7) on whomever he pleases apart from any constraint originating outside his own will. This is the essence of what it means to be God. This is his name.

Now, briefly, in what direction does our OT exegesis point in answering the questions raised by Rom 9:14-15? What we have in Exod 33:19cd (in response to question one) is not merely a description of how God acted in any particular instance (toward Moses in granting him a theophany, or toward Israel in renewing the covenant); neither (in response to question two) is it a principle the relevance of which is limited to certain kinds of divine activity.<sup>45</sup> Rather, Exod 33:19cd is a solemn declaration of *the nature of God* and thus underlies *all* his decrees and acts.

<sup>42</sup>*The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974) 1. 118 (cf. sections IV and VI). See next footnote for his arguments.

<sup>43</sup>THAT, 2. 958. In a section entitled “Der Name Jahwehs als Inbegriff der Herrlichkeit Jahewhs” (cf. 950) he says, “Weil sich mit Jahwehs Namen Ruhm (≠ *hillā*) verbindet (Ps. 48:11), kann *sēm Jhwh* als Synonym seiner ‘Ehre’ (*kābōd*, Jes. 59, 19; Ps. 102,16; vgl. Ps. 72, 19; Neh. 9, 5) . . . eintreten.” We may summarize the arguments for identifying the name and glory of God as follows: (1) They are interchangeable in synonymous parallels (Pss 8:1; 102:15; 148:13; Isa 148:9, 11; 59:19); (2) Israel is said to exist for God’s glory (Isa 43:7; 46:13) and name (Jer 13:11); (3) the terms occur in construct with each other: “the glory of his name” (Pss 79:9; 29:2; 66:2; 96:8) and “the name of his glory” (Ps 72:19; Neh 9:5); (4) when men are called to “give God the glory due his name” (Ps 29:2) the only reason is that there is a glory in the name worthy of such glorification.

<sup>44</sup>Compare the *Midrash Tanhuma* (Wien, 1863) 3<sup>b</sup> cited in Str-B, 4/1. 489: “As Moses stood and spoke to God: ‘Let me see your glory’ (Ex. 33:18), what he said was, ‘Lord of the world, let me know by what guideline you rule your world’; as it says, ‘Let me know your ways’ (Ex. 33:13). God answered him, ‘Yes, I will show you; I will let all my goodness pass by before you, etc.’ (Ex. 33:19). God said to him: ‘I am not obligated to any man; whatever a man might do by way of fulfilling the commands, I still recompense him out of grace; not that I owe men anything, but rather I reward him out of grace’; as it says, ‘I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful’ (Ex. 33:19).” See also *Deut. Rab.* 2 (197<sup>b</sup>), *ibid*.

<sup>45</sup>Forster and Marston, *Strategy*, 64-67, argue that what God says here and what Paul says in Rom 9:15 has only to do with God’s strategy on the plane of history and has no application to anyone’s eternal destiny. This cannot be inferred from the text in Exodus, especially since the sovereign freedom of God entails the forgiveness of sins and punishment (34:6-7), both of which affect one’s eternal destiny in so far as the OT writers conceived of an eternal destiny.

The third question raised was whether Rom 9:15 (= Exod 33:19cd) is really an argument (*gar*, v 15) for the righteousness of God asserted in v 14. Our exegesis does not provide a certain answer. But it does point us to the next task of our investigation, for if it can be shown that the righteousness of God in the OT and in Paul consists basically in God's acting for his own name's sake or out of faithfulness to his divine glory, then Exod 33:19cd, which defines that name and glory as the freedom of God in dispensing mercy, will prove to be a very cogent support for the righteousness of God in electing Jacob over Esau before they were born.