

***TAKING READER-RESPONSE TO ITS
LOGICAL CONCLUSION: READING
ROMANS WITH ORDINARY READERS
IN PIETERMARITZBURG.***

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PREFACE

DECLARATION:

I declare that this thesis is my own work, and is offered here for the first time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Centre for Science Development towards the completion of this thesis.

My thanks also go to Jonathan Draper for his role as the supervisor of this thesis.

My greatest debt of gratitude is owed to the ordinary readers who participated in this study. Without their willing co-operation this work would have been impossible.

DEDICATION:

This thesis is dedicated to Fiona, with my love and my thanks for her invaluable critical commentary on all levels of my work.

ABSTRACT

This study uses reader-response methodology in order to argue:

- 1) that it is possible through a right understanding and application of this methodology to use it to discover how ordinary readers interpret the Epistle to the Romans and to present a reading of the text by two groups of ordinary readers in Pietermaritzburg.
- 2) that it is possible to collect the data necessary for the presentation of the interpretation of Romans by ordinary readers using the techniques that have been developed in ethnographic research.
- 3) that the interpretation of the letter by ordinary readers shows that they read the text of Romans with a mixture of acceptance and resistance to the rhetoric of the text.
- 4) that a discussion of the debate on the authorial intention in Romans can be used to posit the reactions of the original readers/hearers of the letter and that this reaction can then be compared with that of the readers in Pietermaritzburg.

To reach the conclusion that in the case of Romans, and by extension in any other text, it is the ordinary readers of the text who, by accepting or rejecting it, determine the success or failure of the author in communicating her intention through the text .

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

THE ORDINARY READER AND THE LITTLE TRADITION

- 1.1 The purpose of this introduction, and the motivation for this study, is to bring to centre stage, a marginalised reader of the Bible. In the everyday reality of the church, most people who read the Bible could be described by the term ordinary readers. However, the vast majority of biblical scholars, even those who are ostensibly engaged in reader-response or influenced by reader theory have ignored the ordinary reader in the pew. The reason may be, as West (1991:90) points out, that the definition of who ordinary readers are, is somewhat complicated by the difficulties of pinpointing the exact personal and cultural characteristics of the average ordinary reader. I believe that it is rather because of their situation in the structures of society. Ordinary readers do not have a particular lobby when it comes to making themselves heard in the hubbub of modern theological debate. Yet, in recent years there has been a small but growing concern to discover how the ordinary reader interprets key passages in the Bible. West, who is concerned with the readings of poor and marginalized communities, has been a pioneer in this field of study. When working with marginalised communities, the term reader is often used metaphorically to include many people who are illiterate, "but who listen to, discuss and retell the Bible." (West 1991:89). I will not be dealing with such metaphorical readers in this study but with literate, trained, professional people reading the text. I have rather chosen people who, more or less, reflect my own white, prosperous, middle class situation. So for the purposes of this study I wish to define ordinary readers as those who read the Bible pre-critically (West 1991:89) and whose readings have been largely silenced by the privileged position of academic readers and commentators. I cannot, within the scope and resources of this type of study, hope to liberate the readings of marginalised and illiterate people from the neglect they have suffered at the hands of official biblical studies. But with this modest study I can hope to bring the readings of some of my social and cultural peers to the attention of the readers who have power.
- 1.2 It is probable that having reached this point in my argument, the reader will be wondering whether I am about to give a justification for doing reader-response from the unorthodox position of the ordinary reader. I will explain my interest in the ordinary reader with a short diversion into a social

scientific model. I have recently had the good fortune to discover the work of James Scott. His model explains that it is the nature of religious and ideological beliefs to be shadowed by a little or unofficial tradition which lives alongside and shares some characteristics with the great or official tradition. This is how he explains them:

The terms "little tradition" and "great tradition" were coined by Robert Redfield in his essay "Peasant Society and Culture." They are intended to distinguish the beliefs and practices of the folk strata of an agrarian civilization from that of its elite. More or less in keeping with Redfield's concepts we may define the little tradition as "the distinctive patterns of belief and behaviour which are valued by the peasantry of an agrarian society"; the great tradition is the corresponding patterns among society's elite (Scott 1977:7).

At first glance this model may not seem to have much to offer to a study that is essentially involved with an aspect of post-modern literary theory. Even more so if the reader considers the way I have only just defined my own study in relation to the better known studies of West (1991). At least West is dealing with people who are close to their agrarian roots, migrant workers and squatters at the margins of urban society. I on the other hand am dealing with people who are from the urban elite who would, in most cases, be thought of as representative of the great tradition. Yet, I am encouraged by the way Scott has already begun to stretch the boundaries of this model, by extending his "concerns more directly to issues of economic organisation, statecraft and political authority" (Scott 1977:8). Also, by the way his examples include not only traditional beliefs or religions but also imported ideologies such as communism in South East Asia (cf. Scott 1977:2-4). It is only a short step from Scott's extension of the model to the one I propose, which posits that there may be, analogously, little and great traditions in theology and literary theory. The great or orthodox traditions of theology and literary theory have their origin in the world of the academy and are in dialogue with the scientific world view. The little traditions of these academic disciplines are their popular or folk incarnations in the minds of the people as they sit in the pews each Sunday or as they consume interactive popular entertainments, which play with the idea of the reader making up the story as she goes along. If this analogy is acceptable, then I can state that my purpose, in this study with ordinary readers, is to discover the little tradition of theology which is generally neglected or denigrated by the great tradition.

- 1.3 My purpose will be achieved in three separate parts.
- 1.3.1 In Part One of this study I will concentrate on the methodology of reader response. I will make a thorough review of the development of reader-response theory since the 1950's using mainly the work of Jane Tompkins' celebrated collection of essays on the subject (Tompkins 1991a). Following that I will also use her critique of the shortcomings of reader response theory and practice (Tompkins 1991b). Then my attention will turn to the way reader response has been used by biblical scholars (Thistleton 1992) and to some very pertinent criticism of these studies (Berg 1989, Moore 1989, Porter 1990). To draw together the threads of Part One I will review an essay by Mark Brett (1995) which offers some hope for the future of reader-response theory. This leads me on to my own conclusion that the best way to do reader-response is to read with ordinary readers and record their interpretation of the text.
- 1.3.2 The second part of my study is a report of my attempt to put this conclusion into practice with two groups of ordinary readers in Pietermaritzburg, with whom I read Paul's letter to the Romans. I begin Part Three, by reporting on the methods I used to collect the data which forms the centre of this report. I have used ethnographic research methods to collect my data. This involved triangulating my sources of information; by asking each member of the two groups to fill in a questionnaire (Appendix 2), by interviewing each of them in turn (Appendix 4) and by taking detailed field notes on the formal (Appendix 3) and informal (Appendix 1) aspects of the meetings with the groups over eight weeks in June and July of 1995. This is followed by a "thick" description (c.f. Geertz 1973) of the reading culture of each group. I describe the people in each group, the typical conversation in the informal parts of the meetings, the typical methods of biblical interpretation in each group and end with a summary of some of the important patterns that emerged from our reading of Romans. My presentation of data is in two parts, first a summary of the responses of the ordinary readers to the questionnaire and then a summary of their responses to the text of Romans. Alongside this second summary I present some of my own reading of the letter and some of my preliminary analysis of the patterns emerging from their reading of each passage. To end Part Two I present the conclusion that ordinary readers read the text of Romans with a mixture of acceptance and resistance to the rhetoric of Paul's message.
- 1.3.3 Part Three of this study takes seriously the contention of the most radical branch of reader-response, that all concerns about texts are reader concerns. This is done towards the end of discovering the intention of Paul in writing Romans, so as to posit some of the reasons why ordinary readers, at the time of Paul and in the present, react to Paul's message with a mixture of

resistance and acceptance. Over a series of five chapters I explore Paul's authorial purpose in writing the letter. This includes a review of The Romans Debate edited by K.P. Donfried (1991), a monograph by James Walters on ethnic conflict in Rome (Walters 1993), a study of Paul's symbolic universe by Jerome Neyrey (1990), a review of Paul's attitude to the Jews in Romans (Räsänen 1988, Sanders 1983a, Sanders 1983b, Snodgrass 1986) and ending with a model of religious rationalization by Clifford Geertz (1973). The conclusion that I reach is that Paul is responding to ethnic tension in Rome by sending this letter to rationalize the chaos of this community into the kind of ordered group, who could support his mission to Spain. From there I examine the kind of rhetorical forms and devices that Paul uses to try and put this message across. However, with my final model, that of ritual empowerment (Bell 1992), I conclude that this rhetoric was only partly successful, by showing that ordinary readers at the time of Paul would have had good reason to react to this letter with a mixture of acceptance and rejection.

B.

PART ONE:

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE READER KIND.

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 This initial part of my study is designed to introduce the reader to some of the incarnations which she has experienced in the minds of literary theorists. To do this, I will begin with the work of Jane Tompkins who, as editor of a leading collection of essays on reader response, has given an admirable survey and criticism of this literary critical tool (c.f. Tompkins 1991a, 1991b). I will follow this with a further survey of the uses of reader-response, this time from A.C. Thiselton (1992) in his comprehensive introduction to field of biblical hermeneutics. To balance Tompkins' secular critique, I will also include three critiques of the direction in which biblical reader response is heading from Temma Berg (1989), Stanley Porter (1990) and Stephen Moore (1989). To bring this part of my study to a conclusion, I will attempt to draw some conclusions about how reader-response can be used to accomplish the stated aim of this study, which is to read Paul's letter to the Romans with ordinary readers.

2. An outline and analysis of secular reader-response:

A time line of reader theory

2.1 This first chapter is a review of the history of reader-response theory based on the introduction to Jane Tompkins'(1991) collection of essays on the subject. The object is to lay the foundation for the whole first part of my study by setting out a time line of the development of reader-response as a literary critical tool. Once this has been done, I will take the opportunity to present a varied array of critiques of reader-response before coming to a decision on how I will use this method of literary analysis.

2.2 Jane Tompkins begins the introductory review of her collection of essays on the subject of reader-response, with the following statement:

Reader-response criticism is not a conceptually unified critical position, but a term that has come to be associated with the work of critics who use the word reader, the reading process and response to mark out an area for investigation (Tompkins 1991:ix).

Such a statement seems to suggest that there is no unifying factor between the different areas of the reader-response spectrum. But she continues with the assertion that their agreement seems to come from their rejection of a Formalist position, which locates meaning with the text, and their putting forward a new position, which locates meaning with the reader. There is still the problem presented by the questions: Who or what is the reader? and: How do we know what he or she is thinking? Many have tried to answer these questions, from one angle or another, so Tompkins attempts to put the development of reader theory into some sort of chronological perspective. She begins with the first tentative steps into reader theory and follows this up with those scholars who have tried, and to an extent succeeded, to put some sort of reader at the centre of the debate about the meaning of texts.

2.3 Tompkins locates the origins of reader-response with thinkers in the 1920's and 30's, I.A. Richards, D.W. Harding and Louise Rosenblatt. But she begins her anthology with the idea of the mock reader put forward by Walker Gibson in the 1950's because this essay "shows how reader-response criticism began to evolve within the confines of the Formalist position (Tompkins 1991:x)." Her anthology, and therefore her introductory review, continues with an essay by Gerald Prince which

explores a figure which he calls the narratee but which is recognisable as the reader. In fact he posits at least three readers to whom a text may be addressed:

The real reader (the person who holds the book in hand), the virtual reader (the kind of reader the author thinks he is writing for, whom he endows with certain qualities, capacities and tastes), and the ideal reader (one who understands the text perfectly and approves its every nuance). (Tompkins 1991:xii).

Tompkins ends the first part of her review with Michael Riffaterre, who turns his attention to "the way poetic meaning is reflected in the reader's moment-by-moment reactions to its unfolding..." (Tompkins 1991:xiii), and Georges Poulet for whom "the reader gains his experience by forgetting, foregoing himself: dying, so to speak, in order that the text may live" (Tompkins 1991: xiv).

2.4 Each of these tentative initial moves in the direction of the reader have not given up the idea that the text is an objective whole.

2.4.1 For Gibson and Prince, reading with mock readers and narratees,

is ultimately a way of refocussing on the text, it does not endow the reader with any powers he did not already have, but leaves him in the same position he had occupied in Formalist criticism -- that of a flawed but reverential seeker after the truths... preserved in literary art (Tompkins 1991: xiii).

Similarly Riffaterre collects the responses of his readers, not as a method of empowering them, but with the view of using such responses as a way closely analysing the style of a text. He, in fact, goes out of his way to disempower the reader, seeing her response as "evidence of the presence of poetic meaning at a given point in the text but ... not constitutive of it" (Tompkins 1991: xiii). However it was these pioneers who provided the impetus for the more radical reader critics who followed, most notably, Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish.

2.4.2 Iser is the first critic for whom the reader becomes an active participant in the creation of meaning.

"By reading" says Iser, "we uncover the unformulated part" of a literary work and what we uncover "represents its [the text's] 'intention.'" The text's intentions may be manifold, they may even be infinite, but they are

always present embryonically in the work itself, implied by it, circumscribed by it, and finally traceable to it. (Tompkins 1991: xv).

This is a significant step towards the reader, but it is not yet a step away from the text, as the repository of meaning. This step was left to Stanley Fish. Where earlier critics had focused on the reader, in order to move her into the position where she would become valuable for the understanding of the meaning of the text. To a position where, the reader is established by the idea that literature is what happens when she reads. Fish is the critic who formulated a definition, of what it might mean to take this idea to a logical conclusion:

The notion that readers actively participate in the creation of meaning entails... a redefinition of meaning and of literature itself. Meaning... is not some thing one extracts from a poem, like a nut from its shell, but an experience one has in the course of reading. Literature, as a consequence, is not regarded as a fixed object of attention but as a sequence of events that unfold within the readers' mind. (Tompkins 1991: xvi).

This represents a decisive shift in favour of the reader, displacing the text from the centre of critical inquiry. With the reader having gained a firm theoretical position, Tompkins continues her introductory chapter with the debate around the practical implications of such a powerful reader. The new question in literary hermeneutics now becomes: How do readers make meaning?

2.5 The first answer Tompkins reviews comes from Jonathan Culler, who is influenced by the linguistic philosophy of French Structuralists like Saussure and Derrida.

2.5.1 These thinkers believe that all language is made up of a random complex of signs and symbols which stand in place of material objects. Culler uses these ideas to express the way readers make meaning, which is by applying a system of conventions to literature as they read:

To read a text as literature is not to make ones mind a tabula rasa and approach without preconceptions:...the semiological approach suggests, rather that the poem be thought of as an utterance that has meaning only with respect to a system of conventions which the reader has assimilated. If other conventions were operative its range of potential meanings would be different. (Culler in Tompkins 1991: xvii).

In some ways such an approach is not really focused on the reader but on the institutions which would teach an ideal reader how to read. Others who have tried to answer the questions of how readers make meaning have rather paid attention to the self awareness and personal identity of the reader.

- 2.5.2 Norman Holland suggests that each person has a particular way of making sense of their lives, which they simply transfer to the interpretation of texts:

The reader will filter a text through his characteristic patterns of defense, project onto it characteristic fantasies, translate the experience into a socially acceptable form, and thus produce what we would call an interpretation. (Tompkins 1991: xix).

Holland backtracks a little along the continuum between the text as meaning and the reader as maker of meaning. His picture of reading implies "that textual data exist prior to and independent of the reader's interpretive activity and that the reader absorbs them somehow and makes them over in his own image" (Tompkins 1991: xix). He does this because he bases his argument on the psychoanalytic theories of the ego breaking through to the other. In this scenario the text must have a separate identity in order for the reader to share and create her identity with it.

- 2.5.3 In contrast to Holland, David Bleich denies the autonomy of textual meaning but he still wants to make a case for individual identity in interpretation:

The text is an object only insofar as it has a physical existence: its meaning depends entirely on the process of symbolization which takes place in the mind of the reader. This initial symbolization is what Bleich call "response." The effort to understand that response, to give it coherence or point, is a process of resymbolization that he calls "interpretation." (Tompkins 1991: xx).

Thus, response, is the "subjective" reaction of the free individual to literature, while interpretation, by which that response is turned into a form of knowledge, is "a process that is determined by the community of interpreters to which the reader belongs" (Tompkins 1991: xx).

- 2.6 The phrase "community of interpreters" is used by most of the reader critics who are interested in how the reader makes knowledge.

- 2.6.1 It may be explained as a:

shorthand for the notion that since all sign systems are social constructs that individuals assimilate more or less automatically (or more accurately, that pervade and constitute individual consciousness), an individuals perceptions and judgements are a function of the assumptions shared by the group he belongs to.(Tompkins 1991: xxi).

While Bleich sees the community of interpreters in a process of negotiation of meaning with the traditional sources of authority, in order to grant power to the individual who seeks after truth. Fish is ultimately interested in collapsing the distinction between the individual, her interpretive community and the text which they encounter, in order to grant power to the interpretive community. Fish's agenda raises several questions: How does one interpret a text if it has no substance apart from the self? How is the interpretive community to be recognised if it has no separate existence? And perhaps most importantly: How can we study the effect of literature on a reader when she is totally subsumed by the text and the other interpreters of the same text?

2.6.2 The first question is easily answered:

The text does not disappear in the sense that we no longer perceive it: poems still have line endings and patterns of alliteration: there are still data to interpret: but these data are themselves the products of interpretation and do not have objective status (Tompkins 1991: xxiii).

This answer then merges with the answer to the second question, because the disappearance of the text as object undermines any claims of final truth or definitive interpretation. In this way the individual's interpretation of a text becomes just one possible interpretation alongside the community of all other interpreters of the same text. The real dilemma of this position is the question of what to do with the self. Tompkins sees both Culler and Fish struggling with this conundrum:

Fish's moral claims for his theory imply a self that is independent, free and responsible for its own choices, but the self that the theory posits is one constituted by its own interpretive categories which are public and shared. In that case, the self as an independent entity vanishes and, in Culler's words, " its functions are taken up by a variety of interpersonal systems that operate through it."... Thus the powerful arguments these critics launch against the objectivity of the text make the nature of the interpreter's self into a problematic issue (Tompkins 1991: xxiii).

Tompkins ends her review of the essays in her collection with the attempt by Walter Michaels to come to terms with the view of the self implied by this radical conclusion of reader criticism.

- 2.6.3 Michaels sees the root of the objection to the loss of objectivity in the American fear of a subjective and radically free self. This self would seem to have the power to impose any meanings onto any texts, thereby making a mockery of the study of literature and as a consequence plunging the world into an anarchic nihilism where there is no meaning. In fact, Michaels would argue the interpreting self is not free at all but is entirely constrained by the shared standards and understandings of the interpretive community. So it is really the discourse of the interpretive community that we are studying, when we study the response of a reader:

Relocating meaning first in the reader's self and then in the interpretive strategies that constitute it... [asserts] that meaning is a consequence of being in a particular situation in the world. The net result of this epistemological revolution is to repoliticize literature and literary criticism. When discourse is responsible for reality and not merely a reflection of it, then whose discourse prevails makes all the difference (Tompkins 1991: xxv).

In this case the obvious conclusion is that studying the responses of a group to the text is the way to go in reader-response: Hence this study.

- 2.7 Having come to the end of Tompkins' review of her collection, I conclude the question of the identity of the reader is bound with the further questions: What is she reading? and: Where is she reading it? As this first part of my study progresses, I will be attempting to answer these two questions, as they relate to the task of discovering if there is a little tradition about **Romans** among ordinary readers of the Bible. But first I will need to revisit the first question, Who is the reader? In the following chapter I will be reviewing an article by Jane Tompkins which reassess the status of the reader in the light of the classical, renaissance and eighteenth century views of audience response. When I have done this I will present a review of some of the ways in which biblical scholars have attempted to use reader response theory. To this will be added some objections to the way the Bible has been read by reader-response critics. Finally I will try to locate myself and the readers, with whom I will be reading, within the whole discourse of reader-response.

3. A critical reaction to the contradictory nature of reader-response

- 3.1 The purpose of this Chapter is to present a critical view of reader-response taken from the final article in Tompkins' anthology. In her essay she takes a look back to literary theory from its origins among the Greeks and Romans to the Romantic movement of last century. In the process she examines the kind of response which author's expected from their readers in the past and begins to question many of the assumptions that underpin, not only reader-response, but almost all modern literary criticism.
- 3.2 Tompkins begins her critique by underlining the essentially similar character of reader-response and the critical movements that preceded it:

Although New Critics and reader-oriented critics do not locate meaning in the same place, both schools assume that to specify meaning is criticism's ultimate goal. This assumption not only joins these polemically opposed movements, it binds them together in opposition to a long history of critical thought in which the specification of meaning is not a central concern (Tompkins 1991:201).

The underlying Formalism of present day reader response is underlined by its search for the meaning which, if not in texts, is found in the proximity of texts which are in dynamic interaction with a reader. But what is the goal of literary criticism if it is not the search for meaning? Tompkins explores this question by a comparison between reader oriented criticism and the older forms of rhetorical literary criticism which also show a preoccupation with audience response.

- 3.3 Tompkins begins her comparative study with the literary criticism of Greek and Roman authors.
- 3.3.1 Her first example is "a passage from Longinus's On the Sublime which deals explicitly with the way a particular locution in Herodotus affects the hearer" (Tompkins 1991:202). Having quoted the passage and made some observations on the way it affects the hearer Longinus concludes with some advice to his own reader:

You will make your hearer more excited and more attentive, and full of active participation, if you keep him alert by words addressed to himself (Tompkins 1991:202).

There is a contrast between such a statement, made by an ancient author, and the same kind of statement made by his modern counterpart. For Longinus this is the end of the matter, while for Iser or Fish it would be the prelude to interpretation. In Tompkins' view Longinus is interested in the effect of a literary text. So it is the effect which becomes the focus in the study of literature and the meaning of the text is practically ignored:

For Longinus, language is a form of power and the purpose of studying texts from the past is to acquire the skills that enable one to wield that power... the ultimate goal of studying literature is to become master of a technique (Tompkins 1991:203).

3.3.2 Alongside this technical study of literature, are the debates of Greek authors over the moral and political affects of literary production. Tompkins puts it this way:

The reader, in antiquity, is seen as a citizen of the state, the author as the shaper of civic morality, and the critic as the guardian of the public interest: literature, its producers, and consumers are all seen in relation to the needs of the polity as a whole (Tompkins 1991:204).

This view was strongly propagated by the poets themselves, but there were some philosophical detractors. From the side of the poets, Aristophanes, uses his position as comedian and satirist to "declare that tragedians must provide 'wise counsel for the making of better citizens'"(Tompkins 1991:204). On the other hand Plato regarded poets as so dangerous that he would have banished all lyric and epic poets from his ideal state. In this he is agreeing with Aristophanes that poetic language has political potential, but rather than harness it for the state he regards it as too dangerous to tolerate. He also has serious doubts about the usefulness of language that has been structured into a text:

Once frozen into letters, speech can no longer defend itself against abuse or suit its terms to the various people it wishes to address. It cannot take advantage of opportunities or forestall misprision: in short, because it lacks the power of accommodation to circumstance, it loses its power to mould circumstance in its own image (Tompkins 1991:204-5).

This view clearly illustrates the difference between the ancient and the modern views of language. For the ancients language is a force acting on the world and altering it in some perceptible way, while the modernist goal is to decipher the puzzle hidden in the signs which make up language and thereby to find out what it means.

- 3.4 The second example in Tompkins' argument is literary criticism of the Renaissance. On the surface the attitude to literature in the Renaissance is almost the same as that of the Classical period. Tompkins includes a quotation from Bernard Weinberg's History of literary criticism in the Italian Renaissance:

Poetry was by its nature an imitation or representation of reality, made to conform to that reality in order to produce the moral effects desirable both for the individual and the state. (Weinberg in Tompkins 1991:207).

Yet the similarities between the Classical and Renaissance attitudes mask an underlying difference in the audience which gave rise to Renaissance literature and criticism. Rather than the 500 member jury of the Athenian courts or the assembled citizenry at a theatrical festival, the Renaissance audience is conceived of as the narrow band of the privileged elite, gathered in council or at a private entertainment. The poet is no longer a functionary of the state but a client in need of a powerful patron or patrons. In these circumstances, Tompkins argues, we must thus regard almost all Renaissance literature as 'the literature of patronage'.

When it is the essence of the poets task to express an attitude towards real persons and events -- praising, blaming, memorializing, petitioning, thanking, -- then poems are thought of as a form of influence, a means of accomplishing specific social tasks (Tompkins 1991:208).

So literature in this period is thoroughly utilitarian. It exists not for the meaning it gives to the world, but for the effect that it will have on the people who have the influence to change the world.

- 3.5 The clearest manifestation of this poetical utilitarianism comes with Tompkins third example, English poetry of the Augustan age:

The tailoring of verse to some particular person or situation assumes its most obvious form and achieves its most spectacular results in the genre that dominates poetry in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries -- satire (Tompkins 1991:211).

She centres her argument around an amused commentary on some of the incredulity of modern critics when they are faced with Augustan satire:

Ronald Paulson points directly, if unintentionally, to the chasm that divides the Augustan conception of literature from ours. He says, in effect, that the Augustans had no poetics of satire because their discussions of the genre consider only its social function and the motives of the satirist: ... Paulson's judgement that the Augustans had no theory of the genre at which they excelled is based, of course on a particular notion of what poetry is. If the poem is thought to be an "organic system of relationships," then it is true that the eighteenth century critics have nothing to say on the matter. But if poetry is thought of as a weapon to be hurled against an opponent, as a partisan activity whose purpose is to advance individual and factional interests, then its social function and the motives of its users inevitably occupy the centre of critical discussion (Tompkins 1991:211).

She continues with a satire of her own, on the New Critics' futile attempts to give these polemical verses an historically neutral and universally significant meaning. They have she argues, destroyed "satire's very essence" (Tompkins 1991:212) which is to be in the thick of the political battles for power and influence, defending their favoured party and mercilessly sending up their rivals.

- 3.6 But it is not only the Formalist New Critics who fall into the trap of looking for universal meaning where none is intended. In each of the three cases above they have missed the point that poetry, and the critical philosophical thinking on poetry, is deeply enmeshed in very particular political contexts which must make their impact on audience response.

When poetry takes its place parallel to and in reciprocal relation with other kinds of human activity, and when the author's relation to his audience is direct and intimate, audience response so crucially determines the nature and direction of literary activity that its importance is simply assumed (Tompkins 1991:213).

- 3.6.1 Tompkins goes on to say that with the advent of Romanticism and the decline of patronage, poets were less influenced by particular audience response. Indeed the small audience of the privileged

elites had been replaced by the vast market of the urban middle classes whose response offered the poet nothing but monetary success. In such an atmosphere it becomes necessary for the poet and the critic to make the claims for the beneficial power of poetry which earlier had been presumed, but seemingly to no avail:

Just when the most grandiose claims are made for the power of poetry to transform human consciousness -- poets are the "unacknowledged legislators of the world," who "bind together the vast empire of human society" -- the poet starts to be described as lonely and ineffectual, a "nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer his own solitude with sweet sounds" (Tompkins 1991:217).

In an increasingly scientific world, poetry and literature were forced to defend themselves with claims of transcendence and detachment. They had to carve a niche for themselves above the increasingly quantifiable positivist reality, as "an image of perfection, a goal to which they can aspire." (Tompkins 1991: 221)

3.6.2 The task of criticism in such a scenario is to claim this place for poetry and literature in the academic terrain. The Formalist New Critics established themselves in opposition to positivism, claiming to interpret reality from an ontologically separate but equally rigorous, if not superior, position (Tompkins 1991:222). Reader critics have rejected this method of defence and are pursuing their own line of attack.

The difference is not one of goals but of tactics... reader critics attack the foundation of positivism itself. Instead of protecting literature from unfavourable comparison with science... reader response theory, in its most recent formulations, denies the existence of any reality prior to language and claims for poetic and scientific discourse exactly the same relation to the real -- namely, that of socially constructed versions of it (Tompkins 1991:224).

But this difference of method masks a basic similarity of approach. With no apparent awareness of the irony involved, reader critics write academic essays which reflect those of their Formalist rivals. Tompkins considers one such article, Walden's false bottoms by Walter Michaels:

The fact that Michaels's interpretation of Walden calls into question the possibility of ever arriving at a final interpretation of anything does not alter the message delivered by the traditional format of his essay, which, in time-honoured fashion, challenges previous interpretations of Walden and offers a new reading of the text (Tompkins 1991:225).

Yet, she argues "if we take seriously Michaels's own theoretical assertion, ... that perceptual categories define the world and give reality the only shape it can ever have, then a shift of critical emphasis would seem to be in order." (Tompkins 1991:225)

3.7 This shift would demand a return to the political character of language. It would entail the recognition that those who control the choice of language which is spoken and who invent the perceptual categories which define reality have the power to influence the reality of others. If this is the case reader critics, who claim to be granting power to the reader, should not be binding themselves into forms of academic discourse which reinforce the alienation of ordinary readers. In the rest of this study I would like to take seriously the idea that power can be transferred to the ordinary reader. I hope this can be achieved by allowing them to determine the language and the conceptual categories which we will use to read Romans. My aim in this project is to present more than just another interpretation of just another text. I hope to present an alternative way of looking at an important sacred text, by searching out the little tradition about this text which I believe exists among ordinary readers in the church. In the two following chapters I will be concentrating on the views of biblical reader critics. Firstly, looking at the use that has been made of reader-response in some recent biblical hermeneutical studies. Secondly, responding to the accusation that biblical reader critics are simply toying with the methods of reader response, without taking seriously the implications these methods have for their faith commitment and the kind of questions they ask about the Bible.

4. Some reactions to reader response from Biblical studies:

An assessment of the usefulness of reader-response to biblical hermeneutics.

4.1 The influence of reader-response has been felt in various ways in biblical studies. In this chapter I will be looking at several attempts to utilise this method of literary criticism, as they are reviewed by A.C. Thiselton in a chapter of his book New horizons in hermeneutics.

4.2 Thiselton's review of reader critics and their biblical disciples begins with several scholars who use the work of Wolfgang Iser.

4.2.1 First he sets out the nub of Iser's theory:

Iser pointed out that the objects of perception are not perceived by the consciousness of the human subject exhaustively, but in terms of those aspects which are presented. A measure of incompleteness is involved in all perception. The perceiving subject "fills in" what is missing by construing what is not "given"...(Thiselton 1992:516).

This idea is most concretely used in the everyday human perception that many objects are three dimensional even though they have not seen the back or all the sides. Iser's point is to extend this view of perception to the literary text and to describe how readers often fill in details, like the shape and texture of items of furniture, which the author has not given. To stretch the point even further, the reader perceives, and makes concrete, areas of meaning which have potential, but not actual, existence in the text.

4.2.2 The first in the line up of biblical scholars in this review is Susan Wittig who uses this idea from Iser in an essay on polyvalent narration. She uses the example of Luke 15:11, the opening of the parable of the prodigal son: "There was a man who had two sons." She argues that this statement is central to the meaning of the parable because, although this purpose is unstated, the reader perceives that there are two sides to this story. So she must take sides and apply the resultant meaning to her life. In other words the purpose of the parable is "*to create the conditions under which the creation of meaning can be defined and examined by each perceiver*" (Wittig's italics in Thiselton 1992:518).

- 4.2.3 The second example of a biblical scholar using Iser is James L. Resseguie who embraces the text/reader dualism of Iser's theory. Using the parable of the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-22) Resseguie pays attention both to the Markan context of parable, thus placing constraints on meaning, and to the part wealth plays in the mind of the reader, thus acknowledging the almost infinite potential variations of meaning which can exist. The problem with such a view, for both Iser and Resseguie, is that it straddles the gap between two camps, refusing to establish the locus of meaning with either the text or the reader. A position which either mollifies or infuriates the purists of each cause.
- 4.2.4 Robert Fowler's study of the meaning of feeding miracles and bread imagery in Mark's Gospel also uses Iser's theory. He notices that in many past studies of this theme the reader had been expected to apply, retrospectively, eucharistic imagery from Mark 14 to the feeding stories of Mark 6 and 8. Fowler's argument is to stand this idea on its head by saying that the reading process, generated by Mark, demands that the reader fill the feeding stories into the gaps of the eucharistic meal. Fowler suggests that this is a deliberate authorial strategy to heighten tension for the reader as she anticipates the possible outcome of new events in the light of the disciples consistent underestimation of the Jesus' power. This view of Mark is shared by Jouette Bassler who experiences a narrative full of dark corners and "gaps" which:

generate and heighten reader-involvement and reader-activity, as the reader wrestles with a text which, until the end constitutes an incomplete jigsaw. The release of information, the putting together of the pieces of the puzzle, comes to be achieved by the text and the reader gradually, until the eucharist and the cross in Mark 14 bring about a retrospective understanding of the significance of the long struggle with the text (Thiselton 1992:520).

These studies of Mark serve once again to highlight the dualism of Iser's theory. On the one hand it is the author who seems to be setting the agenda through the structure of the narrative, but it is only the reader who can make meaning, by filling in gaps, anticipating events and retrospectively arranging the narrative into a meaningful whole. On the whole one cannot escape the impression that many biblical interpreters and indeed Thiselton himself are essentially comfortable with the dualism of Iser's theory and are pleased to have their cake and eat it. This impression grows when one observes how jittery they become with each step that reader-response theory takes away from the sanctity of the individual and the authority of texts, towards a world where each reader seems to be her own authority.

- 4.3 Later in his chapter Thiselton offers an assessment the usefulness of Holland and Bleich for biblical studies.
- 4.3.1 On the positive side he believes that Holland's theory, in which the individual appropriates the text in an individual way, can be seen as reinforcing the self-awareness and self-perception of the reader. At the same time this theory also develops a respect for the biblical texts, in which readers have a stake and to which they bear witness. Negatively, Thiselton believes, the closeness of the reader's experience with the text as she "symbolises" and "replicates" herself in it may lead either to idolatry; placing our view of the text above God, or to pietism; where the text speaks back to the reader her own desires and values. The problem is that if texts speak of the self to the self then there is no possibility for the text to transform us from outside, or in the biblical case, for grace or revelation to speak to us from beyond the text.(cf. Thiselton 1992:530-1)
- 4.3.2 Bleich's more democratic theory of a community of interpreters is taken up by Mark Labberton in a study of ordinary readers, in the time of the Protestant reformers and in modern reader oriented criticism. Concentrating on Jean Calvin, he notes that during Calvin's tenure as minister to the Protestant congregation in Strassburg the rate of literacy among the population rose dramatically, to the extent that reading was taken from the professional few and given to the democratic masses. This necessitated that some cognisance be taken of the fact that God speaks through the biblical texts to ordinary people as well as through professional interpreters. Labberton bemoans the fact that this idea was lost for centuries by the church, only to be discovered once again with the advent of reader oriented criticism (cf. Thiselton 1992:532). However neither Labberton nor Thiselton can stomach the idea that the authority of texts should be sacrificed in favour of the interpretation by ordinary readers:

In practice Bleich's literary theory is bound up with a familiar socio-political agenda. Egalitarian social politics dictate the de-privileging of the author, the de-privileging of academic interpreters, and even the de-privileging of a literary or theological cannon of "classics", in order to make the whole mixed community co-authors of texts; everyone constructs, and no construction is "better" than another because critical theory would already prejudice an answer in favour of the elite. Once again, socio-pragmatic theory disintegrates into the anarchy in which the most militant pressure group actually carries the day about what satisfies their pragmatic criteria of "right" reading. (Thiselton 1992:534).

This is almost a classic case of the kind of paranoia which Tompkins highlighted from Walter Michaels article. Thiselton seems to have no sense of the irony of his position as he argues for the

privilege of "reason" and "order" in the name of the privileged pressure group otherwise known as academic interpreters.

- 4.3.3 It seems needless to say that Thiselton is deeply suspicious of Stanley Fish and his seemingly total disregard for the identity of individuals and texts.

The major contribution of Fish is his unflinching acceptance of what is entailed, or not entailed, in socio-pragmatic hermeneutics... Fish anticipates and checks out every possible move which critics of his pragmatic relativism might make. He disarmingly accepts what has to be accepted, and relishes his opponent's confusion when some (by no means all) of his counter arguments take, in effect, the form: "So What?" Fish is more interested in the "non-consequences" of his theory than in its consequences. (Thiselton 1992:537).

He feels that Fish has betrayed the essential function for which the discipline of hermeneutics was created:

... it is clear that he cannot entertain the possibility of a genuinely critical, socio-critical, metacritical, or transcontextual hermeneutic. He cannot journey with Habermas or with Apel in the quest for any principle that would relate the life-world to a broader system, however loose and open such a system might be (Thiselton 1992:539).

This, it would seem, is the challenge set down for us by a radical reader hermeneutic, to abandon the search for a wide ranging and ultimately ineffective principle or set of principles. The attraction of Fish, Bleich and Walter Michaels is that they take seriously the possibility that ordinary readers may have something to say about how texts speak in their situation. Grand philosophic and hermeneutic principles have their place in academia, but they are really as culture and situation bound as any local hermeneutic arrived at by ordinary readers.

- 4.4 So this is where my study is heading. As an academic theologian I will facilitate a close reading of a very important letter in the Christian canon by ordinary readers. My aim is to allow them to become the interpreters and to start answering the kind of historical and intentional questions usually reserved for academic theologians. While they do this I will keep in mind Walter Michaels point that no individual interpreter is free from the influence of a community of interpreters, so I

will place their readings alongside those of other interpretive communities who have tackled these questions before them. Meanwhile in the next chapter I will face some of the critiques levelled against biblical reader-response to see what insights can be drawn from that debate.

5. Some critical reactions to biblical reader-response.

- 5.1 This chapter is designed to bring to the fore some of the critical reactions to the work that is being done with reader-response tools in biblical hermeneutics. Temma Berg (1989), Stanley Porter (1990) and Stephen Moore (1989) all level essentially the same accusation at biblical reader critics: That they have not taken the method to its logical extent and abandoned any claim that texts have a final authority.
- 5.2 In an essay written in response to Semeia 48, which is devoted to reader perspectives on the New Testament, Temma Berg accuses most of the contributors of lacking the courage of their convictions.
- 5.2.1 Her argument begins by arranging the contributors to the volume of Semeia in a spectrum from Structuralist to Post-structuralist. She places critics like Bernard Lategan and Willem Vorster firmly in the Structuralist camp. In her view they share Iser's problematic notion that an implied reader is created by the text. A reader who is also so impossibly competent (she reads uninterruptedly, she can master all texts, she forgets nothing of what she reads) that she bears no relation to the real readers in the world (cf. Berg 1989: 188-9). Wolfgang Schenk moves slightly beyond Structuralism with the admission that there are many roles for the reader, but his critics (Bernard Combrink and James Voelz) accuse him of paying scant attention to the polyvalent nature of texts and the way readers and reading communities make meaning in the text.
- 5.2.2 Berg begins to wonder why it is that most New Testament critics remain so firmly in the structuralist camp. She believes she finds the answer when Detlev Dormeyer's raises the question whether the implied reader of the New Testament can be anyone other than a Christian or a potential convert? She asks then about the relationship between the position of a reader, who is also a believer, and the ability of that reader to ask radical questions about their sacred text? Berg comes to an answer by visiting the writings of Derrida and returning to Dormeyer once more. For Derrida reading a text and deconstructing it involves respecting a whole range of interpretations and preventing any one reading from transcending the text, by maintaining a constant self-critical attitude. She believes that Dormeyer is hinting that such radical self-criticism is impossible for Christians:

To be a Christian is to be confident in one's knowledge. To be a Christian is to be the implied reader of the New Testament; to be the implied reader of the New

Testament is to be a Christian. To be the implied Christian reader is to accept and celebrate what the text has to tell you (Berg 1989: 191).

- 5.3 Stanley Porter has a similar criticism of New Testament scholars who have ventured into the area of reader response.
- 5.3.1 He begins his article, much like Tompkins (1991a), by focusing on the wide range of possible species of criticism which can fall under the banner of reader-response. In view of this state of affairs Porter feels the need to define the distinctive rules which mark off reader-response from the rest of literary criticism. The first is that a contemporary reader holds interpretive privilege as opposed to the first reader, subsequent readers, the author or the text. The second is that " the reader is involved in a complex interplay with the text, which chronicles his or her struggle to comprehend" (Porter 1990:279). The third states that there is no single meaning but a multiplicity of meanings made by each reader responding to the text. The fourth holds that there is no objective standard for meaning, only the product of reading and the fifth that those who use the same reading strategy are an interpretive community.
- 5.3.2 Like Berg he finds that most biblical scholars pull back from this radical model of reader-response and prefer the implied reader model put forward by Iser. He believes that this is the case because biblical studies has a conservative fixation on historical questions, as evidenced in the constant questing for the historical Jesus, and as a consequence " has very little use for an interpretive model which is not concerned in some direct way with history" (Porter 1990: 284). The implied reader model favoured by Iser has the advantage in this regard because it can easily be mutated into a historical study of the reception of the Gospel or letter by its first readers. In principle, Porter has no problem with historical questions in literary studies. But he believes that the kind of historical questions asked by the so called New Historicism, "about the historical, economic, political and social context out of which the work emerged" (Porter 1990: 284), are more valid than questions of establishing the historicity of texts or finding the first readers.
- 5.4 Both Berg and Porter have a basic problem with biblical reader response because they believe the centre of authority is somewhere other than with the reader, where it should be. Berg locates this authority in the reverent attitude among biblical scholars, even those who are trying to make the move towards Post-structuralism, towards the transcendence of Jesus. A reader who has taken a firm stand of faith in the transcendent divinity of Jesus Christ cannot help developing a reading

which somehow or other transcends the text. Porter locates the authority of biblical scholars in the need to establish whether the events of the text actually happened in history. This is a big problem because the rules that Porter initially laid down for reader-response anchor it firmly and solely in the present. As a result his outlook on biblical reader response is pessimistic:

If the historical question as traditionally posed in biblical studies is not bracketed, if only temporarily, reader-response criticism will never have a genuine opportunity to contribute to New Testament studies, but will be reader-response criticism in name only (Porter 1990:285).

- 5.6 Stephen Moore seems to have produced some answers in anticipation of Porter's problems with biblical reader-response.
- 5.6.1 He notes that the historical questions asked by many Iserian reader critics about the first readers or listeners of the Gospels have, almost accidentally, discovered something valid. Their moment by moment description of the reading does have some "clear affinities with the syllable-by-syllable experience of *hearing* a text read, a question which makes all the difference to one's conceptualisation of the text" (Moore 1989:87). In this way they have at least begun to break down the objectification of the Bible by the neat printed editions with chapter headings, verse numbers and critical apparatus. On the other hand their attempts to read the text in the mode of the original audience are clearly hampered by the anachronistic expectations of a print centred culture, because "with Guttenberg, we exchanged a primal sea for dry land, so to speak, so that now our water breathing is confined to mime" (Moore 1989:87). This problem is the one which we have already noted with Tompkins, that modern critics tend to bring cognitive rather than affective questions to the text, to concentrate on the cerebral effects of literary devices rather than on the emotional effect of the power of the language (cf. Moore 1989:88).
- 5.6.2 Another problem is that of the relationship of the reader, outside the text, to the reader, in the text, who is a property of the text itself. Iser is so popular with biblical critics because, although it is his actual reader who undertakes the task of reading, it is his implied reader, the one created by the text, who is in control of the reading process. It is the implied reader who "will admit a range of acceptable interpretations" or "the responsible pluralism of reading" (Moore 1989:89). Who will, in other words, limit the amount of damage that an unfettered reader can do in a text. In this Moore is really asking the same question as Porter: Can biblical reader-response ask hermeneutical as well as historical questions? His answer is much the same as Porter's. Iser and most biblical

critics are more concerned with their status among their peers in the academic community than with the freedom of the reader. They want to remain within the limits of scholarly respectability, which has set definite limits on the amount of subjectivity that can be tolerated in a world where objectivity is still the norm (cf. Moore 1989: 90):

The "reader" of audience-oriented Gospel criticism is a repressed reader. Its parents are mainstream Gospel exegesis on the biblical side, and reader-in-the-text Formalism on the non-biblical side. Its sibling, of course, is narrative criticism, which has the same exegetical-Formalist ancestry. And what of the black sheep relatives which audience-oriented Gospel criticism, whether intentionally or inadvertently, has tended to exclude or disown? Reader theory in literary studies, particularly where it shades over into non-foundational Continental or Anglo-American philosophy, is a Pandora's box into which we, infant literary critics of the Bible, have barely begun to peer (Moore 1989:91).

- 5.7 The questions posed by each of the above critics seem to place biblical reader-response firmly within the grip of respectable academic readers. There would appear to be no room for Berg's rather eccentric readings of Mark from the perspective of a Jewish reader with Post-structuralist leanings (cf. Berg 1989:197ff). On the other hand Porter's plea for radical reader response has been clearly rejected by Thiselton (1992:549) as dangerous for Christian theology because it cannot contemplate prophecy, grace, revelation, historical certainty or firm doctrine. If I am willing to take the risk of following in their footsteps I have to ask myself seriously if my attempt to read Romans with ordinary readers can live up to the standards set by Berg and Porter? More importantly I must ask if a study of ordinary readers will be acceptable in the eyes of academic biblical studies? How can I conduct my study with sufficient rigor to satisfy academic requirements while remaining true to my commitment to listen to the voice of readers and take them seriously? In the concluding chapter I will try to outline the ways in which my study can be practically accomplished.

6. Conclusions: Drawing the threads of reading together.

- 6.1 The purpose of this concluding chapter is to draw together all the threads of my argument so far. Thereby I hope to explain how it is that I can use reader-response tools to discover the "little tradition" of a particular group of ordinary readers. To assist me in this task I turn to an article by Mark Brett in which he is also contemplating the future expansion of reader-response criticism.
- 6.2 In an unpublished paper on the future of reader criticism Mark Brett has warned that our interpretive interests in coming to a text must be properly conceived (Brett 1995:2). This reminds me of what Jane Tompkins says, in the passage I quoted right at the beginning of this part of my study, that reader theory is not a conceptually or methodologically unified school of critics, but a group of critics basically interested in placing the reader at the centre of interpretation. In the introduction to this part of my study, I stated my desire to bring the ordinary reader and the "little tradition" of theology closer to the centres of interpretive and theological power. Now, having outlined in some detail the history and the debates of the "great tradition" of reading, I will try to outline some of the questions I will have to consider in order to properly conceive this study of the "little tradition" that exists in the readings of the two groups who participated in this study.
- 6.3 Mark Brett takes on those reader critics, like Porter and Berg, who believe that we have somehow reached the apogee of interpretation:

This leads to an anti-pluralist argument which runs something like this: over the past three decades fashions have simply changed in hermeneutics. We used to be interested in authorial intention, then we were interested in texts and now we are interested in readers. The trouble with the emphasis on authors, so the story goes, was that it hadn't discovered the so-called intentional fallacy, and therefore failed to notice that texts have a kind of public existence independent of their authors. The trouble with the emphasis on texts in themselves was that it attributed too much independence and coherence to literary artifacts and failed to realize that meaning is always created by readers. Thus, reader criticism arises from the ashes of both intentionalism and Formalism (Brett 1995:2-3).

This is the view of reader theorists following in the radical footsteps of Stanley Fish. But Brett, on examining Fish closer, finds that he makes no methodological prescriptions about the questions that can be asked of or about texts, but simply wishes to make the epistemological point that "all scholarship is the product of interpretive communities; all interpretation is socially constructed" (Brett 1995:4) which means, in other words, that all the old fashioned questions that we used to

ask about texts should now be seen as reader concerns. In this vein I would argue that historical, intentional and faith questions are unavoidable in the context of ordinary readers of the Bible because these are exactly the questions which they bring with them into the text. If Berg and Porter are arguing for reader-response in the mould of Stanley Fish then they must surely accept that some readers and some communities of interpreters must come to a text with set questions about history. In the same way a community of interpreters which is joined together by a particular commitment to faith in Jesus Christ must surely be allowed to read and interpret texts in such a way that their faith is confirmed. I would argue with Bleich (cf. Thiselton 1992:534, Tompkins 1991:xx), that the freedom of the ordinary reader, or group of readers, to believe and read a text from a believer's position, is something that should be guarded and perhaps even privileged.

- 6.4 Brett's essay continues with the question of a distinctive method for reader criticism. He sees two possible candidates: A chronological reading, which Fish calls 'affective stylistics', really nothing more than the Iserian moment-by-moment reading. Or the reception theory of Hans-Robert Jauß, which is barely distinguishable from the kind of historical criticism which biblical scholars have been doing for over a century (cf. Brett 1995:5-14). What is more, in the light of Fish's philosophical assertion that all methods are really reader methods, the idea which emerges in his mind is that what really matters are ethical interests of the reader:

Precisely because there is a difference between ethical purposes and interpretive method, the implicit or explicit ideology of a particular reading can always be brought into dialogue with others who use the same method but have other commitments... Ethical concerns might well influence the interpretations that particular critics offer, but precisely because committed readers use methods in the public domain there are limits to interpretation which are imposed by the public context of that discussion (Brett 1995:17).

- 6.5 Brett's argument then provides me with two convenient ways to proceed with this study. First it provides support for my ethical stance vis a vis the ordinary reader and the "little tradition" of theology. Secondly it assures me that if I choose a method of interpretation and analysis which is in the public domain, I will have built in a limiting factor to the kind of interpretation which I will finally offer. Having come this far I had to ask myself the question: What method do I use for reading when I am not reading a text but the "little tradition" as expressed by readers who are reading texts? No current reader method really suffices, of itself, to meet the needs of both the

observer and the ordinary readers. The result of this debate with myself can be seen in the next part of my study. To meet the requirements of reader-response, I encouraged the readers to do as close and detailed a reading of the text of Romans as they can over a period of six to eight weeks. In this way the ordinary readers have produced a reading of Romans which corresponds to a certain extent with the moment by moment method of Iserian reader-response. My role as the observer was then to record and analyse this reading using the tools of participant observation provided by qualitative or ethnographic research. In the following part of my study I will explain in detail how I have used these methods to conduct my research and then go on to present and analyse the "little tradition" of reading Romans, which I have gathered from the two groups of ordinary readers with whom I have studied.

C.

PART TWO:

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE READING KIND

1. Introduction.

- 1.1 The first part of this study was an attempt to move from the intellectual abstractions of academic reader response theory to a place where that theory could be used to read texts with ordinary readers. In the second part of my study I will be trying to give an account of the way I have read **Romans** with the two groups of readers who took part in these Bible studies with me. First, I will give an account of the methodological considerations I had to assimilate before beginning to collect data. Following this there will be a detailed description of the two groups and some initial analysis of their reading culture,¹ using both the self observations of the groups, which emerged in the interviews I conducted with each participant, and my own analysis of emerging patterns. To continue, I will present a summary of the data collected. The first part of this data is the responses to the questionnaire which each participant filled in at the beginning of the study. The second part of the data is the response of each group to consecutive passages in **Romans**. Finally I will attempt to bring all these threads together into some kind of coherent reading of **Romans** from the perspective of these two groups. I will then move on to the third part of my study, in which this emerging reading from the second part of my study will be compared with a more conventional reading of the text, which is slowly emerging from my own debate with mainstream **Romans** scholarship. In the end I hope to provide the reader with a rich and complex reading of the text of this equally rich and complex letter.

2. Methodological considerations for collecting data on reading.

- 2.1 The purpose of this first chapter of Part Two of my study is to introduce my method of data collection. So I will present, briefly, a relevant summary of the methodology used in ethnographic research and also some of the problems associated with it. After this I will proceed to explain how I adapted this methodology to the reading context and how I dealt with some of the problems.
- 2.2 The term ethnography has been used in the field of anthropology since Malinowski's study of the Trobriand Islanders during the First World War (Erickson 1990:88). Since that time the term, and the research methodology that Malinowski developed, has grown in popularity with other disciplines of the human sciences, notably the study of classroom interaction in education research. The following quotation is a handy definition of an ethnography, which I discovered in a short article which applies ethnographic methodology to the classroom situation.

An ethnography -- of a community, a classroom, an event, a program -- seeks to describe a set of understandings and specific knowledge among participants that guide their behaviour in that specific context, that is to describe the culture of that community, classroom, event, or program (Hornberger 1994: 688).

- 2.2.1 This quotation encapsulates what I have been trying to do when collecting data from the groups of readers in this Study. Hornberger argues that the value of an ethnography is that it tries to account meticulously for the relationship and interrelatedness of all the component parts of a culture. By careful observation the ethnographer needs to compare and contrast the things people say with the way they act in different contexts. This builds up a portrait of the culture which avoids none of its complexities or contradictions. Another of the advantages of ethnographic research which Hornberger discusses is the ability of the researcher to move from the emic or culturally specific standpoint, which tries to understand a culture from the perspective of its members, to the etic or interpretive standpoint, which is the observer's own reading of the situation. Each of these standpoints provide a framework by which the culture can be analyzed. Taken together they create a series of opportunities for comparison and contrast between the two frameworks, which has the potential for eliciting surprising results. In attempting to write an ethnography of the reading culture of my groups I have tried to pay careful attention to their reactions as they read and encounter the text especially in the unfamiliar translation that I have provided. In doing so I have tried to account for the different reactions to the text by each reader, by a careful summary of their reactions to

consecutive paragraphs and chapters of the text of Romans. This includes any seemingly contradictory reactions by the same reader to different aspects of the text. Placed alongside these reactions will be my own reactions, to the patterns emerging from the readers' reactions, and my own interpretations of the same texts.

2.2.2 One of the traps set for ethnographers, especially those who investigate their own communities is the risk of being too familiar with the culture of that community. This can lead to the researcher overlooking some vital aspect of the culture because she is so immersed in it. An additional problem is that the participant observer might affect the processes of the culture by distorting the data to fit a preconceived idea of what that culture should be. Hornberger describes this dilemma as the struggle of researchers to "simultaneously maintain membership of the group for the sake of their identity and detach themselves from the culture sufficiently to describe it" (Hornberger 1994: 691). But she continues that it is just these sort of tensions which produce the richness of an ethnographic portrait of a culture. I recognised that my position with at least one of the groups put me in the position where I could have overlooked vital information. I also recognised that my position as a trained reader gave me the potential to influence or alter the readings of the readers to fit my own purposes. The precautions I have taken to avoid these pitfalls are: Taking copious notes of each encounter (c.f. Appendix,3) so that I include as much information as possible in my data. Carefully separating my own observations from those of the readers in the report I have made of my research in later chapters of my study.

2.3 To achieve the best results from an ethnography of reading, I required a carefully laid out plan for collecting data from the readers. Frederick Erickson warns that there can be a very romantic - in the macho adventurous sense - notion about ethnographic fieldwork.

One enters the field with no preconceptions, and learns the methods by doing them (as one learns to swim by being thrown into the pool). After tremendous emotional stress one finally induces grounded analytic categories (Erickson 1990:135).

Having made exactly this mistake in a previous study, in which I tried to study the reactions of ordinary readers to an illustrated "comic strip" version of Mark's Gospel (cf. Meyer 1993), I took Erickson's advice to heart. He continues that we should consider fieldwork as a set of problems to be solved over time by carefully deciding: Who you ask questions of? What questions you ask? And, in the end, how "to bring research questions and data collection into a consistent relationship, albeit

an evolving one" (Erickson 1990:136)? This ensures that the researcher will collect enough data for her task.

- 2.4 Continuing in a similar vein, Erickson (cf. Erickson 1990:137) identifies five main areas where evidence may fall short in the collection of data:
 - 2.4.1 The researcher may discover that she has too little evidence to fully support the main assertions she is trying to make in her thesis.
 - 2.4.2 The researcher finds that her range of sources is inadequate to triangulate her data, ie. to have at least three independent sources for the same data.
 - 2.4.3 The researcher may conclude that she has not fully understood the complexity of the perspectives in her research situation. This may be through lack of exposure to the conditions in the field and/or to the deliberate falsification of evidence by key informants.
 - 2.4.4 The researcher has only collected evidence which will confirm her key assertions and has not gone on a deliberate search for evidence that could disconfirm or falsify her interpretation of a situation.
 - 2.4.5 Discrepant cases should be sought out because they may be the kind of exception that proves the rule. If these cases are carefully analyzed they can help a researcher tighten and fine tune her central theses.
- 2.5 Because this is an ethnography of a culture of reading, my study does not match classic ethnography in every way. It is a study inclined towards hermeneutic, rather than cultural or educational, goals and as such it requires different conclusions. Yet I saw in this method, the potential building blocks of a method which is right for my present study. Set out below are the principles by which I have tried to avoid the kinds of faulty evidence which Erickson outlined.
 - 2.5.1 Firstly, to avoid the perception that my study is lacking in evidence because it concentrates on only two groups of readers reading the Bible, I have made no universal claims for the significance of this study. Except to say, that within the confines of the present study I believe I can present valuable evidence which might be used in further research. When in Part Three I have tried to match the reactions of these readers to those of the first readers/hearers of Romans, I have only done so in the context of my own growing convictions born out of my own debate with Romans scholarship.
 - 2.5.2 Collecting a variety of evidence was a more straight forward issue, because there are various guidelines available for setting up triangulation mechanisms. Erickson suggests a simple method of

keeping and collecting of different types of data, direct observations or field notes, interviews with participants and documents from the site of research (cf. Erickson 1990:137). Hammersley and Atkinson's suggestions are a little more complex:

Data-source triangulation involves the comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but deriving from different phases of the fieldwork, different points in the temporal cycles occurring in the setting, or, as in respondent validation, the accounts of different participants (including the ethnographer) involved in the setting (Hammersley and Atkinson 1990:198).

Having looked over these suggestions, I have collected data from audio-taped interviews with all of the participants in each group, during the course of their reading of Romans (Appendix 4). I also obtained written responses from all the members of each group at the beginning of the time we spent reading Romans (Appendix 2). And finally I kept detailed notes of the responses of the groups during the discussions and wrote these up as a journal of my own interpretations of each week's encounter. This journal is divided between the informal (Appendix 1) and formal (Appendix 3) parts of each meeting.

- 2.5.3 By working with people who are known to me I have tried to avoid the deliberate falsification of data. Group One has been my regular home fellowship group for the past five years, they know me and my beliefs and so they have no reason to distrust my motives. Group Two is less well known to me, however when they had participated in my previous study they enthusiastically invited me back (c.f Meyer 1993). In these circumstances I believe I can have a fair amount of confidence in the reliability of the data from each group.
- 2.5.4 The issue of disconfirming evidence was potentially tricky because of the way each group is made up of people of similar convictions. However this danger was more apparent than real. Each group has provided a variety of discrepant cases where readers have reacted to the text in a way that runs counter to the reading of the group and there have even been cases where people have been, unconsciously, self-contradictory in their efforts to deal with their emotional response to part of the text. The variety of the readings within each group shows the power of individual reader-response to the text, it can resist the equally powerful forces, of conformity within a church tradition and those forces which create the reading culture of each group.

2.6 One further methodological consideration in this study was to observe closely the responses to Romans, of the members of the groups, to see if their reading of the epistle changed or developed. My findings have been twofold, as the rest of this part of my thesis will make clear. Firstly, a set of findings which confirm those in my previous study (Meyer 1993). I thoroughly underestimated the tenacity with which readers cling to familiar and dearly held interpretations of texts, despite all the best efforts of the trained reader, to get them to change their minds. Secondly, a set of findings which came out most clearly in the interviews. The readers expressed a heartfelt gratitude for the chance to tackle a major book and a genuine feeling of having learned a great deal. This is the kind of creative tension which Hornberger (1994: 691) describes. In the first case it is the tension between my need, in the emic sphere, to be part of the group and to convince people of my point of view, and my responsibility, in the etic sphere, to maintain the kind of distance which would allow the voice of ordinary readers to be heard. In the second instance, the tension is within the readers, between their own deeply felt convictions and a socialised response to the superior power of the trained readers and interpreters.

2.7 The following chapter is a "thick" description (cf. Geertz 1973) arising from my encounter with both groups and their emerging culture of reading using the methods I have described above. This will take the form of some personal details of each participant. However in the interests of confidentiality all their names have been changed and any other specific information of their jobs or interests, which would increase their chances of being identified, has also been altered. My description will also encompass data I collected in notes on the informal part of the meetings (Appendix 1) and parts of the interviews (Appendix 4). This will I hope lay some of the ground work for the summary of the data collected from the formal sessions (Appendix 4) which will form the central pillar of this part of the thesis.

3. Observing ordinary readers of the Bible in their natural environment.

- 3.1 This chapter is a "thick" description of my encounters with both groups over the two months of reading Romans. I had worked with both groups of ordinary readers before this study. In the case of Group One over five years of membership of a home fellowship group and in the case of Group Two, I got to know them during the course of my previous study (Meyer 1993). I will begin this chapter with introductions to the readers as I have come to know them. Then I will present a more general description of their culture of reading, arising from my own observations over the time I have known them and their own words given in their interviews.
- 3.2 The first group is an amalgamation of the group from my original study with members from another group from St Matthew's Church which had lately disbanded.
- 3.2.1 The new group consists of three couples and two single people not including myself. Harry is a Librarian, whose wife Lydia does not attend the house group, but is very active in other aspects of parish life. Mary is a widowed grandmother and a retired school secretary. The couples are: Martin and Fay Winterton, a senior teacher at a private school and a librarian in a tertiary institution. Robert and Renee Dillon, an industrial manager and a nursing sister. And Anna and Tim Stannard, a couple of my own age, who work as a travel agent and an artisan.
- 3.2.2 As an initial indication of the reading culture of this group I will look in detail at their process of reading in a group and make some comments on the type of material they read. Over the years of my participation in this group there has been little variation in the process of their meetings. We arrive around 7:30 on a Thursday evening and, unless there is some urgent contrary reason, we spend at least half an hour talking about what has been significant during the week. Various members of the group take the opportunity to blow off steam about the frustrations of their week in a supportive environment. Examples of other subjects that are discussed can be seen in the following paragraph or in a closer perusal of Appendix One (p. 1-8). It must be emphasised however, that these examples are not exhaustive and our talk is very much dependent on the issues of the moment in our national, parish and personal lives. Having opened in prayer, the meeting usually proceeds with not much more than an hour of Bible study. The material used here is usually of two types. When I first joined the group the materials were generally thematic studies of the Bible on subjects like, dealing with your money, why you should be evangelising etc. It was my growing

frustration with these types of studies that lead me to undertake my original study with this group on Mark's Gospel (c.f. Meyer 1993:3). Since then we have found a number of other studies which have dealt with whole books and others which do character studies of biblical personages, to add spice to our diet. A close reading of the notes in Appendix Three (p.29 -46) will show that our method of responding to studies is not rigidly formal and the discussion can vary quite widely until the leader brings us back into line. Often this discussion will also hinge on the issues of the moment, trying to relate them to whatever we happen to be studying. After the study we pray once more. Usually these are prayers of intercession for family and those known to us, in their sorrow, need or sickness, and for the state of the nation. After the prayers the meeting usually breaks up quite quickly at around 9:30.

- 3.2.3 The change in age balance has had an affect on the group. If only to the extent of giving me a few allies in debates around recent changes in the Anglican Church. In this regard, Robert and Harry are the most hardline members of the group keeping to conservative church order and the King James Bible. Other members of the group are less forceful in their opinions. However all of the older members continue to express reservations about the role of women in society, not only as priests but as medical professionals or any other traditionally male occupation (Appendix 1 p 9 I.8-11: 24-32). The other major issue which arises from the informal discussions of this group is the state of the nation. During the eight weeks of the study this included, the two car thefts suffered by Harry's family members, the continuing state of violence in Kwazulu-Natal and the unrest at Edgewood College of Education, where Harry's daughter is a student, usually ending with a general lament on the moral decline in the country which seems to be unabated. On all these issues the group was in clear agreement. They see a great need for God's intervention in the South African situation and a return of the nation to Christian values. Apart from these the topics, the discussions centred on family. Especially Mary's concerns for her grandchildren and her trips to help her daughter move from Johannesburg to Cape Town and the return to health of my sister-in-law (c.f. Appendix 1 p. 1-8). These factors taken together give the impression of a conservative reading culture which takes the Bible and the Christian life very seriously. A close reading of each interview, especially the interviewees response to the questions on the Bible and its importance, would clearly support this impression (c.f. Appendix 4).

3.2.4 The first extract that I will quote is from my interview with Tim. He is the quietest member of the group, who made barely any response to the study other than agreeing with his wife Anna:

Billy Okay, so the next question is why do you study the Bible personally?

Tim To get a better knowledge of what's happening, what happened in the Bible, because I'm a very new Christian and I think it's important to study the Bible and to know the facts and everything, and, uh, just to follow it is the correct way to live your life.

Billy Okay, so it's a follow on, so asking about the ways in which you see the Bible as important in your life and how to you see the Bible as important in our society?

Tim I think it's very important because if everyone lived by the Bible it would be a much better place, this world. I don't think we'd have as much problems as we do.(Appendix 4 p.59 l.10-17)

3.2.5 His very simple and direct answers are clearly echoed in other members of the group. The following extract is from Mary's interview. Here she speaks of being brought up in the faith:

Billy So then the next question is why do you study the Bible?

Mary I don't rightly know how to answer that question because, you see, my mother was a very good Christian, law-abiding, church-abiding. My father didn't often go to church but my mother was a regular church-goer. She had been brought up that way and I have just lived the same kind of life. I had two brothers. They both went as boys, they were younger than I was. They both went to church as boys. Frank was a cross-bearer in the choir: my mother was the choir mistress - that was in Johannesburg at St Peters Anglican Church where I was originally married. And I've just always belonged to a group. But I am not a deep thinker about it. I just know that there's a Lord above me who takes care of me and my children and anybody else that I ask for help for. And for me, I don't really need much more assurance of that. It may just be a very light hearted manner of putting it.

Billy Just to put the question in a slightly different way, what way do you see the Bible as important in your life?

Mary I haven't got the same deep feelings about it, I just know that I can read the Bible and I know what is considered to be right and wrong and I'm fortunate really, I sometimes wonder how much progress we've made when I see some of the things that are still going on. But I'm not a theology follower: I read it for my own pleasure: I have lots of other Christian books that I read, but I'm not a deep thinker, I must be quite frank about that.(Appendix 4 p.68 l.3-20)

3.2.6 In the following extract from Renee's interview she also gives a similar response which illustrates her daily reliance on the Bible:

Billy Okay, the second one, then, is why do you study the Bible?

Renee Well, basically, I think if I didn't, I wouldn't know where I was going. I mean, I just need it every day. Because, I feel, if you're a very confident person, maybe you can go into the world and you're fine, but I think, just to face work and the problems, I just need it to start my day off. Or, if I've had a rotten day, I need it to end it off before I ..

Billy Right, okay. A little bit of elaboration, how do you see the Bible as important in your life?

Renee I think it's very important. I mean, you can believe, have the Spirit within you, you can believe in Jesus, but you still need that guideline, you need that sort of..., it's sort of like a link or a line to Him so that you basically know what He wants you to do. And, I don't know, when you're depressed and down, at least you can go, there's always somewhere in the Psalms or somewhere, where you have a little word that will fit in exactly with the way you are feeling.

Billy Okay, I'm interest then in a general, like a general impression of your view of the Bible.

Renee Mm, I never thought of it generally but, um, I don't know, I mean it's your guideline, something you hang onto.

Billy Okay, then, in the light of that, what is your view of the Bible in society?

Renee Well, I think it's essential. Unfortunately, I don't think society thinks it's...: you know, they think it is something that's rather staid and a bit old-fashioned. But, I think if they stuck to it, there'd be far less problems.(Appendix 4 p.75 l.10-27)

3.2.7 These responses from some other quieter members of the group show the strength of their views. Their responses are mirrored in the responses of the more talkative members to the text of Romans which will be reflected in later chapters of Part Two. At the same time I do not want to put these responses forward as a totality of the groups response. At times their reader-response to Romans could be startlingly original as the later chapters will also show.

3.3 Group Two is, by contrast to Group One, an all female group of mixed Catholics and Anglicans.

3.3.1 There had also been changes in this group from when I last worked with them. Three of the original women remained, including the leader Nell, who is a worker at Hospice. She shares her work and Catholic Faith with Jane who lives across the road from her. The third member of the original group

is Gladys. She also works for Hospice, but is an Anglican. Pam, the fourth member of the group, is a widow and a great traveller. As a result of her travels she missed most of this study and is included only when she provides significant data in my field notes of the formal meetings of this group. The two new members are Hilda, who had recently retired from full time employment. This has given her the leisure to explore her Catholic faith further with this group of her women friends. Lynne has also recently retired from her role as a pastor's wife. Gladys, who is a long standing friend, was persuaded to obtain an invitation for her to join their Bible sharing and discussion group.

3.3.2 I have far less data on the usual process of the meetings of this group or the usual materials which they study, because I have only really had contact with them when I have been leading them in textual studies of Mark (Meyer 1993), Romans and Galatians. Appendix One (p. 8-10) also illustrates that during the time I was with them their informal chatter was also greatly curtailed by the need to get on with the study. However from the experience of my readings with them and a few hints of further evidence I can attempt a description of their meetings and materials. The meetings take place on a Tuesday afternoon at 3:00 and usually last until 4:30 when Nell goes walking with her dogs. Once people arrive there was usually an opening prayer or, in one case, a short meditation lead by Gladys. In her interview Gladys spoke of these meditations on God and her love and the prayer that usually ends the meeting, as an important part of what they do as a group.

Gladys *I suppose what bothers me is that we normally start with a meditation and we end with a prayer, but I think, the leadership, we don't really make it clear who's going to do it, so that's something we grapple with now and again, and I miss it when we don't because I think it quietens us down, it brings us into the present and it helps me to concentrate, and it also adds a full stop at the end, you know, rounds it off (Appendix 4 p.91 l.28 -32)*

After the opening, the study or discussion proceeds for about an hour. The materials they use have been varied. From Lynne I learned that just before I came they had been listening to taped sermons on Mark's Gospel (Appendix 4 p.78 l.16-18) and from Nell that they often used William Barclay commentaries when studying Paul's letters in the past (Appendix 4 p.87 l.5-7). Otherwise it seems that they discuss the writings of modern writers from the Catholic tradition like Henri Nouwen (Appendix 3 p.39 l.4). They have built up a library of these authors, which they share by reading during the week and talking about the issues raised during their meetings. If there is no closing prayer the meeting usually breaks at a convenient point in the text and the members disperse quite quickly, Nell to her walk and the others to their homes.

3.3.3 The recent addition of new people into this group had also altered its character. The two new members were not yet fully integrated into the more free thinking reading culture of the group. As a result they often feel the need to defend more conservative positions than might otherwise have been the case. Something of this is shown in the kind of discussions in the informal part of the meeting. In the first meeting Nell read from the writings of the Dalai Lama for about 15 minutes and expressed a great respect for Buddhism, because she felt its message of reincarnation was a relief in the unremittingly hard life of Asian peoples. At another meeting, while the group was discussing the recent abolition of the death penalty, it was Nell and Gladys who expressed the most favour. As an illustration of her views, Nell cited the example of a large institution in the Eastern Cape, built for orphans of the 1918/19 influenza, called the Ugie Koshuis. The head teacher had an enlightened regime, for that time, which did not include corporal punishment and was very successful in producing well balanced people. On the other hand, when South Africa won the World Cup of Rugby, Lynne and Hilda most enthusiastically embraced the idea that there was some kind of divine intervention in the game as a means to unify the nation. While not detracting from this idea, Nell did express some cynicism about both sides praying for help while only one can win (Appendix 1 pp. 8-10).

3.3.4 In the interviews I realised that this division should not be overemphasised. When it came to answering the question as to their motivations for reading the Bible there was a high degree of consensus in the group. The first extract is Lynne's comments on her sense of living with the Bible:

Billy *Okay, thanks. Then can I just, about studying the Bible, just a personal reflection on why you study the Bible?*

Lynne *Just because it's absolutely part of my upbringing and my life. As I've grown older I've got more and more involved in reading and studying the Bible. I'm not an intellectual at all, I don't even call myself intelligent, but I love reading the Bible, I'm not au fait at all with the Old Testament, very interested in Psalms, and that's really through my husband's love of the Psalms, I've become very interested in them, but I'm very, very remiss as far as the Old Testament is concerned. But the Gospels are just part of my life (Appendix 4 p.78 l.29-36).*

3.3.5 In the following extract from her interview, Hilda expresses a need to know something of God's plan for her life and her family, in much the same way as Mary had.

Billy *Okay. Then can I ask the second question which is why you study the Bible?*

Hilda *I'm very, very interested to know what God's plan is for me and I just feel the only way is for me to study the Bible. You know, I belong to the Catholic Church because I've always been there but I really have many, many reservations, and I also feel that I don't want to blame the church for me not being happy. It's up to me to get my quality of life so that I am happy rather than worship, perhaps in different churches. I want to be a Christian, a better Christian, and I really feel that the Bible is direct from God, and no interference about church, because I'm really not so interested in theological arguments, I really want practical information, you know. Basic things, not think about yourself so much, put the other person first. How do you spend your time?... and I think the Bible will teach me eventually exactly what's required of me (Appendix 4 p.82 l.11-21).*

3.3.6 This sentiment was echoed, to some extent, by Nell in this description of her conversion experience:

Billy *I'm sure, yes. Then the second question is, why do you study the Bible.*

Nell *Um, well, I had a conversion experience about twenty-two years ago. Before that I'd never read the Bible at all, apart from a Catholic, going and reading the liturgy at the Mass. But, I mean, that just, for the first time I discovered the Bible and it just became a part of my life... A part of my prayer life, I would say.*

Billy *Okay. And then, continuing from then, what ways do you see the Bible as important for your life and then, what is your view of the Bible in society, or, as it takes...*

Nell *Um, gosh, important for my life in that it is the word of God, so, therefore, it tells me how well God's plan for mankind, historically, if you can put it that way, but also God's intervention in mankind's, you know, from a Christian point of view. Um, important for my life because I do get my direction from the teachings of the Bible, obviously as a Christian (Appendix 4 p.85 l.11-21).*

3.3.7 In her interview, Gladys shared a sense of living with the Bible, in similar sentiments to Lynne's, but she broadens this with her description of how she uses different parts of the Bible for different purposes:

Billy *Okay. Then the second question is, why do you study the Bible?*

Gladys *I study the Bible because I find that it speaks directly to me, I read, I use the lectionary and find that um, I read it for different reasons, I read the Psalms sometimes for comforting, for strengthening, for bonding me with the human condition, with other humans somehow, the Gospels because I feel that they speak to me directly of the love of God, that they seem to resonate...(Appendix 4 p.89 l.7-12).*

3.3.8 Jane's answer to this question focus all of these responses. In very few words she eloquently expressed her sense of studying the Bible as central to her spirituality and her relationship with God and with others:

Billy *Um, to continue with that then, I want to know in which ways, in what way do you see the Bible as important in your life?*

Jane *I don't know whether to call it religion, or spirituality, or relationship, or what, but that is of vital importance to me. So, the more I can learn of the Bible, the more familiar I can become with the Bible, the better (Appendix 4 p.93 l.25 - p.94 l.3).*

These responses of Group Two also give an impression of the great importance of the Bible in their lives and their dependence on biblical texts as a guide for their spirituality and their relationship with God and the community. So in a very essential sense they share a common regard for the Bible with Group One.

3.4 Thus far I have concentrated on the differences between the groups. In the following paragraphs I will discuss two of the general patterns that emerged in the course of the study. The first was a protest at the complexity of Paul's language and argumentation. A complaint brought into sharper focus by my attempt, in the translation, to stick closely to the original Greek. The second is a strong tendency by both groups to relate issues and themes discovered in the text, to concerns in their own lives. They often had strong reactions to the text when it touched on subjects where they have passionately held views. At times these concerns seem to divide the groups evenly with Group

One being more concerned with the difficulty of the text and Group Two being concerned with pressing their own issues onto the text. But as I will illustrate below, members of both groups related to these patterns in the interviews.

3.4.1 With regard to the protests at Paul's language. The interviews show a variety of responses from the groups. Firstly, Lynne expressed her discomfort with my translation because it took her away from the comfort of the words of her familiar translation:

Billy *Okay. So the next two questions I would like a bit more detail now about what have you liked about **Romans** and the way we've been studying it?*

Lynne *I'm going to be honest, I prefer reading from my Bible because I know it so well, particularly **Romans**, I really do know the words well. I find the typewritten thing just a little stiff in comparison to reading my comfortable Bible.*

Billy *How do you mean 'stiff'?*

Lynne *I don't know, perhaps because it's on a piece of paper and typed. I don't know what it is, but I love having my Bible there and I think I like reading the pages that I know. (Appendix 4 p.80 l.1-8)*

3.4.2 Hilda and Anna also expressed their difficulty with my translation. Especially in terms of the literal translation from the Greek. However they also acknowledged that it was not easy to follow Paul's reasoning when he seems to be off at a tangent for long sections of the letter. Hilda talked about her struggles with the text in the attempt to develop her understanding.

Billy *Right. Then a bit more detail. What have you liked about **Romans** and the way we've studied the book?*

Hilda *I found it very difficult, particularly the Greek translation to it, you know to read it the first time, I it took me a few times to really understand it (Appendix 4 p.83 l.24-26).*

Anna added to this a strong statement about Paul's tendency to go into complex and seemingly tangential arguments.

Billy *Right. Okay, then, a bit more detail then. So what have you liked about **Romans** particularly and then about the way we've studied.*

Anna *Okay, I like my version better (laughs), I can understand it a bit easier than yours. A direct translation from Greek is obviously a lot more accurate than mine but, it is a little bit harder to understand, especially when it's going off on all these tangents, and that sort of thing but, no, it's definitely a very relevant book in the New Testament.*

Billy *Okay. Then the other question is what have you disliked about Romans.*

Anna *The way Paul keeps going off on all his tangents! (laughs) (Appendix 4 p.55 l.23-30)*

3.4.3 Together, these statements show a common discomfort with the text by both groups. However some members also expressed some appreciation for the difficulties of the Greek translation, which forced them to look carefully at texts which they might otherwise have glossed over. Fay especially, commented on this aspect of the translation in her interview:

Billy *Well, maybe we can ask you a development question which is what have you liked about Romans and the way we have studied it?*

Fay *Well, that kind of ties back. I must admit when we started off, I found your translation very heavy going, with all the Torah business. That was very tongue-twisting, but um, I think it was good because, instead of just being able to read a pattern of the familiar words, you actually had to read it and think what you were reading and tie it together (Appendix 4 p.65 l.13-18).*

She does not stop there, the rest of her answer returns to the theme of Paul's complexity and her frustration with his seeming inability to make a simple argument from what she sees as a clear cut issue:

Fay *I still don 't like it when Paul goes off on his little involved arguments and theories, I wished he would just make two statements which said 'you may be a Jew, you may be a Gentile but God and Jesus are for you both and for these reasons, you know? um ...As I say I don't think there is a new insight it is more a reinforcing of things I've learned before um ... things like there is a place for everybody Jew or Gentile, there is a place for everybody, whatever their diverse gifts or their high or low um contribution to the whole , that basically Jesus is the answer he has done it all for us, um... that He has paid the price already, um, other things like, the law, if your like, is there so that we can see sin for what it is and know that we must have nothing to do with it. (Appendix 4 p.55 l.19-27).*

3.4.4 In this kind of statement she is strongly supported by Harry who expresses his belief that Paul could have used brief arguments to full advantage:

Billy *Okay, now you can tell me what you dislike.*

Harry *What I didn't like was some of the long, drawn-out ways in which a particular theme, or a particular aspect was written. I think it could have been said in a more shorter way without losing its message. On the other hand, we are used to things being pretty short and precise whereas in those days maybe it was the normal way, like Victorian novels that go on and on and on. So, you know, I can accept that, but in the modern context, it does seem a bit drawn out. Some parts, not all parts. There are some really very punchy parts in there where it flowed quite well.(Appendix 4 p.58 l.7-14).*

So then, the picture which is beginning to emerge from this pattern is that of a common struggle with the text of **Romans** on the part of both groups. Interestingly though it is the more conservative people who struggle most. Those who want the text to speak clearly and give them instructions to follow, are those who express their frustration most strongly when the text does not give them what they want. It is at this point that people, who might never have considered it before, can begin to think that not every word of the Bible is relevant to their lives. In essence they begin to place their own need for Scripture to speak directly to their needs above the tradition which tells them that every word of the Bible is inspired with God's revelation.

3.5 The second pattern I want to explore touches directly on this need for Scripture to speak directly to the reader. Both groups have, to a certain extent, made the self discovery that when Scripture does not meet their needs, they will have to read their own issues and concerns into the text.

3.5.1 Nell was the member of Group Two who expressed this tendency in their group most succinctly. She also noticed that this was a repetitive feature with various people bringing up the same concerns over and over again.

Nell *I've liked the discussions among us, I have been intrigued as to how much, for me, people read their own agendas into ah .. into **Romans** or read back into **Romans** various things that we, that sort of appeal to us and somehow it seems with some more than others always coming back into it, I found that quite intriguing, recognising that we all do it, I suppose, to some degree (Appendix 4 p.86 l.34 - p.87 l.4).*

3.5.2 Robert talks about the similar tendency in Group One in terms of a kind of unity in diversity. The issues of diversity that he specifically highlights are our responses to society and our opposing views on the role of women in the church:

Robert I think we all are convinced that it has to be the backbone of society and we have to use it to establish rules, regulations, laws, etc. etc. and moral standards and ethical standards. It has to be the basis of it. I think we all agree on that but I think our individual interpretation does differ. And I think I can say that quite confidently that probably the two mostly diametrically opposed views would be between yourself and myself, when it comes to social aspects. And also our understanding of the simple thing, simple or complex thing, whichever way you want to look at it, of how a woman fits into society and how they fit into a church environment (Appendix 4 p.71 l.22-29).

3.5.3 Anna agreed wholeheartedly with Robert and expressed her appreciation for the way Group One is able to hold and express a variety of viewpoints:

Anna Okay, as I said, I like the group because it is not just everybody saying the same thing and agreeing, you know, there's discussion and you know, you sort of thought something one way and you listen to how somebody else puts it and you realise that there are all the different viewpoints, that there is a different way of looking at something, not just your own way. And, um, I find I really enjoy this group (Appendix 4 p.56 l.3-7).

Her assessment is supported by Harry who experiences the discipline of interacting with a group as a way of community building:

Billy Ja. Okay. So then can I ask you then, just coming out of that, why do you personally study the Bible?

Harry Uh, I think it's a good discipline, um, it's a learning process, there's always something new, one has never got to the stage where one knows it all. Um, and also to interact with other people within the church. And I think that builds up the church community. So that's basically why I support this group (Appendix 4 p.57 l.12-17).

3.5.4 Martin would agree, in the main, with Anna and Harry, but he sees the tolerance of diverse viewpoints and a tendency towards jocular teasing as a sign that the group has a strong bond of friendship. This leads to a relaxed atmosphere even when one member of the group is a participant observer taking note of everything that is said for his field notes:

Martin No, just that I enjoyed it, you know, and, alright, I know the group tends to get facetious and throw out odd things and all that, but all that sort of group dynamics I think is in fact quite healthy and good. And I think that it was a sign that they were relaxed enough to occasionally be a little bit stupid was a good thing. We didn't feel totally that we were under examination all the time. You know, I did enjoy it, I did, it was good (Appendix 4 p.63 l.13-17).

3.5.5 At the same time a tolerance of diverse viewpoints does not mean that these views are accepted by everyone in the group. So, when Fay answered the question in the interview about the degree of agreement in the group, she began by stating that there was unity in diversity, but went on immediately to describe her own method of testing what she hears from others with the litmus paper of her own stored knowledge of Scripture:

Fay I would think that they would, if you talk broadly. Now, on certain things we might disagree in our interpretation on what it teaches but, broadly, I think they would agree. Whether they would all use it quite so consciously to test what they're taught and hear, I'm not sure. We once had teaching on that and ever since then I have been very aware - if I am listening to preaching in church, I will be seeing whether it's what I can identify with what I've learnt from other parts of the Bible and that sort of thing (Appendix 4 p.64 l.26-31).

Hilda acknowledged a similar need for autonomy with regard to the influences she comes under in her relationship with the long standing members of Group Two:

Hilda I don't know, they've been together a very long time, they've been through a lot, they have studied a lot of Bibles and they've been to Hospice, and often I'm not right where they are, but they've certainly given me lots of books that I want to read, you know, and they're very much involved, so I'm learning a tremendous amount, and I'm not hearing it, and I don't always agree, you know, the thing about miracles, I'm one of the groups that doesn't believe in miracles, or whatever, and I don't even want to get excited about it, I just think it's not important. I'm quite happy, I want to hear what other people say, if I can use it I will use it, if not, it's your view. I think we all have an idea of where we come from, how we live and how we see things and so, you know, I don't necessarily take on other people's ideas unless I think it's right. Maybe I sound sort of over confident, I'm not, but I also want to be, you know, the ideas that I think are right, not from other people (Appendix 4 p.83 l.4-13).

3.5.6 The pattern that emerges indicates a complex relationship between the readers in each group, on the one hand they appreciate the diversity of opinions that arise in group discussion, but they are also wary of attempts by anyone to force them to accept teaching that is not meaningful in their lives. So I feel sure they would all agree with Lynne when she says:

Lynne I think they're all very, very well-read, very well... um, read and deep thinking and deep praying and deep reading. I find it a tremendous privilege belonging to their group. I think that there's a lot of wisdom amongst them all (Appendix 4 p.79 l.17-19).

3.6 This chapter has been an attempt to give a "thick" description of the reading culture of the two groups who participated in this study. I have described the essential characteristics of both groups in terms of their membership, their usual routine of meeting and some of salient features of their reading culture as I have observed it. Added to this was an attempt to describe two of the patterns that have emerged in their reading of Romans. What follows in the succeeding chapters are the summary of my findings from each group, taken first from the questionnaires that each participant filled in at the start of the study (Appendix 2) and then from my field notes of the formal part of each week's meeting (Appendix 1). Once this is done I will attempt to develop a coherent reading of Romans out of a discussion and analysis of the patterns I have found in the readings of the groups.

4. Questions on the pre-reading of Romans.

4.1 This chapter is intended to build on the previous chapter by beginning to give a more detailed summary of the data I have collected in the course of this study. In this chapter I will be summarising the data from the questionnaires which each participant filled in during the first weeks of the study. The intention of these questions was to try and collect data about the kind of prior knowledge that the participants showed about Romans. The usefulness of this kind of knowledge is twofold: Firstly it serves both as a source of confirming and disconfirming evidence, in the ethnographic sense, to later data I collected from the meetings. Secondly it is an initial standard against which any shift in perceptions, in the hermeneutic sense, may be gauged. After I have summarised I will continue with a summary of the more detailed data from my field notes.

4.2/3 The collection of this data was initially complicated by a sense among most of the participants that they had nothing to say about the letter, but with some encouragement a rich source of data was unearthed. This data will now be summarised below with each question from the questionnaire being followed by the responses from the groups.

4.2.1 **Please write me an extended comment about your reactions to Romans. I would appreciate a candid and honest reflection on absolutely anything you can think of with regard to the letter.**

The members of Group One approached Romans in a fairly uniform manner at this stage. They stated that Romans was an important book for laying down the rules of the Christian life. Tim wrote about the example of a friend's life, which he believed was a "photocopy" of the instructions given in Romans. Robert suggested that Romans could be summarised as a kind of 10 commandments for the Christian life. Fay remembered key instructions from the letter which she considered vital in her own life. Mary, Renee and Harry could not make much response to Romans without having read it again. Martin raised the idea of the complexity of the argument even at this early stage (Appendix 2 p.11-12)

In Group Two, only Lynne had any extended response to this question, writing of the way she had underlined this book over the years. She also wrote of her extensive study of Paul and her interest in him as a great figure of the Church. Gladys and Nell made no response at all. While Jane and Hilda only commented on their general unfamiliarity with the Letter (Appendix 2 p.18).

4.2.2 Have you ever read the whole of Romans?

Nearly everyone in the two groups had read Romans before, except Harry and Hilda (Appendix 2 p.12/18).

4.2.3 Do you have a favourite verse, passage or chapter in Romans? Please write out the verse in full or give the reference.

Tim, Anna and Nell chose verses from Chapter 3 which express Paul's conviction that nobody is righteous unless Jesus makes them right. Mary and Fay chose passages from the paraenesis in Chapter 12, about being genuine in love and loving ones enemies. Martin, Jane, Nell and Gladys chose passages from Chapter 8, mostly the famous verses about God caring for those who love him and the assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Nell also highlighted 2:2-16 which suggests that people have an innate knowledge of God. Other verses which Gladys quoted were 5:3-6, which talks about being patient because of God's love, and 6:3-4, about Baptism leading to new life in Christ (Appendix 2 p. 12/18).

4.2.4 If you read the Bible in your daily devotions, how often (approximately) do passages from Romans occur?

Most people felt they could not answer the question accurately. Robert hazarded a guess at once a month and Lynne agreed with him about the relative frequency with which passages from Romans occur in Bible reading notes. Tim, Anna, Martin and Nell suggested about once a year. Gladys depended on the lectionary but could not say how often. Mary summed up the other responses, saying that she rarely took notice of the book from which her daily readings came (Appendix 2 p.13/19).

4.2.5 How often are passages from Romans read in the services at your church?

Here again the responses were mainly negative. Nell and Robert suggested that it might be once a month and Martin, once a year. Gladys and Lynne said it really depended on the lectionary (Appendix 2 p.13/19).

4.2.6 How often are sermons preached on passages from Romans in your church?

Most often people had also not taken notice of the frequency of sermons on Romans. Jane felt that when a reading from Romans did come up in the lectionary it was rarely chosen as the sermon text. Fay remembered "sermons on 'Many members of one body', 'grace not works', 'love 12:9 -21', 'submit to governing authorities', 'love your neighbour'" (Appendix 2 p.13-4/19).

4.2.7 Comment on whether you think it is easy to read Romans ?

There was a mixed response to this question. Tim and Anna felt that Romans was fairly easy to read. Fay, Martin, Harry, Jane, Gladys, Lynne and Nell all found it difficult to varying degrees. Both Nell and Fay found that there were some easy flowing passages with which they were very familiar. Renee, Mary, Robert and Hilda chose to make no response to this question (Appendix 2 p.14/19).

4.2.8 Comment on whether you think it is easy to understand Romans?

Most people agreed that Romans was mostly difficult to understand especially in the complicated arguments. At the same time Anna, Harry, and Gladys did find that parts of the argument have great appeal. Once more Renee, Mary, Robert and Hilda chose to make no response to this question (Appendix 2 p.14/20).

4.2.9 Do you particularly like any part of the message of Romans? Try and explain why.

The responses to this question closely reflect the responses to 4.2.3. Tim and Anna returned to Chapter 3 and the idea that no one is righteous except through faith in Jesus. Fay returned to Chapter 12 and the passage on the renewing of the mind. Martin returned to the end of Chapter 8 which has passages on God's love for us. Nell returned to Chapter 2 which confirms her belief about innate knowledge of God leading to salvation. Mary wrote about the theme of life in God's service and the text from Chapter 7 which says if God is for us, who can be against us. Gladys concentrated on the theme of salvation through faith alone, while Lynne touches on a variety of texts from Romans. Renee, Robert, Harry, Hilda and Jane chose to make no response (Appendix 2 p.14-15/19).

4.3.1 Do you particularly dislike any part of the message of Romans ? Try and explain why.

Another set of varied responses greeted this question. Tim and Anna did not like Paul's long and complex arguments. Martin wrote particularly about the end of Chapter 7. Gladys and Nell agreed on disliking the way Chapter 13 has been used to bolster oppressive governments. Lynne wrote of her confusion about 12:20. Fay now joined Renee, Robert, Harry, Hilda and Jane in choosing to make no response to this question (Appendix 2 p.15/20-21).

4.3.2 What do you believe is the relevance of Romans for your life as a Christian? Explain in detail.

Those who responded in Group One wrote about the rules of Christian behaviour in one way or another. Martin wrote on the way all books in the Bible are part of the fabric of God's teaching

and Mary highlighted the idea of doing unto others as you would have them do to you. Gladys finds the message of salvation by grace very liberating from her legalistic past, as does Nell who had a Catholic education which taught that even an inadvertent sin could condemn one to hell. Lynne finds the message very up to date and is comforted that others are confused by Paul. Renee, Robert, Harry and Hilda chose to make no response (Appendix 2 p.16/21).

4.3.3 Are you excited by what you might learn from this study of Romans?

Everyone except Harry answered "Yes", he was only interested (Appendix 2 p.16/21).

4.3.4 Explain your answer:

Most respondents were excited about the prospect of a more in depth study of Romans which would broaden their view of the book. The main expectation was that I would bring the insights of my academic study of the letter to challenge them. Fay hoped that we would not go too deeply into the arguments about the relationship between Law and Sin. Renee, Mary and Hilda made no response (Appendix 2 p.16-17/22).

4.3.5 Now that you have answered all these questions is there anything else **you would like** to comment on?

Only Mary, Gladys and Nell responded to this question. Mary wrote about her awareness of God's care for her and how she responded to that by having a simple belief in the Word. Gladys wrote about the way the message of Romans has helped to quieten the accusing voices from her childhood. Nell skimmed the letter and recognised many passages from the liturgy and again expressed her pleasure at the opportunity to study the whole book. (Appendix 2 p.17/22).

4.4 The main patterns arising from the questionnaire show that many of the concerns which I have already highlighted were already present at the beginning of the study. Participants were eager to get clear guidelines from the study of Romans, which would help them in their Christian life. They were aware of the great complexity of the arguments in the letter which they continued to highlight during the study. Many also were approaching the study of the letter with many of their own concerns firmly fixed in their minds. The new feature that appears is a distrust of their own ability to respond to Romans with anything that could be of interest to an academic study. This was most chronic in the cases of Mary and Hilda who barely answered any of the questions in the questionnaire and were very self deprecating when I initially approached them about the interviews. There was also a general expectation that my academic knowledge would somehow transform the way they read the letter. This was at odds with my desire to hear their voices interpreting the text

and occasionally led to some discontent when I refused to commit myself to any "right" answer. The last thing to notice is, that despite their inability to remember the frequency that texts from Romans occurred in their devotional and church life, once they began to study, the letter their antennae were especially sensitive and they recognised texts from Romans many times over the weeks. Martin commented on this in his interview:

Martin I have read Romans through, sort of thing, but, I think your mind often tends to switch off to the early bit when you're reading the latter bit type of thing. Naturally studying it is different, reading it out aloud or having it read aloud as you're following it, and then talking about it, and then rereading bits and all that, certainly a much better grasp than I had prior to it. And, um, also, I suppose just because, while we've been studying it, its cropped up so often in church services both at St Matthew's and at St Johns, um, we're suddenly aware, but I know that quote, I know where it comes from, I actually can put it more into context, and we've talked about it and we know what it means. You know, so it's been quite exciting from that point of view (Appendix 4 p.62 l.11-19).

4.5 In summarizing the data from the questionnaires in this chapter I have been trying to give an idea of the initial responses of ordinary readers to Romans. In the following Chapters I will summarize their responses to the text as they read it. At the same time I will add my own comments in which I will try to highlight common patterns in the responses of the groups. In addition I will try to continue to foreground the patterns already discussed in the preceding chapters.

5/7. Ordinary readers reading Romans.

5.1 Some preliminary remarks:

5.1.1 The following Chapters are a summary of the field notes I took during the meetings I held with the both groups over a period of six to eight weeks in June and July 1995. The presentation of this data takes the form of a commentary on short passages from **Romans** summarised from the discussion of each group. This is followed by some of my own observations on the patterns of interpretation arising from their reading and also incorporating some of my own views of passages of the text. Also included in these observations will be comments on the ways in which this reading has broken down. The cause of these breakdowns was my attempt at various stages to read larger sections of the text than the participants could process and interpret coherently. The result of this is that at times the patterns which could have emerged from a slower, more careful reading of the text have been swallowed up in generalisations which do not reflect the true interpretive potential of the readers.

5.1.2 In these preliminary remarks I must also make some comments on my translation of **Romans** which we read during the study. My initial comment must concern my reasons for choosing to present my own translation of the text of **Romans** when there are so many others to chose from. A new translation is a tool for escaping, at least in part, from four centuries of interpretation which have impacted on most commercial translations of the Bible. A commercial translator must attempt to make the language easier for the reader to understand or, in other cases, the translator will try to retain as much of the flavour and character of a well loved passage, only altering it when the results of scholarship make this necessary. In this translation I have tried to present the readers with the challenge of a fresh and perhaps crude translation to open their eyes to the text once more. As support for this course of action I present below a quotation from the introduction of Herman Waetjen's book **A Reordering of Power** in which he justifies his translation of the Gospel of Mark which appears in that book. I included this quotation on the front cover of each copy of the text which I presented to the participants:

An effort has been made to reproduce much of the ... character of [the] Greek as possible within the bounds of intelligibility. This includes following the author's syntax in the sentence construction of the translation... More important, however, any word that appears more than once in the original Greek text is translated with the same English equivalent whenever possible for the sake of consistency building. As a result the translation may seem to be eccentric, strange, even inept, but it is hoped that these very qualities will contribute to an new experience of meaning. Since key words are woven through the text in order to produce an intricate pattern of themes, a literal rather than a literary translation will, it is hoped, enable the reader to perceive wordplays and thematic developments and consequently foster a more meaningful interaction with the story world of the Gospel (Waetjen 1989: xi).

5.2 1:1-17

(1) Paul slave¹ of Christ Jesus, called to be a messenger², set aside for the purposes of the good news of God,(2) which he proclaimed in advance as good news³, through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures⁴ (3) concerning his son, who was born of the seed of David, according to the flesh, (4) who was appointed son of God in power according to the Holy Spirit, because of his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord⁵, (5) through whom we have received grace⁶ and sending out, with the aim of the obedience of faith, among the Gentiles⁷ on behalf of his name, (6) and you also are among those called by Jesus Christ, (7) to all those who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be holy ones⁸, grace to you and peace from God our Father and our lord Jesus Christ.

(8) Firstly I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, regarding all of you because your faith is being proclaimed to the whole world.(9) God, whom I serve in my spirit, in the good news of his son, is my witness of how constantly I make remembrance of you (10) at all times in my prayers asking if eventually I may succeed through the will of God to come to you.(11) For I long to see you so that I may give a share of some spiritual gift so as to strengthen you (12) so that we may be mutually encouraged through each other's faith, yours and mine. (13) I do not wish you to be unaware of the fact, brothers, that I often planned to come to you, but I have been prevented until this time, so that I may have some fruit among you just as among the other Gentile nations. (14) Greeks and Barbarians, wise and foolish are my obligation, (15) which is my eagerness to preach the good news also to you in Rome.(16) For I am not ashamed of the good news for it is the power of God towards the salvation of all who believe, Jews first and Greeks.(17) For the righteousness⁹ of God is revealed in it from faith to faith, as it is written: " The righteous shall live by faith"

¹ The word δούλος (LSJ s.v. δούλος I) is more accurately translated as "slave" rather than "servant" which would be διακονος (LSJ s.v. διακονος I.1.). In the LXX the title δούλος is used of David and the prophets to mean someone who is special to God (BAG s.v. δούλος 4).

² ἀποστολος (LSJ s.v. ἀποστολευς II) is derived from the verb ἀποστελλω (LSJ s.v. ἀποστελλω II) meaning "I send out or dispatch". The noun then means someone who is sent out and comes to mean a messenger, ambassador or envoy. Each of these categories of people carries a special authority from the person who sent them.

³ The verbs προεπαγγελλομαι (LSJ s.v. προεπαγγελλω I) and ευαγγελιζομαι (LSJ s.v. ευαγγελεω) are both compound verbs including the root αγγελος (LSJ s.v. αγγελος I, αγγελλω) which also means envoy or messenger.

⁴ This is literally translated "writings" but I have left the translation as "scriptures" because Paul is referring to the Hebrew concepts of תּוֹרָה (KB s.v. תּוֹרָה 4.) and כְּתוּבִים (KB s.v. כְּתוּבִים), the law and the prophets, rather than simply to the writings or סְפָרִים (KB s.v. סְפָרִים 5.)

⁵ I have tried to translate this as literally as possible to bring out the adoptionist christology implicit in the Davidic descent and the verb ὀρίζομαι (LSJ s.v. ὀρίζω III.1.) which is further emphasized by the contrast between σαρξ (LSJ s.v. σαρξ II.3.) and πνευμα (LSJ s.v. πνευμα IV). For a full discussion of this point see Jewett R. 1985 The redaction and use of an early christian confession in Romans 1: 3-4 in Groh D.E. & Jewett R. eds. The living text: essays in honour of Ernest W. Saunders Lanham, University Press of America p. 99 - 122

⁶ χάρις carries the sense of a favour bestowed by the kindness and goodwill of the doer and the sense of a favour received in the gratitude of the receiver (LSJ s.v. χάρις III)

⁷ ἔθνος can mean any group who lives together a clan, tribe or a nation. In the Jewish vocabulary τὰ ἔθνη are all those nations who are not Jews hence Gentiles (LSJ s.v. ἔθνος I.2.b)

⁸ This term ἁγίους is often translated saints. This is because the word saint is derived via French from the latin word sanctus meaning "a holy thing or person" which is also the meaning of the greek term (LSJ s.v. ἁγιος I: Concise Oxford s.v. saint 1.4)

⁹ The noun δικαιοσυνη is traditionally translated as "righteousness" in the NT (LSJ s.v. δικαιοσυνη I), but it must be noted that the root verb δικη also includes the concepts of customary order, law and justice (LSJ s.v. δικη I.II.III). So in verse 18 when the negative form ἀδικια appears I will translate it as wickedness and injustice to pick up the meaning of crimes against good order and the law (LSJ s.v. ἀδικεω I: ἀδικος I).

5.2.1 The initial reaction of this group was to ask technical questions about aspects of the text and my translation of it. Robert wanted to know if there was some kind of qualitative difference between the terms slave and servant in regard to my note 1 and the translation of *δουλος* as a slave. My response was to point out that the term slave (*δουλος*) is the one used in the LXX of prophets and others with a close relationship with God (See note 1). I suggested that Paul uses it to suggest that he is equivalent to these figures from the Old Testament. He also wanted to know if Greeks and Gentiles were the same, because I translate Greeks were other versions translate Gentiles. I answered that the word used here is *Ἕλληνας* (LSJ s.v. *Ἕλληνας* II.2:3) which is the Greek's word for themselves, as opposed to all others who were Barbarians. For Jews however most Gentiles (*τῶν Ἑθνῶν*) would have been Greek speaking so the terms may have been interchangeable. Later in the meeting he also raised the idea that the opposition of Greeks and Barbarians seemed to show a kind of Greek Chauvinism and he wondered if Paul as Greek speaking Roman Jew may not have shared this prejudice. In response I talked about evidence from Philippians that he belonged to a Hebrew speaking congregation which would suggest that he did not. Harry's question was about the order of the names Christ Jesus or Jesus Christ. My answer explained that as Christ was a title it could come before or after the name, like Lord Jesus or Jesus the Lord. He also wanted to know if 1:17 was the famous verse taken up by Luther during the Reformation. I pointed out that this is one of Paul's favourite OT quotations and it also occurs in Galatians. Fay remarked that we should be like Paul and not be ashamed of the Gospel. Their collective reaction to the style of the greeting section of the letter was that there seemed to be a contradiction between Paul commending the Romans for their faith at one moment and then talking about his eagerness to share some spiritual gift with them. This could be interpreted as a diplomatic way of preparing the Romans for some of the harsh things he has to say but could also be a genuine desire to share support and mutual encouragement with them. Martin used the analogy of a letter to an errant child, which begins with affectionate praise and goes on to admonish the child as the main point of the letter (Appendix 3 p.23 l.5 - p.24 l.23).

5.2.2 This group also responded to this introduction with technical questions. Nell began by asking about verse four and the idea of Jesus being made the son of God by an act of power. This entailed a fuller explanation of Paul's possible redaction of the early Christian confession and his understanding of the contrast between *σὰρξ* and *πνεῦμα* (see note 5). There was also some lively discussion on Nell's following question as to whether the doctrine of the Trinity had emerged by this stage of Christian theology. My response was to point to the very clear identification of the Father and the

Son in v.7 and to say that this is at least an indication that separate persons in God had been isolated at this point. Nell also initiated the next discussion which explored how the Gospel got to Rome and whether Paul was writing to Christians. Her interest in this question was piqued by her recent visit to China where she met a youth who claimed to be a Christian. He seemed to have some experience at a church in the city of Gualin and travelled in regularly from his village to attend services. Her surprise at finding a Christian so far off the beaten track had now made her think of the way Christianity may have spread in the first century. I did not want to get into this discussion before we had the chance to read the following sections of the letter. The discussion concluded with the discovery of the unusual pairing of Greeks and Barbarians in v.14, rather than Jews and Greeks in v.16. It was suggested that whomever Paul was trying to address he was trying to appeal to a wide range of people who fell under these labels (c.f. Appendix 3 p. 38 I.1-25).

5.2.3 The pattern emerging from this initial encounter with the letter is that both groups entered into the discussion by asking technical questions. This device seems to have been a way of handling the awkwardness of initial encounters with a text they had not read. This was especially true of Group Two where, having been barely introduced to the new members, we plunged into the study. However as the first meeting progressed the participants were able to relax and enter into some of the issues of who was being addressed by the letter and Paul's relationship to them.

5.3 1: 18-32:

(18) For wrath is being revealed from the heavens¹⁰ against all the ungodliness and injustice of people who hold back the truth with their wickedness, (19) because what is known of God is manifest to them: for God has manifested it to them. (20) For his invisible attributes have been clearly seen with understanding from the creation of the universe through the things that have been made, his eternal power and divinity¹¹, so that they are without excuse, (21) because knowing God they neither glorified God as God nor gave thanks, but were thoughtless in their reasoning and darkened in their stupid hearts. (22) Asserting that they are wise they have become foolish (23) and exchanged the glory of the imperishable God with counterfeit images¹² in the form of perishable humans and birds and quadrupeds and reptiles. (24) Because of this God handed them over into the custody¹³ of the desires of their hearts to the unclean practice of dishonouring their bodies among themselves: (25) they exchanged the truth of God with a lie and were in reverence of and

¹⁰ The word *ουρανος* commonly means "sky" but my translation takes into account the more technical meaning in religious sources where it means heaven the abode of the gods or God depending on your perspective (LSJ s.v. *ουρανος* I.3:2).

¹¹ These are God's invisible attributes, which I have left in their original place in the Greek sentence.

¹² The two words here *ομοιωματα* and *εικων* both have the meaning of "image" but the first carries the idea of being in the form of something else and the second the idea of a semblance or a phantom, so together they make up my rather expanded translation (LSJ s.v. *ομοιωματα* II.1:1; *εικων* II).

¹³ The term *παραδιδωμι* carries with it the idea of betrayal leading to arrest and the handing over of the prisoners to the legal authorities (LSJ s.v. *παραδιδωμι* I.2:3).

served the creatures rather than the Creator, who is praised until eternity, Amen. (26) Because of this God handed them into the custody of dishonourable passions, for their females exchanged the natural sexual usage¹⁴ for that against nature. (27) In the same way their males giving up their natural sexual usage of the females, were inflamed with their lust for each other, males in males performing reprehensible acts through their ungraceful labour¹⁵ and receiving the retribution necessary for their error in themselves. (28) And just as they did not approve to have God in knowledge, God handed them over to the custody of a mind worthy of disapproval, to do things which are not proper, (29) having been filled with all unrighteousness, evil, avarice, wickedness, filled with envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, (30) slander, God-hatred, pride, arrogance, boastfulness, inventors of evils, disobedient of their elders, (31) stupid, faithless, heartless, merciless: (32) Although they recognise the righteous decree¹⁶ of God that those doing these things are worthy of death, they not only do these things but are also in approval of those who practice them.

5.3.1 The initial response to this section was a sense of shock at the catalogue of vices that Paul is able to dredge up in v.29-31. After Mary had expressed her disappointment at how little the world seems to have changed, despite 2000 years of Christianity, there was some discussion regarding the impression we all carry that the old days were somehow more moral. Mary then shared her conviction that in her younger days it really seemed as if South Africa and England were moral places while all the evil emanated from America. After further discussion it was agreed that much of the impression of morality was created by the fact that vices which are now practised openly were covert. Robert's suggestion that we have progressed in the respect that we no longer worship idols was soon countered by the assertion that stone images had simply been replaced by money, sport, famous people etc. When asked to identify who is being addressed here there was much confusion owing to the mixed signals in the text. Their rejection of God seemed to suggest that lapsed Jews were the audience, while their morals seemed to suggest that they were Romans. A more generalising suggestion was that this admonition applied to everybody. However there did seem to be consensus that these people were probably not Christians (c.f. Appendix 3 p.24 l.23 - 25 l.9).

5.3.2 This second group began by reacting in much the same way as the first. Once they had identified the people being addressed as the general Roman community, Nell noted with interest that they are accused of deliberately and arrogantly rejecting what is good, even though they know what it is. Gladys and Jane felt that many people still arrogantly rejected God in this way. Hilda suggested that this is still a clear description of the kind of sexual morals found today. But when Pam asked how a loving God can be wrathful, they agreed that the wrath to be meted out on these people comes

¹⁴ *χρησις* is literally "usefulness" or "usage" but here as in other places it is also a euphemism for sexual inclinations (LSJ s.v. *χρησις* I.3)

¹⁵ Paul's image here is very graphic. I have tried to capture this by including more than one meaning of *ασχημοσυνη* (LSJ s.v. *ασχημονειν* I -σσυνη) and *κατεργαζομαι* (LSJ s.v. *κατεργαζομαι* I.1) in my translation.

¹⁶ literally "a decree by which a wrong is set right"

out of God/Paul's disappointed love for them rather than out of a desire for revenge. Nell had some sympathy for the people having read Henri Nouwen who suggests that sometimes depravity results from intolerable circumstances in people's lives. Gladys also felt that this was perhaps a description of the reasons why Jesus had to come into the world (c.f. Appendix 3 p.38 l.21 - 39 l.9).

5.3.3 In this and the following section I was trying to get both groups to identify the two groups of addressee's in the letter. So, despite much prompting on the part of Group One, I was reluctant to give my opinion as to whom Paul's was addressing at this point. In each case I moved the discussion on to the beginning of Chapter 2, so that we could try and identify the next group. The interesting pattern, that emerges from this section, is the immediate common cause that both groups have with Paul in abhorring all kinds of depravity of the flesh. However Group Two was also willing to temper their abhorrence with compassion. This reflects my experience of working with them in the past. They are much more reflective and refuse to accept opinions simply because they are the doctrine of a church or are accepted by the majority of Christians.

5.4 2:1-12:

(1) Therefore you are without defence, every person who passes judgement: for whatever judgement you pass on others, you pass judgement against yourself, for as the one passing judgement you do the same things. (2) We know that the judgement of God against those practising these things is according to truth. (3) You must calculate this, O person, the one passing judgement on those who practice these things, and who also does these things, whether you will be able to escape from the judgement of God? (4) Or do you look down upon the riches of his kindness, of his forbearance, of his patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (5) with regard to your hard and unrepentant heart you are storing up for yourself a treasure¹⁷ of wrath on the day of wrath and the uncovering of the righteous decree of God (6) who "will give out to each according to his works": (7) on the one hand those who with persistence of good work seek glory, honour and imperishability, eternal life, (8) to those on the other hand who through quarrelling and disobedience are persuaded against the truth into wickedness, wrath and anger¹⁸. (9) Distress and difficulty upon every human soul committing evil deeds, Jews first and Greeks: (10) glory and honour and peace to all those doing good things, Jews first and Greeks: (11) for there is no respecting of persons in the presence¹⁹ of God.

5.4.1 The group began the discussion of this section by relating it back to the previous section. They noticed a contradiction between Paul's injunction against passing judgement and his own judgemental

¹⁷ θησαυρίζω (LSJ s.v. θησαυρίζω 1.) has the specific meaning of storing up treasure

¹⁸ The θυμός is literally the centre of life in the body and as such it is also the seat of the passions, love, hatred, anger (LSJ s.v. θυμός I: II) In this case it is used abstractly of anger just as earlier επιθυμία was used of the sexual passions or desires of the heart 1:24 (LSJ s.v. επιθυμew I.1 - ια).

¹⁹ The preposition παρὰ with the dative case can have the sense of being before or in the presence of a judge, in this case God (LSJ s.v. παρὰ B. II.3)

catalogue of vices. It seemed to them that Paul was putting himself above sin or claiming to be the channel of God's judgement. This combined with a discussion of the identity of the people addressed here. Martin took my hint and suggested that the addressees in the previous section were Gentiles and those in the present section were Jews. To add to this insight I offered the information that the vices catalogued by Paul may have been a standard list of Gentile perversions from the Jewish perspective. Martin suggested that this could have been a set up, the Jews could have been nodding knowingly at this list and then suddenly find the accusations turned against them. The discussion continued with what was to be a familiar theme in the coming weeks, the difficulty and complexity of Paul's language and his style of argumentation. Fay asked whether I thought the original audience would have enjoyed this style of argument. Robert suggested that they would have gone home and told their family that the church had another of those awful letters from Paul. My own suggestion was that this was evidence that the letter was an oral performance by Paul, dictated to a secretary, rather than a reasoned written essay (Appendix 3 p. 25 I.19-27).

- 5.4.2 There were a variety of opinions about this section. Gladys identified the addressee's here as Jews. Pam and Nell, on the other hand began a discussion about whether the Church should be telling people how to behave in the way that Paul seems to be doing here. Gladys felt the church should lead by example. Hilda felt that this example should be Christ. Nell was very wary of imposing Christian ways of doing things on other people even to the point of questioning the role of evangelisation in the world today. Gladys and Lynne thought that perhaps what Paul was trying to express here was his own feeling of being freed from the Law. The discussion was becoming inconclusive so I introduced my information about the Jewish stereotyping of Gentile behaviour. This elicited the response that the world does not change, we are still racially stereotyping each other and we noticed also that many of the perversions listed were the kind of thing Jews were accused of by Christians over the centuries (c.f. Appendix 3 p.39 I.9-23).
- 5.4.3 The emerging pattern here seems to be a discontent with people who do not practice what they preach. Although I don't believe Group One would go as far as to dispute the Church's right to regulate behaviour, they did balk at the blatant contradiction in Paul's argument which seemed to condemn others for doing precisely what he had just been doing.

5.5 2:12-29:

(12) For however many have sinned outside Torah²⁰, will also be destroyed outside Torah, but however many have sinned in Torah, will have judgement passed on them through Torah: (13) for it is not those listening to Torah who are righteous in the presence of God, but those who do Torah who will be made righteous. (14) For whenever the Gentiles²¹, those not having Torah by origin, naturally²² do Torah, they having no Torah are Torah in themselves: (15) They show the works of Torah written in their hearts, seeing that their conscience provides witness and their arguments with one another accuse or even offer defense, (16) On that day God will judge the hidden things of people according to my good news through Christ Jesus. (17) If then you name yourself Jew and you depend upon Torah and boast in God (18) and you know the will and you discern the things that matter, being instructed from Torah, (19) you have confidence in yourself to be a guide for the blind, light to those in darkness, (20) a trainer of the foolish, a teacher of the young, having the embodiment of knowledge and truth in Torah: (21) Therefore the one teaching others, do you not teach yourself? You preach not to steal, you steal? (22) The one saying not to commit adultery, you commit adultery? The one loathing the idols, do you rob temples? (23) You who boast in Torah, through the transgression of Torah you dishonour God: (24) For "the name of God through you is being blasphemed among the Gentiles," just as it is written. (25) For circumcision on the one hand benefits you if you practice Torah: if on the other hand you are a transgressor of Torah, your circumcision becomes like having a foreskin²³. (26) If then having a foreskin, you keep the just requirements²⁴ of Torah, will having a foreskin not be regarded as circumcision? (27) But you will be judged, by those who naturally have a foreskin who fulfil Torah, you who by virtue of the written code and circumcision are a transgressor of Torah. (28) For it is not the one who is visible who is a Jew, nor the circumcision which is visible in the flesh, (29) but the one who is a Jew in a hidden manner, and who has a circumcised heart in the Spirit not the written code, not the one whose praise is from people but from God.

5.5.1 The reaction by the group was very strong. Their impression was that Paul was making rather a meal of this argument when it was possible to say what he was saying in a straight forward and simple manner. They did go on to emphasize that this was not only because of the literal nature of my translation but was true for translations that tried very hard to make the convoluted reasoning plain. Their concession to Paul was that his complex reasoning may have been more acceptable to his audience, than it is to us who have become used to more economic use of words. They thought that primary receivers for this message still seemed to be the Jews who are mentioned in v.17 - 22. However they also thought there was a strong case being made in the latter

²⁰ I will use the term Torah for νόμος here because I believe Paul is using the term in the very restricted Jewish sense (LSJ s.v. νόμος I.1.b). I translate ἀνομος as "outside Torah" to contrast with ἐν νόμῳ later in the verse.

²¹ As I stated in note 7 τὰ ἔθνη are all those nations who are not Jews hence Gentiles (LSJ s.v. ἔθνος I.2.b)

²² I have translated φύσει twice here to reflect its position in the sentence could read either "τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει. τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν" or "τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα. φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν" (LSJ s.v. φύσις I:11).

²³ ἀκροβυστία is literally a foreskin but here it is used metaphorically of the state of uncircumcision (LSJ s.v. ἀκροβυστία II).

²⁴ δίκαιωματὰ translated here as "righteous decree" (LSJ s.v. δίκαιωμα II.1). see also Chapter 1 note 9 for the root meaning of δίκη.

verses (27-9) for the innate goodness of the Gentiles who can act like true Jews and show up those Jews who don't fulfil Torah (c.f. Appendix 3 p.25 l.29 - p.26 l.9).

5.5.2 This group also picked up immediately that the message of these verses could be interpreted as an argument for the innate goodness of many people who are not Christians and stand against a fundamentalist assertion that all people who are not Christians would go to hell. Nell was most passionate on the subject and went so far as to say she believed in a kind of innate Gospel or natural law which could bring people to salvation. I pointed out that this argument could also be turned against people as it was in 1:18. If people are innately following the Gospel then they should immediately become Christians as soon as they hear the Gospel or this will be used to condemn them. Jane and Gladys emphasized the role of love in our relationship to God. Jesus puts us in the right relationship with God and this leads to the fulfilment of the law. They also expressed the belief that Paul knew from his experience in Judaism that fulfilling the law was impossible and that it was Jesus who made a true Jew and brought people into a relationship with God they could never have had in Judaism (c.f. Appendix 3 p.39 l.24 - 40 l.2).

5.5.3 The common pattern with both groups is their recognition that there is some scope here for interpreting certain verses in this section as an argument for an innate knowledge of God in those who are not Christians. The other patterns to emerge here strongly, are a concern with the complexity of the language and argumentation used by Paul, and a concern to relate what they were reading in the text to their own passionately held views

5.6 3:1-20

(1) What then is extraordinary about being a Jew or the advantage of circumcision? (2) much in every way: Firstly because they have been entrusted²⁵ with the sayings of God. Why? If some have been unfaithful, surely their lack of faith will not nullify the faithfulness of God: (4) May it never be so²⁶! Let God be true and every person a liar, as it is written:

"So that you may be made righteous in your words and prevail in your judgement²⁷."

(5) If our unrighteousness is faced with the righteousness of God, what shall we say? I say, as a human, that in the coming events of wrath, God is not unjust²⁸. (6) May it never be so! Since how will God judge the world? (7) If the truth of God has abounded in my lies to his glory, why do I still sentence myself as

²⁵ The verb here *επιστευθησαν* is the aorist passive of *πιστευω* which can mean "I trust, have faith or believe" (LSJ s.v. *πιστευω πιστ-ευμα, -ευω* I.1). In English it is not possible to be enfaithed or enbelieved with some thing, so I have chosen to translate the verb as entrusted otherwise it will translated consistently with forms of faith.

²⁶ The verb here is the optative mood of *γιγνομαι*, which is used very seldom in the NT and then almost always with the idea of strongly negated potential which it carries here (LSJ s.v. *γιγνομαι* I.3).

²⁷ Here I will translate a form of *κρινω* as judgement (LSJ s.v. *κρινω* II.3)

²⁸ Here I translate *αδικος* as "unjust" taking into account the legal implications of God's wrath (LSJ s.v. *αδικος* II.1).

a sinner? (8) Also not like we have been blasphemed, like some are saying we say : Shall we do evil so that good may come? The judgement against them is just²⁹. (9) What then? Have we excelled? By no means: For we have made the charge in advance that Jews and also Greeks are all under sin, (10) as it is written: "There is no one righteous not one,(11) there is no one understanding, there is no one seeking out God. (12) All have turned away, at the same time they have become useless: There is no one doing useful things, [there is no one]³⁰ even as many as one³¹. (13) Their throats are graves standing open, their tongues are deceitful, snakes poison is on their lips: (14) Their mouths are full of curses and bitterness, (15) their feet are swift to pour out blood like water, (16) afflictions and hardship in their paths, (17) and the path of peace, they do not know. (18) There is no fear of God opposite their eyes. (19) We know that however Torah speaks, it is said, to those who are in Torah, so that every mouth may be fortified, and the whole world become liable to sentence by God: (20) Therefore out of the works of Torah all flesh³² shall not be made righteous in his sight, for through Torah we recognised sin.

- 5.6.1 Once again there was a struggle with the density of the argument in this text, but once they had reached the meaning, the group noticed the contrast of this passage with the previous passages. Fay was very taken with Paul's very strong statement of the faithfulness of God even when people have been unfaithful. Otherwise they recognised this as a series of arguments that Paul is trying to refute. The conclusion of this section is the quotation which renders all arguments futile because it places all people under the sentence of God (c.f. Appendix 3 p.26 I.9-19).
- 5.6.2 Again there was a variety of responses to the passage. Nell recognised it as saying that we are all under sin. For Gladys it carried the message that righteousness is a gift from God and this undermines the importance of the Law as a path to righteousness. Other responses recorded under this section in my notes will be discussed along with the next passage because they seem to fit more easily there (c.f. Appendix 3 p.40 I.2-10).
- 5.6.3 The brevity of responses to this passage reflect both the extreme complexity of the argumentation and the simplicity of the message that it is trying to convey. Paul wants to state two of the central tenants of his message that will come up again and again in his argument. Firstly that God is faithful to the Jews even though they have been unfaithful by not recognising the revelation of Jesus. Secondly to state the conviction that the Jews and the Gentiles are judged to be equally under a sentence for their sinfulness from which the Torah can by no means save them.

²⁹ ἐνδίκως carries connotations of litigation and a very strong sense of a just judgement having been passed (LSJ s.v. ἐνδίκ-αἰσθαλίαι, -ος I.1)

³⁰ The Greek text at this point becomes very obscure, the brackets indicate a phrase for which the evidence, for and against, is equally strong so the editors have decided to sit on the fence.

³¹ The following section is troubling for me, the Hebrew of the source, Ps 14:3, reads "not even one", while the LSJ (s.v. εἰς II.1.b) lists this verse as an example where the particle εἰς can mean "as far as" so my translation tries to reflect this idea and the Hebrew original.

³² σαρκίς is literally "flesh" or "meat" but here used metaphorically as the non spiritual part of humans (LSJ s.v. σαρκίς II.1).

5.7 3:21-31

(21) But now, apart from Torah, a righteousness from God has been revealed to which testimony is given by Torah and the prophets, (22) righteousness from God through faith in Jesus Christ to all those who have faith in him. For there is no distinction, (23) for all have sinned and failed to obtain the glory of God, (24) being made righteous as a gift of his grace through the payment of the ransom in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God offered as a sacrifice, through faith in his blood, as a demonstration of his righteousness, because of his remission of former sins. (26) By holding back, God was able to demonstrate his righteousness in the present critical age³³ so that he would be righteous and the one who makes righteous those with faith in Jesus. (27) Where then the boasting? It is shut out. Through what principle of Torah? Of the works? Never, but through the Torah of faith. (28) For we recognise that a person is made righteous because of faith apart from the works of Torah. (29) Is God, God of the Jews alone? Not also of the Gentile nations? Yes also of the Gentiles, (30) since God is one who will make righteous the circumcised from faith and the uncircumcised³⁴ through this faith. (31) Do we then nullify Torah through this faith? May it never be so! Rather we set Torah to rights.

5.7.1 There was great relief when we came to this passage because it presented a moment of light relief from the rigours of tortuous Pauline argumentation. There were many theories in this regard. Harry suggested that it was because Paul got a new secretary who could follow his dictation better or that the earlier part were rough notes which he had meant to come back and edit later. Martin, Fay and Renee concluded that it was more likely that the truth of the Gospel message was beginning to shine through all Paul's legal language. Instead of trying to put complicated arguments Paul is talking from the heart of his own experience in moving from legalism to faith in Jesus. For Renee and Harry this was very important because it gave this passage a direct relevance to our lives and experience while the legal arguments were largely irrelevant. My own suggestion on this point was that it might be useful to compare the points at which Paul is complicated in his reasoning and at which points he is simple. This may have a lot to tell us about the strength of the conviction with which he is writing (c.f. Appendix 3 p.26 l.20-27).

5.7.2 The main response in this section arose out of some confused feelings among the group on the subject of Jesus death and its meaning for Christians. Jane began with her rejection of the idea that Jesus took our sin upon him. Her idea in response to the reading of this and the previous passage was that rather than taking out sin, Jesus encourages us not to sin by being in relationship with him. Nell added to this later by rejecting the idea that God sent Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins. She is influenced by the idea that Jesus message was to preach that God wanted to save us

³³ The phrase *εν τω νυν καιρω* literally combines the word "now" with the term for "season, a critical period of time or age". I have tried to reflect both these meanings (LSJ s.v. *καιρος* III.2-4) and also to suggest the eschatological connotations of the term in the NT (BAG s.v. *καιρος* 4).

³⁴ From now on *ακροβυστια* will be translated as "uncircumcised"

through his love, but that the message was rejected and this resulted in his death and the failure of his message. In contrast to these ideas Lynne, Gladys, Hilda and Pam tried in various ways to counter these suggestions with more traditional notions of the cross. That our sins are like driving nails deeper in Jesus body or that a sacrificial death on the cross was necessary to expiate our sins and the consequent resurrection was what gave meaning to our belief in God's power to save. From these hard positions attitudes soon softened. Nell claimed that although God had not planned the sacrificial death, he did use it to show love and accomplish our salvation. Jane joined Hilda with the idea that Jesus and God planned the sacrifice together because they knew it would be easier for us to communicate with Jesus. So the emphasis was steered away from the sacrifice, to God's love for us and his suffering as a parent when a child falls foul of its own mistakes. This was reinforced by the response to Pam when she asked if anyone felt burdened by their sin. Everyone answered strongly in the negative (c.f. Appendix 3 p.40 l. 10-28).

5.7.3 There seems to be no agreement here between the two groups. Group One appears to be concentrating on their joy in finding a piece of the argument in Romans that seems to speak directly into their situation. Group Two on the other hand seems to want to plum a variety of philosophical depths according to the dearly held views of the members. And I am beginning to show a fascination with the correlation between the degree of complication in the argumentation and the amount of conviction that Paul has about the point he is trying to make. This is particularly apparent in Paul's ability to try and make complex proofs of a point until he is nearly incoherent in his complexity and then simply to stop shake himself off and make much the same point in clear crisp language without so much as a Scripture reference of proof in sight. With these rare examples of eloquence to guide me I am led to question the efficacy and conviction of long passages of the text of Romans.

5.8 4:1-12

(1) Then what shall we say, have we found Abraham to be our ancestor according to flesh? (2) For if Abraham was made righteous from works he has a boast, but not towards God. (3) For what does the Scripture say?

"Abraham had faith in God and it was recognised to be righteousness in him."

(4) A wage is not recognised as being due to the worker as a grace and favour³⁵ but because it is an obligation, (5) but to the one who does not work, but has faith in the one who makes the impious righteous,

³⁵ Here *χάρις* translates better as "favour", so I have combined the meanings so that the consistency of translating *χάρις* as grace is not lost (LSJ s.v. *χάρις* I.III)

his faith will be recognised as righteousness: (6) Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the person whom God recognises as righteous apart from the works:

"(7) Blessed are those whose lawlessness³⁶ is set aside and whose sins are covered up: (8) Blessed the man in whom the Lord does not recognise sin." (9) Is this blessedness then for the circumcised or uncircumcised? For we say that through faith Abraham was recognised as righteous. (10) How was it then recognised? Being in the state of circumcision or uncircumcision? Not in circumcision but in uncircumcision. (11) And he received the sign of circumcision, the seal of righteousness and faith in the state of uncircumcision, so that he could be the father of all those who have faith while in uncircumcision, so that this could be recognised also in them as righteousness, (12) and the father of the circumcised, those who are not only circumcised but who follow in the path of faith in uncircumcision of our father Abraham.

5.8.1 Group One did not focus much on the text of Chapter 4, possibly because we came to it at the end of rather a long meeting. Once again they noted the complexity of the argument and in my notes I comment on my own stumbling attempts to read the convolutions of my own translation. Looking back at the previous passage it seemed to Martin that Paul was better at laying down rules than making arguments. The main message that the group took from this text was expressed by Fay when she said that we need faith like Abraham's, which believes implicitly that God will do what he promises. Martin noted that Abraham's great faith was achieved without the added hope of the resurrection. We should find it easier to have faith because we have seen what God can do in the resurrection (Appendix 3 p.26 l.28 - 27 l.13).

5.8.2 Once again this group produced a variety of responses. They agree with the previous group that the argument is very tortured. For Jane this was evidence that Paul was tripping over his own arguments in his excitement to bring the Romans the message that circumcision and the Torah are not the way to get near to God, but that this has been accomplished for us by Jesus. This turned the discussion towards good works. Hilda suggested that like the Jews in Paul's time we still find it hard to believe that we have been saved by grace and not good works. Nell asked me if I thought that the reference to wages in v.4 had any hint of a works righteousness. I replied that it is really the opposite, the illustration is used to emphasize that our righteousness is a gift not a wage for good works. The Catholics in the group then had some heated discussion about why the Church preaches that good works are the basis of salvation when this seems to be against Paul's teaching. Jane also wondered why there was not more preaching about **Romans** in the Catholic Church since it seems to be so basic to our faith. There was also some discussion about circumcision then and

³⁶ ἀνομία seems to be a technical term for acts of judicial lawlessness rather than acts against Torah (LSJ s.v. ἀνομία - ἡμῶν).

now. It was interesting to note that for reasons of hygiene, Hilda's sons had been circumcised, while Jane's had not (Appendix 3 p.41 l.1-16).

5.8.3 Both groups seem to agree on the central issue in the convoluted point that Paul is trying to make here and in the rest of Chapter 4. Abraham's faith that a child would be born to him in his old age is given as an example of how faith in God predates both the Torah and even circumcision. Translated into our own terms this means that, for Christians, faith in Jesus is far more important than any external mark of membership of a church or following any code of laws or traditions which have demand our obedience in the past.

5.9 4:13-25

(13) For it is not through Torah that the promise to Abraham and his descendants comes, he was the heir to the world, but through righteousness of faith.(14) For if heirs are from Torah, faith is empty and the promise is nullified: (15) For Torah accomplishes wrath, but where there is no Torah there is no transgression. (16) Because of this, out of faith, so that according to grace,³⁷ so that the promise would be steadfast to all of the seed, not those from Torah only, but also those from the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (17) just as it is written: " as a father of many nations I have set you down," who had faith beforehand that God could give life to the dead and call that which had no being into being. (18) Who against hope because of hope had faith that he would become the father of many nations according to the saying. "This is how your seed will be," (19) and his faith did not weaken when he observed that his own body was already dead, being about one hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb: (20) so that he did not judge the promise of God as unfaithful, but was empowered by faith, giving glory to God, (21) also being satisfied that the one who promised had the power also to do it. (22) Therefore it was recognised in him as righteousness. (23) It was not written because of him only that "it was recognised" (24) but also because of us, who will certainly be recognised so, those who have faith in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, (25) who was handed over because of our false steps and raised for the sake of our righteous behaviour.

5.9.1 This group had not much more to say on this passage having exhausted most of their response to Chapter 4 on the previous one. Harry remarked facetiously that while he did not like Paul arguments, he did approve of the way he put women in their place. The others in the group agreed with this sentiment and it was left to Anna and myself to argue the contrary. Fay said that she was wary of women priests or ministers, to which Renee added women doctors and dentists. Fay talked about how she mistrusted a locum dentist when she found out she was a woman. This was despite the admission that the woman's small hands were better at working in her mouth than the huge male dentist. They share the conservative view that women can't really be trusted with responsible jobs. The only reference to Paul, was to speculate whether he was a cold or warm person? Harry

³⁷ At this point I am reflecting three dangling clauses that have come down to us in the manuscript.

suggest that in the light of his arguments, all the warmth of his greeting in the letters was added later by Tertius. Fay talked about the experience of writing letters for blind people and wanting to add funny and warm bits to their very formal style (Appendix 3 p.27 I.1-13).

5.9.2 The discussion on this passage began with Nell's question as to whether I agreed that Abraham's faith is almost solely based on the promise that he and Sarah would have a child. My response was in line with the old adage that children are the future. In effect then Abraham's faith that he would have a son is the same thing as having faith in God's promise for the future. Gladys, Hilda and Jane expanded on this point focusing on v.18. The thought that idea of hoping for the impossible with a fervent hope that it would come about was a model for Christian faith. Nell noted that the whole Bible is filled with examples of hope for good times in the future which have not yet arrived, ie the disciples expecting Jesus to return in their life time. There was some debate with Hilda maintaining that the hope is for a better life in the hereafter, while others raised the question whether faith and hope were the same thing. Gladys thought that hope led on to faith. Jane rather contended that hope is a softer version of faith. Faith is the more absolute condition which allows us to dare to believe that Jesus has made us fit to commune with God (Appendix 3 p.41 I.16-27).

5.9.3 The problem at this stage is that both groups are discussing the end of Chapter 4 from different perspectives. Group One is finishing off a discussion which links the chapter back to the end of Chapter 3. On the other hand, Group Two is linking this passage very closely with the following passage. It is also interesting to note how the difference in levels of enthusiasm and focus on the topic by both groups. Group One is at the end of an hour long study while Group Two are just beginning their meeting. This difference illustrates of one of the disadvantages of reader hermeneutics. Readers who approach a text fresh will be much more responsive than those who are looking forward to going home to bed. Also at fault is my attempts to push the study on at faster pace than the readers can cope with. If I had been content to end the meeting at the end of Chapter 3 then I may have had a better response from Group One.

6.1 5:1-11

(1) Therefore having been made righteous from faith we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) through whom we have access [through faith] to this grace in which we stand and boast in the hope of the glory of God. (3) Not only this but we also boast in suffering, knowing that suffering accomplishes patience, (4) patience character and character hope. (5) And hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. (6) For Christ, while we still were weak, at that very time died for the impious. (7) For rarely someone will die for a righteous person, and perhaps someone will dare to die for a good person: (8) but God set out his own

love for us because while we were still sinners Christ died for us. (9) How much more then, having now been made righteous in his blood, shall we be saved through him from wrath. (10) For if being enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (11) Not only this, but we are also boasting in God through our lord Jesus Christ through whom we have received this reconciliation.

6.1.1 Right at the outset Renee commented on the relative ease with which this passage could be read. Her main concern however was to question Paul's statement in v.3-4 that suffering builds patience, character and hope. She could not imagine that this would always be the case because as a nurse she had seen many people undone by their suffering. Harry and Martin wondered what the difference is between a good and a righteous person, and if it were possible to be good but not righteous. Anna and I suggested that perhaps, righteousness denotes a correct relationship to Torah, while goodness is correct behaviour outside of Torah. Robert remarked that the idea of boasting in God (v.11) does not seem to fit with the idea of a humble Christian. My feeling on this subject was that we should disregard the negative connotations of the concept boasting and recognise that Paul is using it in a positive light (Appendix 3 p.27 l.14-24).

6.1.2 With Group Two the discussion of this passage is directly related to the one above. Gladys suggested that v.3-4 are about how we can co-create our hope with God. Jane agreed enthusiastically saying that we are responsible for creating faith and hope in hopeless situations. Nell and Hilda see faith and hope as gifts we get from God. Gladys expands this idea saying that they are our responses to the gift of God's love for us. Hilda observes that, because these qualities are gifts from God, we cannot pass them on to those we love, we have to let them create these qualities for themselves. Jane responds excitedly that we can be co-creators of faith with God by bringing God's love to people and thereby leading them to the response of faith. The idea of creating faith leads on to a discussion of the Toronto Blessing. Hilda had heard very positive things about the movement and the way it created faith and hope in people. Others spoke of the way these renewal movements offer people a kind of instant fix and end up making people disappointed and disillusioned. Everyone agreed that the Toronto phenomenon was not really any different from the previous renewal movements that they had all been involved in at one time or another. They all felt that they had grown beyond the appeal of renewal movements and the kind of hysteria it seemed to create was not part of their worship culture (Appendix 3 p.41 l.28 - 42 l.14).

6.1.3 There is not much of a common pattern between the responses of the groups to this passage. That is apart from their responses to v.3-4, where they suggest that the process of creating faith and hope is an active one on our part, rather than a passive waiting for God's gift to us.

6.2 5:12-21

(12) Because of this, just as through one person sin entered into the world, and through sin death and in this way to all people death came, on the premise that all sinned: (13) For before Torah, sin was in the world, but sin was not recognised, because Torah was not in being. (14) But death reigned from Adam until Moses, even upon those who did not sin in the same way as the transgression of Adam, who is the pattern of the one to come. (15) But the trespass was not just like the grace³⁸: For if through the trespass of one the many died, how much more the grace of God and the gifts in grace, which is of the one person Jesus Christ, has overflowed to the many. (16) The one who sinned is not like the gift: For on the one hand the judgement of the one led to condemnation: On the other hand the grace from the trespasses of many led to righteousness. (17) For if by the trespass of one, death reigned through the one, how much more the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, to those receiving it, shall reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. (18) Therefore just as through one trespass all people were led to condemnation, so also through one righteousness all people were led to righteous life: (19) For just as through the disobedience of one person the many were set down as sinners, so also through the obedience of one the many will be set down as righteous. (20) Torah sneaked in secretly so that trespass might increase, but where sin increased, grace was in superabundance, (21) so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

6.2.1 The members of Group One were immediately struck by what seems to be an unusually severe lapse in Paul's logic in this passage. The text in 5:14 implies that some kind of eternal death or condemnation reigned in the world from Adam to Moses. This then would be in direct contradiction to Chapter 4 which argued that Abraham found salvation and righteousness by faith during that time. It would also imply that other figures in the Torah narrative like Noah (I would add Isaac, Jacob and Joseph), were also condemned to eternal death. In an attempt to respond at the time, I suggested that this might be a problem of confusing use of death and life terminology on Paul's part. There does seem to be a hiatus between the way Paul talks about physical death in v.12-15 and the implication of eternal life in v.17. Martin proposed the theory that the purpose of this passage is that Adam brought death and Jesus brings life and that we should not worry too much about the lapses in the argumentation. Indeed the text in v.18 seems to support this view. Harry and Robert were also very surprised about the strongly negative imagery of the Torah sneaking up to cause sin. (Appendix 3 p.27 l.25 - 28 l.2).

6.2.2 Group Two also had a problem with Paul's use of death and life terminology in this passage. Gladys was upset when a pastor, who gave a lecture for Hospice, brought up the idea that death came into the world because of our fallen nature. She was particularly concerned with the implication in his lecture, and in the passage we are discussing, that death is a punishment or an aberration, rather than as a natural part of life. Such an attitude is of great concern to her because of her work at

³⁸ χάρισμα is a neuter noun form derived from the root χάρις. I have translated it here as "grace gift" (LSJ s.v. χάρις - ἰστίος. -ισμα) to avoid confusion with δωρεά and δωρημα later in the verse and in the next (LSJ s.v. δωρεά I: -ημα).

Hospice which aims to make death as comfortable, natural and dignified as possible. In this group meeting, my attempts to unravel this confusion only created further complexity. Gladys' solution is to view death as an absence of abundant or meaningful life which means that people can be dead for years before they are officially buried. This initial comment generated a discussion of how to handle the complexity of Paul's argumentation. Nell's understanding was that the confusion was all part of showing that Paul was a fallible human being. Jade agreed but emphasised his excitement with his message that makes him trip over the logic of his argument in places. The consensus which emerged from the discussion was that the complexity should not put us off but that we should rather read passages to find what is meaningful for us in them. The example given here was v.20, the group agreed that it was far better to leave this strange idea well alone and expend their energy elsewhere. Hilda, Gladys and Jane especially commented that amongst all the complexity of Paul there are many treasures to hold on to and make meaningful in your life. Other observations were that this passage and the others before it assure us that God has no grandchildren, so each must come in their own faith. Also Jane related the experience of being freed from the law to being freed from the need to follow all the Catholic rules of behaviour in order to feel that she had a hope of being saved. (Appendix 3 p.42 l.15 - 43 l.9).

6.2.3 The pattern surfacing through the comments on this passage is a common confusion about the complex use of arguments in the letter that seem to contradict one another and instill unhealthy attitudes towards death. The agreement between the groups is that this complexity need not be a barrier to understanding but that we should rather look for the core meaning of a passage or find a meaning in the passage that is true for us. At this point I should also add some observations on the text arising partly from my own thoughts and those of the groups. These are centred around v.14 and 20 and the ambivalence in Paul's attitude to the Torah at this point. The implications of v.14 are that life came with the giving of the Torah by Moses. On the other hand v.20 is a negative portrayal of Torah increasing sin in people. It is no wonder that the ordinary readers are confused. My own study of **Romans** suggest that this is the point where Paul's argumentation begins to take on schizophrenic motivations. Namely the defender of the right of Gentiles to be freed from the traditional marks of Judaism, circumcision and dietary laws, but at the same time assuming that the moral precepts of the Torah are the natural code of behaviour for anyone imbued with the Spirit of eternal life (c.f Neyrey 1990: 80-9, Snodgrass 1986:76-9, Sanders 1983b:51-55).

6.3 6:1-11

(1) What then shall we say? Are we to remain in sin so that grace may increase? (2) May it never be so! Since we have died to sin how can we still live in it? (3) Or are you ignorant that however many were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? (4) Then we were buried with him through baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from death through the glory of the father, so also we shall walk about in newness of life. (5) For having become intertwined with the likeness of his death, so also we will be of the resurrection: (6) Knowing this that our old person has been crucified with him, so that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that no longer we should serve sin: (7) For the one who has died has been made righteous from sin. (8) If we died with Christ we have faith that we shall also live with him. (9) Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, no longer dies, death no longer lords it over him. (10) For he died, to sin he died once and for all: but he lives, he lives with God. (11) So also you must recognise yourselves as being dead, on the one hand to sin and living, on the other, to God in Jesus Christ.

6.3.1 Group One had very little to say on this passage. Renee gave the obvious response that it is about being dead to sin and alive to Christ. Robert said that he was very encouraged by v.6 and the idea that our sins are crucified with Christ, it should encourage us to forgive and forget our own past failings. Harry observes that while it is difficult to forgive, it is often even more difficult to accept forgiveness (Appendix 3 p.28 l.3-5).

6.3.2 Group Two was more detailed in their discussions. Nell reckoned that the Romans must have been very confused by the complexity of these arguments. She summarised the passage saying that Christ died so that when we die with him we will die to sin. Lynne sees it differently, as rising each day to a new beginning in Christ. Hilda suggested that living in the Spirit of Christ should mean that we are free of sin. Gladys disagreed and said rather that we are made aware of our sin through Christ and the Spirit so that we can turn and ask forgiveness. This led on to a discussion of the nature of sin beginning with Nell who asked us what we mean by sin. Gladys thought that the main sin is not doing God's will. Namely sins of omission and of falling into a kind of self-centred lethargy, induced by counting the cost beforehand, instead of going out there and doing what God wants. Lynne feels that the worst sin is not being aware of our acceptance by God under his grace. Gladys and Lynne did agree that it is hard to recognise grace when we are overburdened with guilt. Nell reminds us that the two unforgivable sins of Catholic tradition are presumption of salvation, eg. Voltaire's comment that 'God will forgive because it is his trade', and the other is despair of salvation (Appendix 3 p.43 l.11-21).

6.3.3 Both groups comment, however briefly, on two central themes in this passage. The idea of dying to sin and living to Christ as a way of throwing off the guilt of the past and beginning anew and the related idea of how hard it is to really accept that our slate has been wiped clean. Group Two

even go onto suggest that this may be the very way in which we live to sin, by refusing to accept that God can and will forgive and save us.

6.4 6:12-23

(12) Do not therefore let sin reign in your mortal bodies in obedience of its desires, (13) neither offer your body parts to sin as weapons of unrighteousness but offer yourselves to God as those brought from death into living and your body parts as weapons of righteousness for God. (14) For sin should not lord it over you: For you are not under Torah but under grace. (15) What then? Should we sin because we are not under Torah but under grace? May it never be so! (16) Do you not know that when you offer yourselves as slaves to obedience, you will become slaves of the one you obey, either sin leading towards death or obedience leading towards righteousness? (17) But by the grace of God when you were slaves to sin you had obedience from the heart towards the one who handed you over to a pattern of teaching, (18) having been set free from sin you were made slaves to righteousness. (19) I speak as a human because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you offered your body parts as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness which leads to lawlessness³⁹, so now offer your body parts as slaves to righteousness which leads to sanctification. (20) For when you were slaves in respect to sin you were free in respect to righteousness. (21) What fruit did you have then? Those things of which you are now ashamed, for the end of these things is death. (22) Now having been set free from sin and serving God you have your fruit leading to consecration, the end of which is eternal life. (23) For the wages⁴⁰ of sin are death, but the grace gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

6.4.1 Group One began with a long silence while everyone thought of something to say. When I asked why this was, Robert said that he wanted to be sure that what he says is constructive, useful and understandable. Fay asked what it was I was looking for here and I replied that I wanted whatever they have to give me. Eventually Harry says that v.19 implies that Paul somehow does not have the weakness of our flesh. Fay concurred and says that Paul is being simplistic if he thinks we are totally evil and then suddenly totally good; these are such cut and dried terms. Paul does not seem to recognise that goodness is a process which leads to eventual perfection; he wants perfection now. Martin said that this is probably meant to be encouragement, to spur us on to perfection and also to tell us that from the moment of our salvation we can be perfect and be in expectation of the reward. Fay added that perhaps Paul uses the word for military wages in v.23 because life is a battle for perfection (Appendix 3 p.28 l.6-14).

6.4.2 Group Two's meeting began with Lynne wanting to know what I thought of verse 15, about sinning because we are under grace and not under Torah. I responded with the observation that, in talking of sin here Paul probably means disobeying the commandments of Torah, so that we live by Torah

³⁹ Here I have translated *ἀνομία* as lawlessness, seeing it as encompassing the idea of living without law as well as not having the benefit of Torah.

⁴⁰ The term *μισθία* seems to refer to monetary wages (LSJ s.v. *μισθία*) as opposed to wages for hire or services, possibly in kind, which fall under the term *μισθός* (LSJ s.v. *μισθός*).

but are not bound by it. Gladys said that this sounded logical to her because we must, on the one hand, live according to God's precepts while, on the other hand, we have to be flexible enough to choose to break laws for a greater good. Hilda and Jane agreed that this kind of discernment is important for our actions. Changing the subject and turning to verse 22, Jane said that she cannot believe that we are made 100% free from sin. Nell thought this was a simplistic view of salvation, rather like people who believe that God gives you your salvation once and for all time, after which it does no matter what you do. I add that this is why I sometimes think that Paul is very naive; he really believes that once you have the Spirit you will have the ability to fulfil the whole Torah easily. Lynne disagreed with me on the subject of Paul's naivete, but went on to say that in her view no Christian can claim to be "reborn" because we really have to die to sin and rise to life daily through the grace of Jesus Christ (Appendix 3 p.43 l.23 - 44 l.7).

6.4.3 Both groups are struck by what seems to be a simplistic argument that once we are under the grace of God we are free from sin. Both would rather emphasise the idea that we grow in goodness by a daily process of being in Christ. To me this seems to be a classic misunderstanding of honour-shame ethics which can perceive of earthly moral perfection of sorts and guilt ethics which cannot (c.f. Malina in Neyrey 1991). This misunderstanding continues as we tackle the issues of Chapter 7.

6.5 7:1-13

(1) Or are you ignorant brothers, for I say this to those who know Torah, that Torah lords it over the person for however much time there is in life? For the married woman is bound by Torah to a living husband⁴¹: but if the man dies, she is discharged under Torah from the man. (3) Therefore then,, having a living husband she will bear the name of adulteress if she lives with another man: But if the husband dies she is free under Torah, she will not be an adulteress when she marries another man. (4) With the result my brothers, that you also have died to Torah through the body of Christ, which leads to your becoming another, the one who has been raised from the dead, so that we may bear fruit for God. (5) For while we were in the flesh, the passions of sins which have been aroused by Torah in our body parts, which led to it bearing fruit of death: (6) But now we have been discharged from Torah, dying to what had bound us, with the result that we serve in the new spirit and not in the old written code. (7) What then shall we say? Is Torah sin? May it never be so! But I would not know sin if not through Torah. For I would not have known desire if Torah had not said "You shall not desire"⁴². (8) But taking a starting point through the commandment, Sin raised up in me all desires, for apart from Torah sin is dead. (9) I lived apart from Torah then, but with the coming of the commandments sin lived again, (10) and I died

⁴¹ As in many other languages the term *ανηρ* can mean both "man" and "husband" (LSJ s.v. *ανηρ* V) c.f. also man (German, Afrikaans), *ndoda* (Nguni).

⁴² The commandment usually reads "You shall not covet" in English translations, but both Paul and the LXX use the term *ἐπιθυμῶ* which I have consistently translated as "desire" (LSJ s.v. *ἐπιθυμῶ* I).

and in me the commandment of life was found to lead to death: (11) For sin taking a starting point through the commandment deceived me and through it put me to death. (12) With the result, on the one hand, that Torah is holy and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. (13) Did something good become death to me? May it never be so! But sin, so that it might appear as sin, through something good accomplished death in me, so that sin would become utterly sinful through the commandment.

6.5.1 Group One concentrated on the second part of this passage. Fay said, in response to v.7, that if we did not have the 10 commandments we would believe that anything goes. Martin suggested that this applies to any system of law, even the secular and pagan laws we followed before we become Christians. Harry felt that the 10 commandments are pretty basic to all religions and societies. The conversation developed into a debate about the different interpretations of polygamy and adultery, which seems to be a clear dividing point between our culture and OT societies although both are based on the 10 commandments. Someone related the Mormon justification of their polygamy, which depends on interpreting adultery only in purity and racial terms, ie. you can marry as many women of your own race as you like (Appendix 3 p.28 l.15-22).

6.5.2 Group Two did not discuss this section of Romans at all. We read the whole of Chapter 7 at one go and when they came to comment on it they could find nothing important here (Appendix 3 p.44).

6.5.3 The problem with this section is that it is dwarfed by its more famous partner 7:14-25. As a result when they are read together, as with Group Two, the former is completely neglected in favour of the latter. This is one of the disadvantages of reading with ordinary readers. They are free of the tyranny of systematised theological study and will ignore whole sections of text which do not interest them.

6.6 7:14-25

(14) For we know that Torah is spiritual, but I am fleshly having been sold under sin. (15) For I accomplish what I do not know: For that which I do not want, that I practice⁴³, but what I hate, that I do. (16) If what I do not want, that I do, I agree with Torah that it is good. (17) But now I no longer do this but the sin living in me. (18) For I know that what lives in me, that is in my flesh, is not good: For the wish is present in me, but the means to accomplish good is not. (19) For I do not do what I wish, the good, but what I do not wish, the bad, that I practice. (20) But if that which I do not want, that I do, it is no longer I that accomplish it but the sin living in me. (21) This is what I have found out about Torah, that when there is a wish in me to do good, the bad is close beside me: (22) For I rejoice with the Torah of God according to the inner person, (23) but I see another Torah in my body parts making war on the Torah of my mind and taking me prisoner in the Torah of sin which is in my body parts. (24) I am a miserable person! Who

⁴³ The terms *ποιεω* and *πραξω* both mean "do" so I have translated the first as such and the second as "practise" the English word derived from it (LSJ s.v. *ποιεω* B.I.1: *πραξω* III.1.5:IV.1)

will save me from this body of death? (25) But grace and thanks⁴⁴ be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore then I, on the one hand, in my mind, serve the Torah of God, but on the other, in the flesh, the Torah of sin.

- 6.6.1 Group One began once more with a comment about how very convoluted and twisting Paul's argument is. Martin commented that he often feels that you need to have gone through the same education system as Paul to really understand him. His arguments are like rugby commentary in Afrikaans or Xhosa, a lot is familiar but then the other parts are completely obscure. In this passage the group identifies that Paul seems to be talking of some sort of foreign power in him which does the sin rather than him, thereby seeming to give people an excuse to deny their own sin and blame outside powers. Harry found Paul's seeming rejection of all things physical and what is good in the physical nature very problematic. Fay was worried that Paul was setting up a dualism of the mind and the flesh which may not be a good thing. Robert felt that Paul should have acknowledged his weakness, rather than try to undermine his very good illustration of the frustrations we all feel at not being able to live as good people. Martin wondered if the idea of a foreign power sinning in him was an early form of the concept of a conscience, since his NIV notes say that this passage is not a cop out from sin but a description of the power of sin. Fay said that we should all be so full of the Spirit that there is no room for sin. With this the group became very critical of Paul's attitude to his own sin and even Martin suggesting that he did acknowledge his own sin in v.24 was not seen as a sufficient defence (Appendix 3 p.28 l. 33 - 29 l.6).
- 6.6.2 The conversation in Group Two's meeting began to lean towards Paul's own inner struggles at the end of Chapter 6. These struggles he describes in Chapter 7 seem to belie his naive faith in being free from sin. For Lynne this chapter is a real cry from the anguish of his soul. Alternately Jane suggested that it seems to be about a separation of the physical nature from the spiritual and as a result not being responsible for your physical actions. Everybody would strongly disagree with Paul if this is what he is saying. Lynne absolutely insisted that this is an intensely personal passage because of the use of I and because of her husband's theory that Paul was a manic depressive. The others agree that this passage is a very personal testimony by Paul, which is very comforting because it really matches their own inner struggles. Hilda was depressed about the idea that sin lives in us. The others reassured her that this only makes us need God more and challenges us to daily make the choice to do what is good. As the conversation progressed the group expressed the opinion that Paul seems to complicate everything with his arguments and then oversimplify them in

⁴⁴ *χαρις* in this context can also mean thanks so I include it in my translation here. (LSJ s.v. *χαρις* II.1.2)

his statements of faith. Nell said the complications explain why nobody wants to preach on most of Romans in church. Lynne however was encouraged that even such a brilliant mind as Paul's can hopelessly complicate an argument. Then we went on to discuss guilt feelings and the problems of destructive guilt. Nell told the story of a nun who was filled with guilt about her temper and prayed constantly for deliverance, but her confessor felt that the guilt feelings and the constant forgiveness kept alive her relationship with God. We also discussed the idea of confronting our guilt and becoming liberated from it. Gladys and Lynne felt that it was healthy sometimes to embrace and accept our dark side and our guilt for things in our past especially in SA where we all have or have had intense feelings of guilt (Appendix 3 p.44 l.7 - 45 l.11).

6.6.3 Both groups are well aware of how tortuous Paul's arguments are becoming at this stage. The dualism between the physical and spiritual implied by much of the passage is deeply problematic to both groups. They are even more disgusted by any suggestion that Paul should get out of acknowledging his own sin by blaming it on some outside power beyond his control. They all wish to interpret this passage in the light of the struggles of Christians over the centuries to do good in spite of their sinful nature. I go along with Sander's interpretation of this passage as a defense of the Torah from the idea that it is sinful or causes sin. To do this Paul must postulate a physical Torah, which causes sin in people, and a spiritual Torah, which is free from all sin. Paul is in a hole by the end of this passage and can only escape by declaring that, whatever happens, salvation is in Christ (c.f. Sanders 1983b:51ff).

6.7 8:1-11

(1) Therefore there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. (2) For the Torah of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets you free from the Torah of sin and death. (3) For the inability of Torah is that it was weakened through the flesh, God sent his own son in the same state of sinful flesh and on account of sin condemned sin in the flesh, (4) in order that the righteous decree of Torah might be fulfilled in us, those who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (5) For those who are according to the flesh think of the flesh, and those according to the Spirit of the Spirit. (6) For the mind of the flesh is death, and the mind of the Spirit is life and peace: (7) because the mind of the flesh is hostile to God, for it is not subject to the Torah of God, for it is not able: (8) For those who are in the flesh are not able to please God. (9) But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells⁴⁵ in you. But if someone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that one is not of him. (10) But if Christ is in you, on the one hand the body is dead because of sin, but on the other hand the Spirit lives because of righteousness. (11) And if the Spirit

⁴⁵ I use the old fashion "dwell" to translate *οικεω* (LSJ s.v. *οικεω* B.1) so as not to confuse it with the term for "life or living" *ζωη* (LSJ s.v. *ζωη* 1.2).

of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Jesus from the dead is also able to animate⁴⁶ your mortal body through the indwelling of his Spirit in you.

- 6.7.1 Group One had only brief comments on this passage. Fay thought that the real crux of the passage was in vs.1 and 11, and we should leave out all the rest. Renee found this passage comfortingly familiar because there is a song based on v.1. There was some debate about verse 3. Martin found that the meaning was very slippery. Anna and Fay interpreted it as stating that Jesus, who is sinless, was made a sin offering to God to make us righteous because the law did not work any more. (Appendix 3 p.29 l.10-14).
- 6.7.2 Group Two begun with quite a long silence before Hilda asked me what the Torah of sin and death was. Jane also wondered where Paul got the idea of separation of the physical and spiritual bodies because she cannot agree with the idea? I responded that I thought it was related to the bind Paul was in at the end of the previous chapter, and he has to try and resolve the problem that he has created of a Torah in the physical body which brings sin and death. I thought that by v.11 he has found one solution which is to talk about the indwelling Spirit reanimating the physical body and thereby uniting the two again. Developing on that point Nell said she cannot accept the idea that anyone who does not have Christ is under death. Lynne tried to reason it out as only referring to people who have heard the Gospel and rejected it. Gladys supported Nell saying, people who are in Christ are those open to the Spirit of Christ, which allows them to do what is good and life giving. Nell also cannot accept that whatever is right, is done through Christ. This is to impose our interpretation of reality on Atheists and Hindu's etc., who would reject it in principle. This raised a question of the value of evangelism. I told them of the work of Vinay Samuel in India who evangelises by building mosques and temples in slum areas and then telling people to be Christians by taking the Spirit of Christ into their traditions to transform them. Gladys for one was very pleased with the idea, because of all the harm done by missionaries who have imposed their culture on people all over the world. The discussion turned to the intolerance in Christians and in other religions. The group generally agreed that this arises from the belief that one has all the answers, while proper humility precludes fundamentalism (Appendix 3 p.45 l.13 - 46 l.10).
- 6.7.3 There was quite a bit of confusion in both groups about the nature of the Torah of sin and death. Group One chose to avoid the issue to concentrate on the way Jesus has replaced the Torah code by his death. In confronting the issue Group Two questioned the whole idea that those who are not

⁴⁶ ζωοποιεω literally means "make living" so I use here the Latin equivalent which is still common in English usage (LSJ s.v. ζωοποιεω II.1).

in Christ are in Death. This difference in attitude is a further illustration of the extent to which Group Two is willing to question deeply held tenets of dogma.

6.8 8:12-30

(12) Therefore then brothers, we will have no obligation to the flesh to live according to the flesh, (13) for if you live according to the flesh, your body parts will die, but if by the Spirit you practice the putting to death of the body you will live. (14) For however many are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (15) For you are not taking again a Spirit of slavery to fear but you are taking a Spirit of adoption in which we cry out: Abba! Father! (16) This Spirit testifies with our spirit that we will be children of God. (17) And if children, also heirs: heirs on the one hand of God, and on the other hand co-heirs of Christ, if we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.(18) For I recognise that the sufferings of these present critical times⁴⁷ are not worthy to be set against the glory which is about to be revealed to us. (19) For the creation waits with earnest expectation the revelation regarding the sons of God. (20) For the creation was in subjection to meaninglessness, not purposely but through the one who had subjected it, upon the hope (21) that the creation herself will be set free from slavery to decay into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation has been joined together in lamenting and travail up till now: (23) and not only creation, but ourselves also having the first fruits of the Spirit, we are also awaiting, lamenting in ourselves, our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (24) For in this hope we have been saved: But seeing hope is not hope: For who hopes for something he sees? (25) But if we hope for what we have not seen we wait for it with patience. (26) In the same way the Spirit takes hold of us in our weakness: For the things we might pray it is not possible to know, but the Spirit himself intercedes with unutterable lamenting: (27) but the searcher of hearts knows something of the mind of the Spirit, because according to God he intercedes for the saints. (28) We know that for those who love God all things work together for the good, those who are called according to his purpose. (29) Because those he foreknew, he also predetermined⁴⁸ to be conformed to the image of his son, which led to him being the first born of many brothers: (30) Those he predetermined, he also called: and those he called, he also made righteous: those he made righteous, he also glorified.

6.8.1 Harry began the group's response with a comment that Paul must have employed a decent scribe at this point because the passage is initially more understandable. Anna and Martin commented on the well known passage that living by human nature results in death but living by God's rules results in our becoming heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. Harry adds that v17 tells us to take up our crosses and that we will have tribulation in the world. Robert and Renee interject that this is not just any suffering but sharing Christ's suffering. Martin was worried about not suffering. Fay reassures him that our suffering may be lighter because we are Christians or that we don't notice it as much but that suffering will find us anyway so we don't have to worry about looking for it. Harry speculated whether the glory we receive is going to be proportional to our suffering. Fay

⁴⁷ The phrase *εν τω νυν καιρω* literally combines the word "now" with the term for "season or a critical period of time". I have tried to reflect both these meanings. See also note 33 (LSJ s.v. *καιρος* III.2-4).

⁴⁸ I deliberately avoid the term "predestined" (LSJ s.v. *προοριζω*) because I believe later verses show that Paul's attitude did not stretch as far as rigid predestination.

countered that we should not be grading sufferings just as we should not grade our sins. Martin and Anna point to v.15 and 18 as answers to our debate and as assurance that we will make the grade in God's eyes. Paul's argumentation once more begins to defeat them. Martin's opinion is that vs.24-27 are a tangent on hope which seems to have no relation to the theme of suffering in the rest of the passage. Others disagree, Fay, Anna and Robert liked my translation of v.26 because it gives a powerful and strong view of the Spirit, whose unutterable lamenting they interpret as speaking in tongues or as the Spirit taking over and praying through us, making our feelings of compassion or lamentation into a prayer to God. I added that the connection of lamenting in v.22, 23, 26 gave the feeling of the Spirit taking up the laments of the whole creation in sympathy. In another vein Martin remarks on how often v.28 is quoted, but Fay wished we could see it happen more often. Harry took issue with the seeming predestination in the verses which follow, because they cancel redemption and seem incompatible with Christianity. He rather saw God as intervening in our lives without predetermining them. Robert and Fay see this issue in a softer light as part of God's plan for all to be saved. They believe that we must have the free will to reject or accept God, but also that God can save us anyway. Fay and Martin add that humans are too limited to understand all the things of God, going on to quote Boethius, via C.S. Lewis, that God holds all our choices in his sight (Appendix 3 p.29 l.15 - 30 l.18).

- 6.8.2 Commenting at the beginning of Group Two's response, Nell said vs.18,19 must be where Marx developed the idea that Christianity is an ideology promising heavenly reward rather than earthly comforts. Others commented that this ideology brought great comfort to blacks as slaves and oppressed minority in America; they had the church and the hope of heavenly joy as a comfort in their suffering. Hilda said she believes heaven will be peace after all the anxiety and that she cannot imagine life without some hope of reward at the end. Jane hoped for growth, but Nell and Gladys thought they would have grown enough by then and they would rather have rest. Hilda was looking forward to celebration and Gladys added that the best thing about that celebration would be not having to cook for it. Nell adds some further perspectives: Firstly, that the Psalms talk of heaven as cloudy rather than sunny skies because they were used to the heat of the desert. Secondly, the Humanist perspective wants to make the best of this world because it is the only world we have got and only one life to do something in. Nell felt that this Humanist view may be a good attitude to have but she also wants there to be justice and recompense at some point in the future. They discussed it a bit longer and realised that they could come to an agreement about heaven as a growth into perfect wholeness, justice, peace and rest. This led on to a discussion of judgement and

whether God would condemn people forever. Nell reminded us of the allegory of judgement at the end of the Narnia series when people pass through the gate and confront Aslan: Either they accept him having always believed in him, or they recognise him for the first time and realise that they have always believed in him. The third group of people are those who look on Aslan with hatred and, because of this, they cannot see the new world but they think they are in a dark stinking stable. The point is that they live in darkness by their own refusal to recognise the light. Further discussion of judgement revolved around the Catholic idea that if you died in mortal sin without confession you could be condemned to purgatory or even hell. Now the Catholic members of the group saw this as misinformation by the Church. Nell observes that v.28 is often used in a very trite manner. Jane wondered if all the talk of suffering suggests official persecution. I responded that at this stage it is probably just the general suffering of the poor people who probably made up the bulk of the community in Rome (Appendix 3 p.46 l.11 - 47 l.30).

6.8.3 The most interesting common feature of both responses to this passage is that they both include references to works of C.S. Lewis. These are The Screwtape Letters and The Last Battle which both deal to a certain extent with judgement. The other common feature is the observation that v.28 is a cliché, often quoted insincerely or judgementally at people who are undergoing hardships. Lastly I must comment on vs. 29-30. My own feeling is to agree with those scholars who believe that this is a marginal argument and that Paul abandons it when he realises it is a dead end and does not repeat or reinforce it in any other part of the letter.

6.9 8:31-39

(31) What then shall we say about this? If God is for us, who is against us? (32) The one indeed who did not spare his own son but for us all handed him over for arrest, how will he not also, with him, graciously give⁴⁹ all things to us? (33) Who will bring a charge against the chosen of God? God is the one who makes righteous: (34) Who is the one who condemns? Christ [Jesus] the one who died, and what is more was raised, who is on the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (35) Who will part us from the love of Christ? Distress or difficulty or persecution or hunger or nakedness or danger or a sword? (36) Just as it is written:

For your sake we are put to death the whole day, we are recognised as sheep for slaughter.

(37) But in all these things we are supra-victorious through the one who loves us. (38) For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor heavenly messengers⁵⁰ nor magistrates nor the present nor the future nor

⁴⁹ χάρις carries the sense of a favour bestowed by the kindness and goodwill of the doer and the sense of a favour received in the gratitude of the receiver (LSJ s.v. χάρις III)

⁵⁰ ἄγγελος is literally a messenger, therefore also a "heavenly messenger" or "angel" as it seems to be here (LSJ s.v. ἄγγελος I, ἀγγελλω).

powers (39) nor height nor depth nor anything else in creation has power to part us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- 6.9.1 Group One thought that the tone of this passage means that Paul is giving the Romans a sweetener after all his tortured argument. Fay and Harry thought that these verses are quoted more often than others because they have a clear message spoken from the heart. There was a general consensus that Paul is trying so hard to understand God philosophically that he gets tied in knots, but his statements of faith are clear and authoritative. After this at my prompting the group provided their own summaries of the message in 3:21- 8:39. For Fay the message is encapsulated in Jn 3:16, which said in other words means that God makes provision for us the way no other God does. Harry's summary of the message was the news that we have an absolute salvation. Together Robert and Fay summarised the message as: Faith and not the law puts us right and gives us peace and glory. Faith cancels out any idea of predestination and God gives us the grace to make our own choices. The reading of this long section ended with some general comments. Harry is amazed that Paul had to make a simple message so complex to which Robert adds the theory that maybe he was paid by the word (Appendix 3 p.30 l.19 - 31 l.5).
- 6.9.2 Group Two found this passage very encouraging, declaring it one of their favourite passages. The discussion centred on my suggestion that the seeming arbitrariness of predestination in the previous verses is counteracted by this message, that if we accept Christ and live in the Spirit of the Torah, nothing can or will separate us from the love of God. For Gladys it is worth going through all Paul's convoluted arguments just to read this passage. Lynne adds that it can be a real comfort for people suffering persecution especially since we know it was written by somebody who knew about persecution. However Nell pointed out that v.31 can be very problematic, especially if it were being used on both sides in a war (Appendix 3 p.48 l.1-13).
- 6.9.3 The relief in both groups to have come across a familiar and relatively uncomplicated passage was almost palpable. The comments by Group One show their continued rebellion against Paul's penchant for long involved arguments. Yet in contrast Martin pointed out that they are now taking notice whenever **Romans** is read in the services they attend. They expressed genuine excitement at being able to recognise passages they have studied and knowing that they have a greater sense of their place in the letter.

(1) I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience is a co-witness with me in the Holy Spirit, (2) because it is a great pain to me and an incessant grief for my heart. (3) For I would wish myself to be some accursed thing away from Christ for my brothers, my relatives according to the flesh, (4) who are the Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the lawgiving, the worship and the promises, (5) in whom the fathers and from whom the Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all, praised until the age, Amen. (6) This does not imply that the word of God falls down. For not all of those from Israel are true Israelites: (7) nor are all children the seed of Abraham, but: "Your seed will be traced through Isaac."

(8) That is, these children of God are not children of flesh but children of the promise recognised as seed. (9) For the word of the promise is this: "According to this time I will come and there will be a son for Sarah."

(10) and not only her, but also Rebecca out of the one who had sex with Isaac our father: (11) for not yet being born, nor having practised some good or evil, so that according to election the purpose of God might stand, (12) not from works but from the calling, it was said to her that: "The greater will serve the lesser" (13) just as it is written:

"Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (14) What then shall we say? Surely not injustice on the side of God? May it never be so! (15) For he says to Moses: "I will have mercy on those I have mercy, and feel pity for those for whom I feel pity."

(16) Therefore the point is not our wishing nor our hurrying but the mercy of God. (17) For he says to Pharaoh in the Scriptures:

"To these things I raised you up, so that I might show off my power on you and so that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

(18) Therefore those he wishes he has mercy on, and those he wishes he hardens. (19) You will say to me then: Why then does he still blame? For who can make a stand against his will? (20) On the contrary my dear person, who are you the one arguing against God:

"Surely the product will not say to the producer: Why did you make me like this?"

(21) Does the worker of clay not have authority to make from this same mixture, utensils, on the one hand put to honourable use and on the other put to dishonourable use? (22) And if God wishing to show off his wrath and point out his power tolerated with much endurance vessels of wrath being fit for destruction, (23) and so that he might point out the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy which he prepared in advance towards glory? (24) To which he also called us not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles, (25) as he also says in Hosea: "I will call those not my people, my people and the one not beloved, beloved (26) and it will be in a place where it was said to them you are not my people, there they will be called sons of the living God.

(27) And Isaiah cried out over Israel: "Even if the number of the sons of Israel were as the sands of the sea, the remnant will be saved: (28) For the Lord will make the reckoning, the consummation and cutting down upon the earth."

(29) And just as it is foretold in Isaiah: "If the Lord of Sabaoth had not preserved seed for us, we would become as Sodom and would be the same as Gomorrah." (30) What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, those who did not pursue righteousness, have received righteousness, the righteousness out of faith, (31) and Israel pursuing a Torah of righteousness for the sake of Torah has not reached it. (32) Through what? Because not out of faith but as from works: They stumbled over the stone of stumbling (33) just as it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of temptation, and the one having faith in him will not be shamed."

- 7.1.1 Coming back to their old refrain the group noted that there was some very convoluted argument in this chapter. Martin could imagine Paul answering questions from a crowd although it seems clear that he is also taking no argument. Martin would dearly love to know what the questions were that caused Paul to respond in the way he does. In an effort to identify Paul's motivation we spent some time reading vs.1-5 to see if it contained any clues. Martin began by that the chapter is saying that Israel had the favour of God in the past but they have now lost it because of their unfaithfulness. At this point responding to my more direct intervention, the group agreed that v.1-5 are about Paul wanting the Jews to add salvation through Jesus Christ to their many other gifts from God. But Martin and Anna persisted with the idea that, despite this, there is an implied criticism of Israel for having misunderstood and rejected the promise of God, when it came in the form of Jesus Christ. In their view the Jews were trying so hard to keep the Law that they failed to see God's plan for salvation, meanwhile in accepting Jesus the Gentiles were saved almost by accident. Fay, elaborating on v.6 suggested that the true Israelites, in Paul's opinion, are those who follow Jesus. Anna and Renee pointed out the prophecies quoted in vs. 25-8. They arrived at the conclusion that this meant that both Gentiles and a remnant of the Jews will be included in the new kingdom (Appendix 3 p.31 l.6-25).
- 7.1.2 Group Two read the whole of 9-11 at one go. I was trying to get them through the whole argument so that we could maybe push on to something else. It does seem that this rather backfired as we seemed to go off track once the initial points had been reached and we ended up miles away in another debate. It would probably have been better to stick to reading by paragraphs and we would probably all have got more out of it. So in presenting these responses I have tried to relate them as best I can to each of the chapters. Gladys commented towards the end of the reading that it was finally beginning to make sense. I asked them what sense it seemed to be making. Jane expressed the idea that it was talking about a complicated plot on God's part for all people to be saved. Hilda thought it was all about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, also picking up on the idea of Paul's pain about the lack of Jewish conversions and wondered if this was Paul's famous thorn in the flesh. (Appendix 3 p.48 l.15-24).
- 7.1.3 The obvious pattern in chapters 9-11, which the participants in both groups have not failed to spot, is the question of the position of the Jews in the new People of God which Paul is trying to create. Group One identified that the Jews seem to be excluded from the new people of God by their stubborn refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah. As the groups progressed in their discussion they were both also able to identify that Paul's overriding emotion, when thinking of these excluded

Jews, is not some kind of self righteous triumph, but rather a deep and bitter anguish for his co-religionists who cannot share the excitement of his revelation.

7.2 10:1-21

(1) Brothers, the desire of my heart and my prayer to God for them is towards salvation. (2) For I witness for them that they have the zeal of God but it is not according to knowledge: (3) For they do not know the righteousness of God and, seeking to establish their own righteousness, they have not become subject to the righteousness of God. (4) For the goal of Torah is Christ, for all those who are righteous and who have faith. (5) For Moses wrote of the righteousness from Torah that: "The person who does these things shall live in them." (6) But the righteousness out of faith speaks in this manner: "Do not say in your heart: Who will go up to heaven? "that is to lead Christ down." (7) or " Who will go down into the abyss?" that is to lead Christ up from the dead. (8) But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouths and in your hearts" that is the word of faith which we are preaching. (9) That if you agree with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and have faith in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved: (10) For the heart has faith towards righteousness, and the mouth agrees towards salvation. (11) For the Scripture says: "All those who have faith upon him shall not be ashamed." (12) For there is no distinction between Jew and Greeks, for he is the Lord of all, of riches to all who call upon him: (13) For "all those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." (14) How then can they call to one who they have not had faith in? How can they have faith in one they have not heard? How can they apart from preaching? (15) How can they preach if they are not sent? Just as it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those telling the good news of good things." (16) But not all heard the good news with obedience⁵¹. For Isaiah says: "Lord, who has had faith to listen to us?" (17) Therefore the faith is from the listening, and the listening is through the word of Christ. (18) But I say, surely they did not hear? On the contrary: " Their sound has gone out into all the earth and their words towards limits of the world." (19) But I say surely Israel did not understand? First Moses says: " I will provoke jealousy in you upon a non-nation⁵², upon a nation with no understanding I will make you angry." (20) Isaiah with boldness also says: "I have been found in those who did not seek me, I have become a revelation to those who did not ask for me." (21) But to Israel he says: " The whole day I held out my hands to a disobedient and contradictory people"

7.2.1 The group began by picking out some verses that had made a significant impact on them while we were reading the chapter. Anna noted the desperation in Paul's desire for his people to be saved that is expressed in v.1-2. Martin noted from v.4 that Paul believed that Jesus was the accomplishment of Torah which is therefore completely meaningless without him. Fay interprets vs. 14-5 as a call for us all to go out and preach. Harry picked out several verses: In vs. 9-10 he noted an exhortation for people to have faith. Then he noted that v.16 states that not everyone will become a believer. But it was his question whether v.20 was in any way autobiographical for Paul

⁵¹ I have translated *ὑπακούω* as "hear with obedience" to reflect the root meaning of *ἀκούω* (LSJ s.v. *ἀκούω* 1).

⁵² *ἔθνος* here is used with the meaning of "nation" rather than "gentiles" (LSJ s.v. *ἔθνος* 1.2)

that finally animated discussion. In response the rest of us thought that v.20 was clearly referring to the Gentiles. Martin admired the Gentiles for making a quantum leap into faith without the aid of the Torah. Anna added, using v.19, that the Jews have been missing God's message since the time of Moses causing God to try and make them jealous of other peoples whom he favoured from time to time. This led onto a wider discussion of the Jewish People. Harry expressed sympathy for the Jews because it seems to have been necessary for them to reject Jesus in order for us to be Christians now. Martin however felt that even if all the Jews had accepted Jesus there would have been some other spur for the Gentile mission. Harry had heard it said that the Jews have been allowed to survive and suffer to show the world what happens to those who reject God. We all felt this would be very harsh and Martin said that they must surely survive because God's promise to them as his chosen people endures. Harry and Anna continued, that considering all the Jews have endured over the Centuries, all the while remaining faithful to God, must have some larger meaning in God's plan (Appendix 3 p.31 l.27 - 32 l.12).

7.2.2 In the continuing discussions of Group Two, Hilda and Gladys talked about the Jews' problem of believing that faith was the criterion of entry to the people of God and not keeping the Torah. To accept this idea is to put a question mark over the effectiveness of the entire Old Testament. Lynne interjected that they would not accept Jesus as Messiah because they were expecting another type of Messiah. Returning to their theme Hilda and Gladys talked about the difficulty of accepting God's grace. Such an acceptance requires a lot of faith because we are trained to be independent and balk at the idea of being dependent on God. Nell added that we need to be aware about the role God plays in our achievements and acknowledge it, but she also objected to the saying "there but for the grace of God go I". She felt that this implied that the person in trouble or adversity is outside of the Grace of God. Jane said that response is most often given out of a feeling of compassion. But Nell replied that we have to think about the words we are using. Lynne acknowledged that we should not be judging the amount of God's grace that other people might have. Jane returned the discussion to its original point by observing that we need to be working with God to maintain our faith and that is in itself a grace. Gladys quoted Ignatius of Loyola saying that we should work as if it depends on us and pray as if it depends on God. Adding another note of caution, Nell said there should be a limit to which God is presumed to be supporting one or other side in a war or sport situation. This led into a discussion of the Rugby World Cup Final and the way that Francois Pienaar thanked God on the rugby field, acknowledging God's help in the victory. Hilda is convinced that God was with the team in a special way because the South Africans as a nation needed the

victory much more than the New Zealanders. Lynne talked effusively about how the rugby brought the nation together in a way not seen since the election (Appendix 3 p.48 l.25 - 49 l.8).

7.2.3 The patterns arising from this passage are a response to Paul's major themes in the Chapters. They both express a heartfelt sympathy for the Jews who seem to have been given a raw deal in the plan for salvation. Group One expressed their feelings at the unfairness of salvation coming to the Gentiles at the expense of the Jews. Group Two responded, from their own experience, to the Jews difficulty in accepting that they could be saved by faith alone. In this passage if in none other Paul has succeed in his intention which is to win sympathy and acceptance for the Jews from Gentile believers.

7.3 11:1-36

(1) I say then, surely God has not rejected his people? May it never be so! For I also am an Israelite, from the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. (2) "God has not rejected his people" whom he foreknew. Or don't you know what the Scripture says about Elijah, when he interceded with God against Israel? (3) Lord " they have killed your prophets, they have torn down your altars, and only I am left and they are seeking my life⁵³." (4) But what did the divine answer say to him? "I have reserved for myself 7000 men, who have not bent their knees to Baal." (5) In the same way then also in the now age a remnant has become selected by grace: (6) And if by grace no longer from works, since grace would no longer be grace. (7) What then? The thing the Israelites strove for, this they did not attain, but the select did: And the rest have been hardened, (8) Just as it is written:

"God gave them a spirit of stupefaction, eyes with which not to see and ears with which not to hear, until this very same day."

(9) and David said: " Let their table become turned into⁵⁴ a snare and into a net, and into a stumbling block and into their repayment. (10) May their eyes be made dark with which not to see and their backs bent through all things."

(11) I say then, surely they did not trip so that they fell? May it never be so! But because of their transgression there is salvation for the Gentiles, so that they would be made jealous. (12) But if their transgression is the riches of the world, and their diminution is the riches of the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfilment be. (13) I say to you, those who are Gentiles: Inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry, (14) if somehow I will make those of my flesh jealous and will save some out of them. (15) For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be if not life out of death? (16) And if the first fruits are holy, also the dough and if the root is holy also the branches. (17) And if the some of the branches have been broken off, and you being a wild olive having been grafted in among them and a partner of the roots and become part of the fatness of the olive tree, (18) You should not boast of the branches: and if you boast you do not carry the roots but the roots you. (19) You will say then: Branches have been broken off so that I could be grafted in. (20) Good: They were broken off by unfaithfulness, but you stand by faith. Do not be high minded but be afraid. (21) For if God did not

⁵³ ψυχη is often translated as soul (LSJ s.v. ψυχη -αζω: -η III), but it is literally Elijah's physical life that they are after here (LSJ s.v. ψυχη -αζω: -η I).

⁵⁴ At this point the idea of one thing becoming another needs to be translated as "become turned into" to remain consistent with the meanings of both γίνονται and εἰς (LSJ s.v. γίνονται: εἰς)

spare the natural branches, how will he neither spare you. (22) Behold then the kindness and severity of God, upon those who fell, severity, and upon you the kindness of God, when you remain in kindness, since you also will be cut down. (23) And they also, when they have not remained in unfaithfulness will be grafted in: For God has the power to graft them in again. (24) For if you were cut out from a naturally wild olive tree and have been grafted against nature into a domestic olive tree, how much more will these natural ones be grafted in their own olive tree. (25) For I do not wish you to be ignorant brothers, this is the mystery, so that you will not think yourselves wise, because insensibility has come over part of Israel until the fullness of Gentiles has come in (26) and in this manner all Israel will be saved, just as it is written: "The one who rescues will come out of Zion, he will turn away the irreverent from Jacob. (27) And this is my contract with them, whenever I take away their sins. (28) On the one hand according to the good news they are enemies because of you, on the other hand according to the selection they are beloved because of the fathers: (29) For the gifts and call of God are never to be regretted. (30) For just as you were once disobedient to God, now you have been shown mercy in this disobedience, (31) in the same way they also have now become disobedient by the mercy he showed you, so that they might [now] also be shown mercy. (32) For God has imprisoned all into disobedience, so that he might show mercy to all. (33) Oh the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unfathomable are his judgements and how untractable his ways. (34) For who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been his co-counsellor? (35) Who has given something to God in advance and been paid back by him? (36) Because from him and through him and to him are all things: To him the glory for all ages of time, Amen.

7.3.1 Fay began Group One's response with the recapitulation that the Gentiles will be saved through the disobedience of the Jews and the Jews will be saved by becoming jealous of the Gentiles. Martin and Harry noted that Israel can be grafted back into the olive tree, but asked whether that will only be when all the Gentiles are saved. If so it is effective exclusion, because all have not and are not being saved. Anna and I counter this, saying that it is not necessarily all Gentiles that need to be saved, but a fullness or a sufficient number. Adding that Paul wants everyone to be saved but in this case especially the Jews. Martin noted that we cannot understand the ways of God and that is not surprising since we cannot even understand the writings of Paul (Appendix 3 p.32 I.14-23).

7.3.2 Jane began the discussion by drawing attention to Paul's strange argument about the hardening of the Jews leading to the salvation of the Gentiles. Gladys would find it very hard to identify with this type of God. I tried to explain that Paul was trying to discredit the Torah and circumcision without at the same time undermining the faithfulness of God. Hence the complicated arguments about hardening hearts and grafting in wild and domestic olive branches. However, in the end he is forced to prove the faithfulness of God by simply stating that all Israel will finally be saved. There was some discussion about the image of the olive tree whether Judaism or God was the tree. I thought God was the ground, the people of God were the tree into which the Gentiles are grafted. I then asked them whether they thought Paul felt it was important for the Jews to be saved. Jane answered that it must be, because God cannot be seen to be choosing a people and then dumping

them when something better comes along. As the discussion progresses we decided that it was important that God be seen as being consistent to the Jews or he would be as suspect and capricious as all the Gentile gods. Nell asked a question at this point about how many Christians were of Jewish origin. This was difficult for me and I got a little bogged down in an explanation of the problem. This prompted Hilda to interject that all these theological arguments were destructive of our faith and she preferred to keep it simple and practical. Gladys said that she had no problem with there being different perspectives on the truth because John says that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, so may not all those that talk about Jesus have a part of the truth. There followed a discussion about what is truth and whether there is one truth. Nell's opinion was that those people whose religion showed love and tolerance to other people were those nearest the truth of God. Jane added, that if the truth will set you free, then she thought true freedom is knowing the truth about yourself. Hilda was greatly pleased with this idea because she often finds that people have difficulty loving themselves (Appendix 3 p.49 I.9 - 50 I.24).

7.3.3 Once again, as in the whole of Chapters 9-11, the fate of the Jews is uppermost in the minds of the respondents. All of them agreed once more that it would be extremely unfair of God to exclude the Jews from the people of God as a ploy to get the Gentiles in. However as the discussion progressed through these chapters it became more and more clear to them that Paul wants everybody to be saved.

7.4 12:1-21

(1) I encourage you then, brothers, through the compassion of God, to present your bodies as holy living sacrifices acceptable to God, your reasonable service: (2) and do not mould yourself to this age, but change yourself to the renewing of the mind in order to test what the good, acceptable and complete will of God is. (3) I say, through the grace which has been given me, to everyone being with you, not to think more highly of it than is necessary to think, but to think about being of sound mind, as God has assigned the measure of faith to each. (4) For just as in one body we have many parts, and the parts do not all have the same practice, (5) in the same way, although many we are one body in Christ and accordingly parts of each other. (6) And having different grace gifts according to the donation of grace to us, if it is prophesying, according to the proportion of faith, (7) if it is serving, in service, if it is to teach, in teaching, (8) if it is encouragement, in encouraging: the one who gives, in generosity, the one who manages, in diligence, the one showing mercy, in gladness. (9) Genuine love, hating evil, associating with truth, (10) with brotherly-love towards each other, going before yourself with honour for each other, (11) do not be lazy but be diligent, with a boiling spirit serving the Lord, (12) rejoicing in hope, being patient in suffering, persisting in prayer, (13) sharing in the needs of the saints, pursuing hospitality to strangers⁵⁵. (14) Speak well of those who

⁵⁵ The term φιλοξενία combines the words for "love" and "stranger" to mean "hospitality to strangers" (LSJ s.v. φιλοξεν-εω II.-ια).

are pursuing⁵⁶ you, speak well and do not curse. (15) To rejoice with those rejoicing, to weep with those weeping. (16) Thinking the same thing towards each other, not thinking haughtily but accommodate yourself to the humble. Do not become wiser than each other. (17) Never give out evil against evil, have regard for good before all people: (18) If it is in your power, be at peace with all people: (19) Do not take vengeance on each other, my beloved friends, but give place for wrath, for it is written: "Vengeance is for me, I will pay it back" says the Lord. (20) But "whenever your enemy is hungry, feed him: whenever thirsty, give him drink: For doing this you will heap fiery coals on his head." (21) Do not conquer by evil but conquer evil with good.

7.4.1 Most comments on this Chapter seemed to be on v.1 and 2. Harry quipped that v.2a is about not conforming to the world by having women priests. On a more serious note Robert, Fay, Anna and Harry commented on how different my translation of 2b is from other versions. I have suggested that we change ourselves while most others interpret it as us being changed by God in some way. My comment was that I liked this idea because it implied an active role in our own lives rather than being simply passive to God. Martin speculated whether v.1 means that we should all be perfect in the sense of being body builders. Robert made some jokes about his own body-building prowess. Fay interpreted this verse following the conventional teaching of respecting your body and not corrupting it with, tobacco, sex, drugs etc. as well as some sense of keeping fit. Her example was that of a person discovering diabetes and deciding on the strength of this verse to control her body so that it would be fit and healthy for God. Anna, who is diabetic, said she gets very angry with people who won't respond positively to diabetes and live to control it. Turning to v.11, Martin and Renee like my translation of serving the Lord with a boiling spirit. On the other hand there was some unhappiness about some of Paul's other advice: Martin objected to the idea of being patient in suffering. Fay talked about her father's strong belief in God's revenge, although sometimes she felt it was rather unkind or even challenging towards God. Harry said that the best thing is not to waste time and energy in anger and revenge and to be pleasantly surprised if God's justice is done. I went on to ask them what they think Paul is trying to teach here. Fay answered that it is to show them that Jews and Gentiles have different gifts and are all useful for the Church. An example of a modern use of this verse would be to say that all denominations have different gifts and perspectives, so we should meet to learn from each other like an American pentecostal group who went to Poland and found the eagerness and reverence of the people very inspiring, especially when the Polish Catholics had a greater reverence for their scarce Bibles than many Protestants would have (Appendix 3 p.32 l.28 - 33 l.26).

⁵⁶ the same word is used in relation to hospitality in the previous verse.

7.4.2 To begin the discussion Lynne said that she was encouraged by vs.3-4 which implied that we are all given a personal type of faith. This was the foundation for her assertion that Christianity is such a personal religion. This led to some discussion of fundamentalism. Nell said that she had tempered her antipathy to fundamentalists after she read somewhere that, while we like to think that the truth comes from orthodox places, it really arises from the fringes of religions and from fundamentalist movements. The discussion continued with Hilda saying that it does not matter what people believe as long as they do good for the people around them, like the TV program where a whole lot of sports people give testimonies. But the others disagreed saying that often these groups do not allow room for growth or are so much into prosperity and praise that they do not take into account brokenness, poverty and the suffering of the cross. Gladys brought us back to Romans with a question about what Paul means by faith in v.3. Her Jerusalem Bible says it is more than personal faith but about faith that builds up the body. I agreed with her saying that we are taught about Paul's ideas on faith apart from works, but here he is clearly telling us how our faith can be shown through our works in our actions and ministries. Gladys drew our attention to v.15 and said how hard it often is to find someone to really share your joy with. Nell illustrated this point with the story of her friend who would drop whatever she is doing to help any friend who is sick but never comes to see them when they are well and can have fun together. Nell and Lynne really liked v.18. Lynne talked about the privilege of being a pastor's wife and to meet so many wonderful lowly Christians along with the politicians and bishops. Hilda said v.20 should make us think about how we spend our money, on our enemies rather than just on friends. The Group commented on how much stature and respect Mandela has gained for his lack of bitterness and his forgiveness of his persecutors. Lynne thought that Chapter 12 was particularly wonderful because of how much good advice there is in it. I pointed out that it is Paul's advice about how we should be living our faith (Appendix 3 p.50 l. 29 - 51 l.22).

7.4.3 It is interesting to note here that neither of the groups had any complaints about Paul's argument in this chapter. They sometimes found his views a little hard to stomach but they were generally willing to accept this as good teaching. So it seems that far from being outdated, much of Paul's paraenesis, at least in this Chapter is alive and well and living in the church.

(1) All souls must be set under⁵⁷ higher authorities. For there is no authority if not from God, and those authorities which are, have been set in being by God. (2) So whoever is set against the authorities, stands against the set command of God, and those standing against will receive judgement on themselves. (3) For rulers are not a fear to good work but to evil. You wish not to fear the authorities: do good and you will have praise from them: (4) For they are servants of God working towards your good. But when you do evil, fear: For they do not carry the sword without cause: for they are God's servant, the vengeance of wrath for those doing evil. (5) Therefore it is necessary to be set under them, not only because of wrath but because of the conscience. (6) For because of this you also must make complete tax payments⁵⁸: for they are ministers serving⁵⁹ God engaged for this very purpose. (7) Give out to all what is their due, to whom tax, the tax, to whom tolls, the tolls, to whom fear, the fear, to whom honour, the honour. (8) Never owe nothing if not love to one another: For the one loving the other has fulfilled Torah. (9) For: "you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not desire" and any other commandment, is brought to a head in this saying [in which]: "you shall love your neighbour as yourself." (10) Love does not work evil to the neighbour: Then the fulfilment of the Torah is love. (11) Also seeing this age, that it is already the hour for you to be raised from sleep, for now the salvation is nearer than when we first had faith. (12) The night is far advanced, the day is near. Let us lay off then the works of darkness and let us put on the equipment of light. (13) As in the day let us walk about decently, not feasting and drunken, not having sex and being licentious, not quarrelling and jealous, (14) but on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision towards the desires of the flesh.

7.5.1 Group One found vs.1-5 a very difficult passage. Robert couldn't understand why Paul would say this when it is often demonstrably untrue in governments everywhere. How can bad governments be seen as God's servants. He found it a great strain on the nerves and the credulity especially when these governments use these verses to justify their power and to squash opposition. Harry said he believes that if this teaching is to be accepted it also means that we should accept the government we have. Taking a different tack Robert stated that the section on tax should be accepted because if a government is spending money on people, the people have an obligation to help pay for it. He thought that maybe the Romans had done some good for their people so that Paul felt it important to encourage them to pay taxes. I then tried to probe them on the matter of why Paul would give such teaching and asked them first to note the contrast between vs.7 and 8. Fay felt that the contrast was an extension of the "render unto Caesar..." saying from the Gospels, contrasting the rigidity of the tax structure with the freedom of God's love. I asked why Paul would want to contrast these things? Harry suggested that Paul is telling them that the end is near and

⁵⁷ In the following verses four forms of the verb *τασσω* appear, *υποτασσω*, *τεταγμαι*, *αντιτασσω* and *διατασσω*. The root verb means to set in order, array or establish (LSJ s.v. *τασσω*) so I have tried to translate the forms of the verb in such a way as to make their relationship plain (LSJ s.v. *υποτασσω* I, *αντιτασσω* II, *διατασσω* II, *διαταγη*).

⁵⁸ The verb *τελειωω* means to "fulfil, complete or accomplish" (LSJ s.v. *τελειωω* I) but in relation to tax it seems to mean a complete or full payment of obligations.

⁵⁹ *λειτουργω* is a verb concerned with the service of priests and public officials. *λειτουργοι* in this case, seem to be ministers of God (LSJ s.v. *λειτουργ -ew* I: III.2: -ος III).

they should not be worrying about earthly authorities but about the kingdom. Martin added that maybe he is telling Jewish groups who are obsessed with rebellion that they should rather be looking for the coming of God's kingdom. Robert said that Paul may be telling them and us that we need governments to prevent the collapse of society. Anna and Fay agreed to some extent but also suggested that governments are often as responsible for chaos, as for order and peace. Fay said that it may be challenging us to listen more closely to God when we vote for our leaders. I gave my opinion that we should not interpret 1-5 in isolation as a absolute law to be applied for all time. We should also notice how 8-14 softens and tempers the strong message. Fay objected to my categorising some teachings as relevant for now and others as not. She stressed the need for discernment in deciding what to believe and in being controlled by our conscience. Martin noted the juxtaposition of the clearly universal teaching in Chapter 12, with the doubtful relevance of 13:1-5 created some problems when we are trying to interpret Romans. Harry proposed that the solution is that we should develop a common sense approach to interpretation (Appendix 3 p. 33 I.27 - 34 I.26).

- 7.5.2 This chapter passed surprisingly easily in the discussions with Group Two. Hilda commented that she is sure Paul would be shocked if he could see how his words had been misused by evil governments. She went on immediately to suggest that this passage should be neutralised by Paul's eschatological beliefs. The group have obviously had some teaching on this chapter and as a result had very little to say about it in this meeting (Appendix 3 p.51 I.24-29).
- 7.5.3 The discussion of this infamous chapter provoked the inevitable discussion on whether government is appointed by God, in both Groups. Yet it seems that Group Two has assimilated a good deal of teaching which has changed their idea that this is a universal teaching. Group One still had quite a struggle with this at first but they were also only too willing to accept that this was a conditional teaching which should not be unquestioningly accepted.

7.6 14:1-23

(1) Receive into yourselves the one weak in faith, not arguing towards judgements. (2) On the one hand the one with faith eats all things, but the weak one, on the other hand, eats vegetables. (3) Let the one eating not despise the one not eating, and let the one not eating not judge the one eating, for God has taken that one in. (4) Who are you if you are the one judging another's property: By his own Lord he stands or falls: But he will stand for the Lord who has power to stand him up. (5) For, on the one hand, one judges each day separately, but on the other hand, another judges all days the same: Let each one fulfil these things in his own opinion. (6) The one minding the day, minds them for the Lord: The one eating, eats for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God: And the one not eating, does not eat for the Lord, for he also gives thanks to God. (7) For not one of us lives for himself and not one of us dies for himself: (8) For when we live we live

for God and when we die we die for God. Then when we live and when we die we are of God. (9) For Christ died and lived for this, so that he might also be Lord of dying and living. (10) And you, Why do you judge your brother? Or also why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God, (11) For it is written:

"I live, says the Lord, since every knee shall bend to me and every tongue will speak out in agreement with God."

(12) Therefore [then] each of you will give an account of himself [to God]. (13) Then let us no longer judge one another: but judge this rather, not to place an obstacle or a stumbling block for the brother. (14) I know and have been convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean of itself, unless it is recognised as unclean by someone, this thing is unclean. (15) For if through food your brother is distressed, you are no longer walking according to love: Do not by your food destroy this one for whom Christ died. (16) Then let your good not be blasphemed. (17) For the reign of God is not meat and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit: (18) For the one serving Christ in this is acceptable to God and tested by people. (19) Therefore then let us pursue peace and the building up of each other. (20) Do not for the sake of food destroy the work of God, on the one hand all things are clean, but a person who by eating becomes a obstacle is evil. (21) It is good not to eat meat nor to drink wine nor anything which will be an obstacle for your brother. (22) Your faith [is what] you have according to yourself, have it in the face of God. Blessed is the one judging himself by that which is tested: (23) The one who passes judgement when he eats passes sentence on himself because it is not out of faith: And all that is not from faith is sin.

7.6.1 Group One returned to their refrain of complains about Paul's very complex argument. Harry found the argument a dangerous one especially when people try to use it to justify their own views on issues, especially the rules of alcohol consumption. But for Fay the main point is the Jewish and Gentile reactions to dietary laws. Paul is telling the Jews, on the one hand, that their ideas are out dated, but also calling on the Gentiles to be more sensitive in their attitude to Jewish dietary taboos. Paul is basically telling them to love one another. Martin heard a very good talk by a Rabbi on the use of dietary laws as a discipline which prepares people for the greater disciplines in life. There was some discussion of the different types of contemporary Jews, from the reform Jews who eat bacon and eggs for breakfast (Martin's mother always had to check whether her Jewish Boss' guests were reform or orthodox before sending in the ham rolls at tea time), to the Chassidim who still dress in black suits and furry hats. Fay has been reading a book about how we as Christians should tolerate each other's sensitivities and problems especially when they are doctrinal. Robert agreed that we should not be getting bogged down by our petty differences. Martin commented on how hard it must have been for Gentiles to understand Jewish dietary laws and thereby find ways to be sensitive to them. Harry ended our discussion by drawing our attention to vs. 17 and 18 which in his opinion are the crux of this passage (Appendix 3 p.34 l.27 - 35 l.15).

7.6.2 Nell opened the discussion saying that this chapter is a convincing argument for not judging others, tolerating their dietary laws and being patient with the followers of other religions. Gladys expanded this interpretation, seeing Paul calling for cultural tolerance and a mixing of the communities in

Rome. Lynne added that the contrast between our society and theirs is that we have few taboos about the food we eat. She interpreted this passage mainly in terms of not abusing the gifts, like food, that God gave us. Paul chose food because it is so basic to life. He is encouraging those who are not Jewish not to look down on those who cannot leave their Jewish dietary code. Hilda and Nell said they could sympathize with the Jews because there are so many things that Catholics still dare not do because of their tradition. Examples of this phenomenon are the ban on contraception or of a woman who died of Cancer rather than break the prohibition on abortion, a very tragic but very admirable action. Nell talked about a friend who gave up drinking on the principle of not encouraging young people to drink. Lynne agreed with the principle that as Christians we should not be giving people things which they will be tempted to abuse. The discussion broadened to include pornography and the way it ruins lives. Nell would have liked to tell a sex shop owner speaking on a radio programme about each one of us being beholden to one another and to God. The whole pornography debate led to a short discussion on the shadow side in everyone. Prime examples are of people like Paul Tillich, Martin Luther King and J F Kennedy who did many things that were about morality and Justice but whose sexual morality was very suspect. The shadow seems to look for the opposite to what you are and exploit it. The conclusion of this discussion was that we are all imperfect sinners and we should not be judging others. Gladys was puzzled by the meaning of vs. 22-3. I suggest that it is about acting in consistency with your faith and not forcing yourself to do anything unless you have faith that what you are doing is the right thing (Appendix 3 p.52 l.1-25).

7.6.3 Both groups again clearly recognise Paul's message here, that Christians should tolerate each other's doctrinal foibles. There was quite a bit of sympathy for both sides in this particular struggle in Rome. The Catholics especially had a keen fellow feeling with the Jews and their reluctance to give up deeply socialised traditions.

7.7 15:1-13

(1) We the powerful ought to bear with the weaknesses of the powerless and not to accommodate ourselves. (2) Let each of us please our neighbour and build him up for the good: (3) For Christ also did not please himself, but just as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." (4) For however much was pre-written was written towards teaching us so that through patience and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (5) May the God of patience and encouragement give you the same mind in each other according to Christ Jesus, (6) so that with one heart and in one voice you may glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (7) Therefore receive each other into yourselves,

just as Christ also received us for the glory of God. (8) For I say that Christ has become the servant of the circumcised for the truth of God, for the establishment of the promise of the fathers (9) and I say that the Gentiles should glorify God for his mercy, just as it is written: "Through this I will agree about you with the Gentiles and I will sing to your name." (10) and again he says: " Be glad, Gentiles, with his people." (11) and again: " Praise the Lord, all the Gentiles and sing praises to him all the people." (12) and again Isaiah says: "There will be a root of Jesse and the one who will stand up to rule the Gentiles, the Gentiles will hope upon him." (13) May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, in having faith, towards your overflowing in the hope in the power of the Holy Spirit.

7.7.1 Having read this section Group One realised immediately that it rightly belongs with Chapter 14. Fay noted that it follows on the theme of being not a stumbling block to others with advice on building one another up. She strongly approved of my translation of v.7 because it has a very graphic image which suggests intertwining of lives and involvement with each other, much more than just a tolerant acceptance. Martin and Robert continued with the idea that from v.8 there seems to be a new theme supported by the fact that in some Bibles there is a paragraph break at this point. The new theme seems to be a justification for the inclusion of the Gentiles in the kingdom. Martin said this must have been addressed to Jews because it would not impress Gentiles to have Scripture quoted to them. I suggested, to the contrary, that many Gentiles may feel very encouraged that the Scriptures specifically support their inclusion in God's kingdom. Harry asked If I know what the ratio of Jewish to Gentile Christians was in the first 50 years. I answered that there is no concrete evidence but one should presume that, because there are inevitably more Gentiles than Jews, they would soon form the majority of Christians (Appendix 3 p.35 l.18 - 36 l.6).

7.7.2 Hilda began the response to this passage saying that it is a pity there are so many denominations, when all Christians should be of one mind. The discussion which follows is mainly about different denominations having different temperaments about worship, but that we should have the same stance on moral issues. Lynne acknowledged that she has many silly prejudices about how she worships, including what to do with your hands when you sit rather than kneel to pray. Almost in contrast to these statements the conversation turned to the fellow feeling we have with other Christians wherever we meet them like Nell's encounter with the young Christian in China. We agreed that our instinct is often to trust those who believe the same as us until they prove themselves unworthy of it. Lynne said that this trust is why we should be so careful about parading ourselves as Christians (Appendix 3 p.52 l. 27 - 53 l.5).

7.7.3 Not much common ground came to the fore in the discussion of this passage. Yet there is a slight common thread in their recognition that this passage continues the theme of tolerance for other Christians and the need for a deep and caring involvement between people in the Christian

Community. Another pattern which has emerged much more slowly from these last chapters is a curiosity about the proportion of Jewish to Gentile Christians in the Community in Rome. This should not be surprising in the light of the strong arguments for Jewish and Gentile unity in these chapters.

7.8 15:14-33

(14) My brothers, I myself also am persuaded about you that also yourselves are full of goodness, filled full of all knowledge, power and to instruct one another. (15) I have written very boldly to you in parts as if to re-remind you because of the grace donated to me from God (16) which is my ministry of service of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, the priestly work of the good news of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified in the Holy Spirit. (17) Then I have this boast in Christ Jesus before God: (18) For I will not dare to say something which Christ has not accomplished through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, with words and works, (18) in the power of signs and miracles, in the power of the Spirit of God: so that from Jerusalem and right up to Illyricum I have fulfilled the good news of Christ, (20) in this manner aspiring to have spread the good news where Christ has not been named, so that I would not be building on another's foundation, (21) but just as it is written:

" Those who were not given the message about him will see, and those who have not heard him will comprehend."

(22) Therefore also I have been hindered many times from coming to you: (23) But now no longer having a place in these regions, and having longed to come to you for many years, (24) as soon as I travel to Spain: For I hope to travel through to see you and to be helped on my journey by you when I have first been near you for a time. (25) Now I am travelling to Jerusalem serving the saints. (26) For Macedonia and Achaea have rejoiced to give some share of their goods for the poor saints who are in Jerusalem. (27) They were pleased and they also owed it to them: For if the Gentiles have spiritual community with them, they also owe them this fleshly ministry of worship. (28) Then having completed this and having sealed up this fruit for them, then I will leave them and go through you to Spain: (29) And I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

(30) I encourage you [brothers] through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit to struggle with me in prayer for me to God, (31) so that I might be delivered from the unbelievers in Judaea and that my service might become acceptable to the saints in Jerusalem, (32) so that coming to you in joy through the will of God I might find rest in your company. (33) The God of peace be with you all, Amen.

7.8.1 On reading this passage Martin and Harry remarked immediately that this seems to be a winding down of the letter. Fay noted v.20, saying that Paul seems to be contradicting the saying of Jesus that one will plant, one will water and one will tend the crop. Paul seems to want only to plant and not to water and tend. Renee says he wants to be a pioneer everywhere. This discussion expanded when Fay observed that she had never noticed the suggestion that Paul may have made a journey to Spain. The group asked me if there was any evidence that he made it there. I replied that I know of no strong tradition of Paul preaching in Spain, rather there is a strong tradition that he was executed by Nero during his purge of the Christians after the fire (Appendix 3 p.36 1.8-20).

7.8.2 By this stage Group Two was running out of time so we made no special study of this section.(Appendix 3 p.53 l.5-6)

7.8.3 There obviously cannot be an emerging common pattern when one group has made no comment on the passage. However I would like to draw attention to the surprise of Group One that Paul was planning a journey to Spain. I shared this surprise with this group when I first read this chapter carefully. Now I am convinced that this is perhaps the most crucial verse for the understanding of this whole purpose of the letter.

7.9 16:1-27

(1) I present to you our sister Phoebe, being [also] a servant of the community in Cenchreae, (2) so that you might receive her in the Lord worthy of the saints and help her in any things you might be of use. For she has also become a helper to many people and to me myself.(3) Greet Prisca and Aquila my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, (4) they have placed their necks at risk for my soul, I not the only one who thanks them but also all the communities of the Gentiles,(5) and the community that is in their house. Greet Epenetus my dear friend, who is the first of Asia into Christ.(6) Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you. (7) Greet Andronicus and Junia my relatives and fellow prisoners. They are prominent in the Apostles and who were in Christ before me. (8) Greet Ampliatus, my beloved friend in the Lord. (9) Greet Urbanus our fellow worker in Christ and Stachys my good friend. (10) Greet Apelles who is tested in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobolous. (11) Greet Herodion, my relatives. Greet those of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. (12) Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those working hard for the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis another who worked hard in the Lord. (13) Greet Rufus, the one chosen in the Lord and his mother and mine. (14) Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and those brothers with them. (15) Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and those saints with them. (16) Greet each other with a holy kiss. All the communities of Christ greet you. (17) I encourage you brothers, to watch those of dissention and those making obstacles against the teaching which you have learned, and turn aside from them: (18) For these are not serving Christ our Lord but their own appetites, and through smooth words and flattery deceiving the hearts of the innocent.(19) For your obedience has reached to everyone: I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise towards the good and pure towards evil. (20) The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet in haste. The Grace of Jesus our Lord be with you. Timothy my fellow worker, and Luke and Jason and Sosipater my relatives, greet you. (22) Tertius, Who wrote this letter down, greet you in the Lord. (23) Gaius my host and the whole community greets you. Erastos the city manager and his brother Quartus greet you. (25) The one who has power to support you according to my good news and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the uncovering of the secret mystery of the ages of time, (26) but now shown through the writings of the prophets according to the command of the God of ages towards the obedience of faith and the making known to all the Gentiles, (27) to the only wise God through Jesus Christ, be the Glory from age to age, Amen.

7.9.1 I cannot resist pointing out to Harry how many women there are in the list of Greetings and how many of them are mentioned as working hard for the Lord as missionaries. He said he doesn't mind the idea of women as camp followers. More seriously he and Fay added that they have nothing against women having ministries in the Church, they are just against them being priests. Changing

the subject, Martin expressed a squeamishness about greeting each other with the holy kiss in Church and speculates whether the Jews would have gone around kissing each other. All the men agreed that this talk of kissing is the kind of thing excitable continentals would do and it is all very un-Anglican and disorderly. In another change of subject Martin asked whether the long list of greetings means that Paul already knew a lot of people in Rome and whether this means that there was a large community before he got there. I replied that undoubtedly he knew some of them, whom he mentions as his friends, but it is also possible that this is a list of house church leaders to whom Phoebe should read the letter. I explained the theory that the whole point of the letter seems to be to mobilise all the groups together so as to be an effective support for him in his Spanish venture. The meetings on Romans ended with some final comments:

Robert: We have looked at Romans in more depth than we have ever done in previous studies.

Renee: We have learn a good deal about the complexity of Paul's method of arguing.

Martin: But I would like to do Romans again because I have the feeling that there is a whole lot of the message which we have not grasped yet. I don't feel this way about other books. You seem to be able to get all you can out of them after one thorough study.

Fay: We are now aware that here are many more well known verses in Romans than we had noticed were there before. What troubles me is that there seems to be much less about the Holy Spirit in Romans than there is in the other letters. As a result I can't see myself ever being converted by the message of Romans the way I can with say John's Gospel.

Harry: Well of course not, because it is written to a group of believers and not as a conversion Document.

Martin: It is interesting that Paul's ministry seems to just fade away after this and there is no mention of the bang which we would have expected. God seems to have chosen him as a sort of pioneer among the Gentiles and then let him fade away into obscurity (Appendix 3 p.36 l.22 - 37 l.28).

7.9.2 We briefly discussed the list at the end of Chapter 16 and agreed that it seems to be a kind of address list for all the groups in Rome to whom Phoebe should deliver the letter. Lynne used this suggestion to make an analogy between Romans and a Bishop's circular to the parishes in his diocese (Appendix 3 p.53 l.69).

7.9.3 There was some agreement that this list is a kind of address list for the communities to which this letter should be read. Unfortunately the other issues that could have been raised on this and the previous passage by Group Two, were cut short because we ran out of time in our last meeting.

8. Some conclusions on reading Romans with ordinary readers.

8.1 Having come to the end of this central part of my study I must take some time to discuss some of the significance that these findings have for studying Romans in a post-modern world. I have discussed already the growing conviction of many interpreters that reader concerns are central to an understanding of any text. I hope I have also made a convincing case for the place of the ordinary reader of the Bible in the developing of new understandings of biblical texts. So now, having set out the reading which two groups of ordinary readers have made of Romans, I present some conclusions. From this reading I believe that a strong case can be made for a mixed reaction of resistance and acceptance of Paul's message in this letter.

8.2 The ordinary readers I have studied met much of Paul's argumentation with resistance. In the central part of the letter, Chapters 3-8, they often found Paul infuriatingly complex, obtuse and often long winded. When they were not resisting actively it was often clear that they were rather reading their own concerns and value judgements into Paul's arguments. No amount of persuading on my part seemed to budge the readers from the conviction that Chapter 7 is a deeply personal confession of Paul's own struggles with sin and guilt. The areas of their acceptance are perhaps even more interesting than those of their resistance. At first they seemed to accept most readily the dramatic statements of faith, which Paul attached to the beginning and end of his complicated central argument (3:21-31, 8:31-9). They were extremely sympathetic to Paul's anguish about Jewish Salvation in Chapters 9-11 and they were generally positively disposed to the paraenesis in Chapter 12-15. Yet even here there were pockets of resistance. When Paul suggests, in 11:4-24, that the Gentiles are saved at the expense of the conversion of the Jews, all the readers reacted with a uniform sense that this was extremely unfair. The other area of resistance was to 13:1-7, where they found Paul to be very naive in his belief that all governments come from God. So it seems that when Paul can make an argument that is "meaningful, powerful and true" in the lives of these ordinary readers, they will accept his message. Yet they will also fiercely resist his message when it seems to bear little relation to their experience.

8.3 In the light of such a reading from modern ordinary readers I feel the need to ask the question: Did the original letter face both resistance and acceptance from its original audience? By asking such a question, I will also be answering a frequent question posed by the ordinary readers with whom I read Romans. Particularly in Group One, the question that always followed a particularly difficult

section of Pauline rhetoric was: Do you think the Romans would have understood this any better than we do? To answer these questions I will need to discuss some of the issues currently being debated within "great tradition" readings of Romans. So in Part Three of this study I will attempt to discover Paul's intention as he wrote Romans. This will not only provide, in passing, a contrast between the ways that trained and ordinary readers read, but also be the springboard for an analysis of the success that Paul may have had in reaching the ordinary readers/hearers of his own time. My own feeling is that the results of Part Three will be to show that, whatever the circumstances, it is the ordinary readers who determine the success of any text.

D.

PART THREE

READING ENCOUNTERS OF AN ACADEMIC KIND

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 In the first part of my study I set out some of the debate about reader-response as a method of interpreting texts. I also made a case for reading with ordinary readers as a method of discovering the "little" tradition of a text. Then in the second part of I reported the experience of reading Romans with ordinary readers: by detailing my method of data collection, by giving a "thick" description of the reading culture of each group, before presenting their readings of the text alongside my own preliminary analysis of those readings. Now, in Part Three, I am going to broaden my focus to some of the readings in the "great" tradition of interpreting the text of Romans. In this I take seriously the ideas of Stanley Fish and Mark Brett (c.f. Brett 1995:14-17) that all the questions that can be asked about texts are, in fact, the concerns of the reader. By attempting to discover Paul's authorial intention, in the context of a study ordinary readers, I am trying to focus on the message he was trying to convey to his audience. Having come to a conclusion on this score, I will then embark on the task of analysing the success that this message may have had with the ordinary readers/hearers to whom it was addressed.
- 1.2 I will tackle the task of presenting the academic readings on authorial intention in Romans, by beginning with a review of articles collected in The Romans Debate edited by K.P. Donfried (Donfried 1991). This collection is a prime source for the mainstream debate of Romans scholarship on the purpose of the letter. Once this has been done I will explore some of the more marginal areas in the debate. Over four chapters I will explore a new debate in modern scholarship around the purpose of Romans: Firstly, I will look at the idea that the purpose of Romans is to deal with growing ethnic tension in the Roman community. Secondly, I will analyse Paul's symbolic universe, using the work of Jerome Neyrey in his book, Paul, in other words (Neyrey 1990), which uses the paradigms of the sociology of knowledge to elucidate the meaning of Paul's writings. I believe that Neyrey's conception of Paul's symbolic universe, with its concentration on boundaries, order and purity has direct relevance to the Apostle's reaction to the potential of ethnic tension. Thirdly, I will

take a closer look at studies which have re-examined the attitude that Paul has to his people, the Jews, and the allegedly anti-semitic character of some major passages in **Romans**. Fourthly, I will outline an theory from Clifford Geertz' seminal work **The interpretation of cultures** (Geertz 1973). It is a study of the Rationalisation of traditional Balinese religion in the face of changing international circumstances. Using this theory I will try to explain some of the underlying features in first century Christianity which may have prompted Paul to draft the letter we now know as **Romans**. Once this is done I will continue with an exploration of the rhetorical devices which Paul uses to reinforce his purpose. I will do this with the help of a number recent articles. The initial source is an article by N.R. Leroux, a study of the ways in which writers try to use rhetoric to persuade their readers. This chapter will also include illustrations from recent rhetorical studies of **Romans**, among them Jan Botha's recent work **Subject to Whose Authority?** (Botha 1994). To conclude this part of my study that I will analyse the conclusion of Catherine Bell's recent book, **Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice** (Bell 1992). I will attempt to outline her thesis that the task of persuading people, works both in favour of the hegemonic order and to empower the weak. By this route I will come to my own conclusion that like ordinary readers in the present day, the original readers/hearers of Paul's letter would probably react to his letter with the same mixture of acceptance and resistance. So to end Part Three I will explore some of these areas of resistance by readers and interpreters in the first century.

2. A review of the debate on the purpose of Romans :

- 2.1 The first of the academic readings, which I will present in this chapter, may be termed a modern orthodox interpretation of Romans. All of the essays included in this reading are taken from The Romans Debate, edited by K.P. Donfried. This collection represents an attempt by mainstream protestant scholars in North America and Germany to move closer to a unified reading of Romans. The state of confusion, which the collection intends to address, is clearly stated by Donfried in the following quotation from his essay:

Current research concerning the purpose of Romans is in a state of confusion. Almost every recent article or monograph on the subject proposes a different solution. Although the variety of positions is startling there are basically two major opposing viewpoints: 1) those scholars who believe that Paul directed this letter to deal with a specific, concrete situation in Rome: and 2) those interpreters who hold that it is directed to a situation other than Rome. (Donfried 1991: 102)

Unfortunately, it is the nature of any attempt to create consensus that, those voices which stray too far from the path will be excluded. This volume is no exception, especially in their exclusion of E.P. Sanders. Equally, the need for a final publishing deadline precludes many who might have been included. To try and make up for this lack in the present volume, I will put forward a series of alternative readings in some of the following chapters of this part of my study. For now I will review the essays in this collection, concentrating on those areas of the debate which fit my purpose better than others.

- 2.2 In the first part of this volume the proponents of the theory that the letter was directed elsewhere than Rome, begin the fray. In the first essay T.W. Manson examines the troubled textual history of chapters 15 and 16 and proposes that one letter (Rom 1-15), was sent to Rome, while another, including Chapter 16, was sent to Ephesus by the hand of Phoebe. He further suggests that many of the other textual problems in these chapters can be attributed to Marcion. He is convinced that this most infamous of second century heretics, who prompted the drafting of the New Testament canon in response to his own abbreviated list, must have laid hands on the letter and changed it for his own purposes (Manson 1991:12-3). Manson is followed by Bornkamm, who tries to argue the classic Protestant case that Romans is a kind of "systematic theology" from Paul, bequeathed as his testament to the Church. The essay is, in the main, an elaborate exposition of all the points

that make **Romans** distinctive in his view. However he concludes by saying, "this letter, even if unintended, has in fact become the historical testament to the Apostle" (Bornkamm 1991:27). In my view such a statement completely undermines Bornkamm's entire argument. To have built your case and then deliberately shown that it may have been based on an unintended quirk of fate, is surely self defeating. The third essay is by Gunter Klein and tackles the thorny question of the contrast between 1:11-14, where Paul seems eager to preach to the Christians in Rome even though he is not their founder, and 15:20, where he states categorically that he never builds on another's foundation. Klein's novel solution to this seeming contradiction, is to suggest that Paul recognised that Rome had no Apostolic founder and addressed this letter to them, as a theological treatise, to persuade them to let him be their founder (Klein 1991:42).

- 2.3 The debate of the title begins in earnest with Robert Karris' dismissal of the idea that the section on the "weak" and the "strong" in 14:1-15:13 has anything to do with a concrete situation in Rome. Instead of a dispute between two parties, Karris suggests that this section should be seen in the light of the general paraenesis (ethical instruction) of Chapters 12-15 and considered simply as ethical advice (Karris 1991a: 66). Such a suggestion is dismissed by Donfried who suggests that all work on **Romans** should begin from two methodological principles: that any study of **Romans** should assume a concrete situation in Rome, because this is the general rule of every other undisputed letter; and that **Romans** 16 should be considered part of the letter, as it was originally sent to the Roman Christians (Donfried 1991:103-4). His essay makes a brief foray into the nature of the Jewish community in Rome and its probable relations with Jewish and Gentile Christian groups (Donfried 1991:104-5) and is then diverted into a debate with Karris on issues of rhetoric and style. For example: Whether Paul uses the diatribe form and if so does this mean he has an imaginary opponent (Donfried 1991:112-20)? Whether **Romans** is an ordinary epistle or a letter essay (Donfried 1991:121-5)? And whatever the style, does this really tell us anything about the theological situation in Rome that Paul is addressing (Karris 1991b:126)? None of which is of much use in establishing Paul's intention in writing the letter. To round off this section Wilhelm Wuellner declares the Karris / Donfried debate to be unfruitful (Wuellner 1991:127). He then proceeds to minutely examine the rhetorical structure of the opening and closing sections of the letter, which, as far as I can perceive, yields no practical results in the quest for a concrete motive for writing the letter.

2.4 In the second half of the book the debate about Romans is divided between the socio-historical questions and the rhetorical ones. I will confine myself here to the debate about the sociological and historical situation in Rome because it focuses more clearly on the debate about the purpose of the letter. Starting off this second part, F.F. Bruce concentrates his analysis on the three proposed journeys mentioned in the text. The central journey to Rome and the journeys to Jerusalem and Spain which will precede and follow it. Bruce moots the idea that there were separate house churches in Rome, which ranged in a spectrum from " the firm Jewish retention of the ancestral customs and Gentile remoteness from these customs, with some Jewish Christians, indeed, found on the liberal side of the halfway mark between the two extremes and some Gentile Christians on the 'legalist' side" (Bruce 1991:186). Of the other essay's dealing with the purpose of Romans: I note here A.J.M Wedderburn, who has been seduced by W. Schmithals into the rejection of Donfried's second methodological principle and a return to the Ephesus theory. Their suggestion is, that parts of chapters 12 - 16 be rearranged into a letter introducing Phoebe to Onesiphorus (Wedderburn 1991: 197). This allows them to remove all the troublesome references about not preaching where the Gospel has already been heard, about "weak" and "strong" communities and all references to the Spanish mission. They go on to build their theory that Paul is writing to "God-fearing" Gentile Christians in Rome, urging them to abandon the thrall of Judaism and support his collection to Jerusalem (Wedderburn 1991: 197-202). This deliberate and careful removing of all offending references from the text, makes their argument sound all too much like wish fulfilment.

2.5 I prefer the essay of Francis Watson, who joins F.F. Bruce in rejecting Karris' arguments that Romans 14:1 -15:13 refers to general paraenesis rather than a concrete situation in Rome (Watson 1991: 202-3). He also suggests that Romans 16 presents clear evidence for at least two groups in Rome: those whom Paul knows, including Prisca, Aquila and Epaenetus, who are probably "Paulinist" Christians and have left behind circumcision and dietary laws; and those not known to Paul, including Andronicus, Junia and Herodion etc., who are described as "my fellow countryman" and are, therefore, probably Jewish Christians from the original Roman group (Watson 1991: 209-10). He then continues by examining evidence, in Chapters 1 and 15, which suggests that the primary addressees in this letter are Jewish Christians (cf. Watson 1991: 212-15). He interprets 1:5-6 as if Paul were addressing his Jewish readers as: "You who were called by Jesus Christ in the midst of the Gentiles Just as I am." I do not entirely agree with such an extreme position, but this essay confirms my own growing conviction that Romans has a bias towards its Jewish readers.

Peter Stuhlmacher's essay brings this review to an end. Having reiterated in great detail almost everything I have said so far, Stuhlmacher comes to this conclusion:

There was no contradiction to the Gospel of justification when Paul spoke of Israel's continuing special status, based as it was on Israel's election and promises! As the Gospel shows preference for the Jews but by a miracle is open to the Gentiles as well ... so God's promise which goes beyond the salvation of the "fullness of the Gentiles" holds good for the people of God through Jesus Christ. (Stuhlmacher 1991: 242)

- 2.6 As far as this mainstream debate is concerned I am in full agreement with Bruce, Watson and Stuhlmacher, in their emphasis that the letter is responding to a concrete situation in Rome and that this situation concerns Jews in the Roman community and their relations with other Christians. In the following chapters I will develop this idea in much greater detail: Firstly, by suggesting that the Apostle was concerned by the potential for ethnic conflict among the Roman Christians. Secondly, that this situation offended his sense of the holy order and purity of God. And thirdly, that he attempted, in this letter, to convince the Romans of their need to form a unified and orderly community, which could, incidentally, support his forthcoming Spanish venture.

3. In which the Romans debate is continued

- 3.1 The readings which make up this chapter deal with the inter-ethnic tension that may have developed in the Roman Community, at about the time Paul was writing this letter to them. To start, I return to The Romans Debate and a essay by J.C. Beker, which raises the possibility of this ethnic tension in Rome. To follow I turn to a recent monograph by James Walters, which explores the ethnic issues among the Roman Christians in more detail. It is this hint of strife that, I believe, is the initial spur for Paul to write the letter.
- 3.2 J.C. Beker's essay in The Romans debate (1991: 328-9) theorises that a number of factors came together in Paul's motivation to write Romans . The first is his trip to Spain, for which he needed Roman support. The second is his journey to Jerusalem to deliver his collection from the Gentile Churches. This act of bringing an offering to Jerusalem is important,"because it expresses symbolically the eschatological unity of the church of 'Jews' and 'Gentiles' in the purpose of God as the fulfilment of Paul's Apostolic mission" (Beker 1991:328). The third is the situation in the Galatian churches where the radical "Judaizers" were winning the battle for the circumcision of Christians. The very aggressive tone in Galatians would, in Beker's opinion, warrant some sort of reappraisal of Paul's attitude to the Jews in any subsequent letter. The fourth factor is the situation in Rome itself, where there is tension if not open conflict between the "strong" and the "weak" parties, which Beker has no trouble identifying as Gentile and Jewish congregations.
- 3.3 The second part of Beker's essay centres on the question of the tension between Paul's statement that all fall short of the glory of God and the further statements of the priority of Israel in the plan of salvation. The first part of this argument is to argue that the uses of terminology like *ανθρωπος* and *πας* in no way means that Paul is insisting that all Christians be the same. On the contrary

Paul intends to stress not uniformity, but unity in diversity. The pluralistic diversity of peoples in their ethnic and cultural variety is maintained, although in Christ this pluralism nevertheless becomes a unity. (Beker 1991:330)

The second part stresses that the priority of Israel is essential for Paul because it goes right to the heart of the faithfulness and righteousness of God. In the end it would be impossible to claim that

God is faithful and trustworthy if it could be shown that he abandoned Israel for the Christians, after promising to be faithful to them forever (Beker 1991: 330-1). So Beker concludes his essay:

In this context, the Gentiles must hear that the Gentile church has no authenticity or identity unless it realises that it "is grafted contrary to nature, into the cultivated olive tree," that is ,into Israel " beloved for the sake of their forefathers"... Thus Paul argues against any conception of the church as the "true Israel." By doing so he protects not only the priority and separate identity of Israel in the Gospel, but also the full range of his conceptions of the faithfulness of God. (Beker 1991: 332)

Beker's recognition of an ethnic aspect to the message of **Romans** is expanded by James Walters in his book on ethnicity in Rome.

3.4 James Walters' book is a detailed historical and literary study of the issue of ethnicity among the Roman Christians and in the letter to the **Romans**.

3.4.1 His first point is that the earliest manifestation of Christianity in Rome was an intra-Jewish phenomenon, in which Christians of both Jewish and Gentile origin were members of the synagogues (Walters 1993:7, 58-9). The conflict that this created between the Christian Jews and God-fearers and their "orthodox" Jewish neighbours in the crowded foreign districts of Rome was of great concern to the leaders of the Jewish Community (c.f. Walters 1993:11-3). This concern was heightened by the experiences of the Jews at the hands of the Julio-Claudians, the first Imperial Dynasty, who were often conservative men bent on controlling the spread of foreign and oriental religions in the city. So, especially under Tiberius and Claudius, there was a great need for circumspection in the behaviour of any foreign cult operating in the capital because of the periodic expulsions of religious groups (c.f. Walters 1993:45-50). In Walters' opinion that circumspection would seem to have been justified by the Claudian edict of 49C.E., which expelled many Jews from Rome. The cause of the expulsion was rioting between members of the synagogues which Suetonius, the Roman historian, says was instigated by 'Chrestus'. If this name is a misspelling of Christus, as many presume, then the rioting was between Christians and their opponents and may have led to many Jewish Christians being expelled from Rome (c.f. Walters 1993:51-5).

3.4.2 The second conclusion in Walters' argument is that, by the time Paul came to write his letter to the Roman Christians, there had been a definite shift in their ethnic make up, which created special ethnic conditions which he felt a great need to address. This conclusion is based on the evidence

that at the time of the Claudian Edict there is no evidence that Roman Administrators differentiated between Jews and Christians, who were then either Jews or lived like them. However by the time of the persecutions of Nero in 64C.E., the Christians are very clearly distinguished from the Jews, who seem to have suffered none of the persecutions. Indeed Walters suggests that, in the period between the Claudian Edict and 64C.E., the Jews in Rome had gone out of their way to establish their distance from the troublesome new cult which had arisen from their midst (c.f. Walters 1993:57-62). Walters goes on to suggest that part of that distancing process would have been the expulsion of the Christians from any synagogue to which they may have belonged. Added to this is the possibility that the Claudian Edict had expelled many of the Jewish Christian leaders from Rome, resulting in a shift towards a more Gentile leadership. In such a scenario the Jews and God-fearers who remained in the Roman Church would have felt an increasing sense of isolation in their attempts to define themselves both as Christians and as people living by the code of Torah (c.f. Walters 1993:64). Walters sees Paul's letter arriving in Rome and attempting to meet the challenges of this growing shift in the self-identity of the Roman community:

As the self definition of Christianity in Rome continued to be hammered out, the question of the Gospel's continuity with Judaism was both pressing and unavoidable. Christianity's Jewish origin raised the question, a large Jewish Community in Rome provided the setting for its debate, the Claudian edict animated it, and the Neronian persecution indicated its ultimate answer. The Roman letter arrived in the midst of this process. It is hardly coincidental that the letter's central concern involves the place of Jews and Judaism in the Gospel (Walters 1993:66).

In this situation of flux and crisis of identity, Walters believes that the potential for ethnic conflict among the Roman Christians was running high, so Paul set out to try and broker a peace, by means of this letter.

- 3.4.3 Speaking into a situation of ethnic tension Paul needed to create an area of common ground. According to Walters, this is what he attempts to do in Chapters 1-4, by stressing the impartiality of God as a maxim that they could both understand. This maxim could also be easily demonstrated, both within the paradigm of the belief he shared with Gentile Christians, that justification came by faith, and the Jewish conception, that the same justification comes by works (Walters 1993:76-7). The next thing to establish was the bottom line on the position of the Jews in the Gospel. Walters' argument in this regard is centred on Chapters 9-11 in which he argues that Paul attempts to

convince his audience "that the common ground that exists by virtue of the Gospel's power... must not be realised at the expense of God's promises to Israel" (Walters 1993:84). The final part of Paul's task in his letter was to encourage a spirit of tolerance that would mitigate against any further conflict. Walters argues that this task is handled in Chapters 14 and 15, which "admonish both groups with specific responsibilities" to achieve "his desire for greater harmony between Christians who 'live like Jews' and those who do not" (Walters 1993:92). To conclude his study, Walters adds his own view on the purpose of Romans, which agrees essentially with that of Beker, namely that Paul is addressing the major issue dividing the Roman Christians in order to weld them into a united community which could in turn support his westward mission to Spain (Walters 1993:94).

- 3.5 I agree with Beker and Walters' conclusions, but I would add my own perception that Paul was beginning to realise that the holiness of God, made manifest in the order and purity of his people, was at stake. The religious and ethnic chaos that had arisen in many Gentile churches, Galatia, Corinth and now Rome, some of it as the result of his own preaching, sent Paul into a flurry of letter writing to restore order. In the following Chapters, I will examine this idea in more detail by showing how his construction of reality demanded order and purity in the life of the people of God. If the Gentiles did not come to realise the mercy of God in allowing them into the covenant and did not stop arrogantly flouting his holy order, then all hell might, literally, break loose. His letters, especially 1 Corinthians and Romans are a call to the Gentiles to come within the boundaries of Torah morality and to stop sleeping with their step mothers, wearing their hair long and to get their women under control. At the same time, the Jews have to accept a few compromises with the Gentiles, sparing them the indignity of circumcision and the full weight of dietary laws and accepting that baptism is the new entrance rite for the people of God. The question that I, as a student of the reactions of ordinary readers, must ask is: How would the original hearers have reacted to such a letter? I will attempt to answer this question in Chapter 8 of this study.

4. Order and disorder in Paul's symbolic universe:

4.1 While Jerome Neyrey's work on Paul's symbolic universe, as far as it can be deduced from his extant writings, is not a reading of **Romans** per se, it is very useful to my argument at this point. Neyrey attempts to show that the ideas of order and purity were often uppermost in Paul's mind as he wrote to Gentile churches that he believed were getting out of line. If, as I believe it was, the Roman community was on the verge of ethnic strife, this would be a great offense to Paul's sense of purity and order and he would have felt obliged to intervene. Besides he needed an ordered and pure community to support him on his next venture in Spain.

4.2 Neyrey begins his discussion of Paul's social universe by reminding his reader that Paul was socialised as a Jew.

He was a Jew's Jew, for as he himself said, "I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people" (Gal 1:14a). Adequately socialised, Paul knew what was expected of him, and he lived accordingly, "as to righteousness under the law blameless" (Phil 3:6b)... he was fundamentally and irrevocably socialised into the purity system of the Judaism of his day: "Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews: as to the law a Pharisee (Phil 3:5)... we must take Paul at his word that he was born and bred an observant Jew, and so his perceptions were shaped in terms of the Jewish system of purity, or order. (Neyrey 1990:26)

4.3 Paramount in the Jewish system of purity/order is the idea of the separateness or holiness of God (cf. Lev 11:44-5, 19:2, 20:7, op. cit). Therefore when God created the cosmos she meant it to be Holy and ordered. The blessings of God upon this world are seen in the ordering and structuring of every part of creation. For Neyrey, Genesis 1 is a perfect illustration of how God is perceived to be mapping out the ordered world. First time is set, day from night, the week with its work days and sabbath, the sun, moon and stars all holding their appropriate space on the calendar. Next the land is created separate from the sea and boundaries are set around each. Then animals, birds and fish are created in pure forms each with their separate ways of acting and each is assigned a pure diet with no carrion or other impure food. The roles and hierarchies are carefully set out with Adam given dominion over all creatures. The conquest of Chaos and darkness was a clear manifestation of God's holiness and purity.

4.4 Neyrey (1990: 31ff) sees Paul reflecting this idea of an ordered holy cosmos, especially in 1 Corinthians. The first way in which Paul reflects his Jewish concept of order is in his frequent use of the oppositions; clean and unclean, pure and polluted, in reference to a range of people, things and places and in his concern to protect the cleanness and purity of the human body. In 1 Corinthians, Paul also develops maps of the different hierarchies. In 11:13 Christ is the head of the husband, but God is the head of Christ. In 15:23-8 all power is placed under Christ and then he places it under God. He goes so far as to rank Jesus' resurrection appearances to various people (15:5-10), the apostles, prophets and teachers of the Church (12:28-30), and the different members of the Christian group with his famous body simile (12:16-24). Then he also creates ordered boundaries between the holy and the unrighteous (6:1,9), the saints and the world (1:20-8), insiders and outsiders (5:12-3), believers and unbelievers (6:6) which reflect his idea of the Christians as a chosen people (Neyrey 1990:42). He differentiates between the different types of flesh for humans, animals and birds (15:38), between the different spiritual gifts (12:8-10) and between adults and children (3:1-2), amounting to what Neyrey calls "Paul's penchant to map everything in his ken" (1990:43).

4.5

Although Paul tends to reflect the maps of Jewish culture into which he was socialised, he broke with the Pharisaic circle and abandoned the Temple. A Pharisee's Pharisee, Paul became a follower of Jesus: nevertheless he remained loyal to the God of Israel and the Scriptures. He preached a reformed vision of God and the Covenant: this reformed vision included new ways of perceiving order in the cosmos. (Neyrey 1990:57)

The new vision which Paul espoused threw the ritual order of the Jewish world into disorder. He began to see that God was no longer exclusively God of the Jews but also includes the Gentiles within his plan for salvation. In **Romans** 1:16 and 2:9-10 Paul promises that salvation, honour and also punishment for doing wrong will come from God "to the Jew first and also the Greek". That phrase also signals a new understanding of God's attitude to Gentiles. Whereas before the Jews could regard themselves as God's specially chosen people who would get special treatment on the day of God's judgement. **Romans** 2:11 proclaims Paul's new vision that God shows no partiality in the dispensing of divine mercy. This establishes a precedent where God "may act contrary to the patterns of order commonly accepted in the world, even patterns to which observant Jews were

socialised" (Neyrey 1990:61). God can do this because God has the sovereign freedom to choose whomever God wants. This idea is developed in the similes, in Galatians and Romans, where God chooses Isaac and Jacob before their elder brothers Ishmael and Esau, disrupting the traditional order of primogeniture. The new vision of God continues by disordering the purity of food, by disregarding the separateness of circumcision and proclaiming new relationships between people: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). As a follower of Jesus, Paul saw the need for a fundamental shake up of the traditional order. For Jews this was a disordering of their social universe, for Paul it was a fine adjustment to make room for new realities.

- 4.6 One area where Paul remains wedded to the idea of order is in his efforts to draw and maintain boundaries around the Christian group (Neyrey 1990:81). Paul wishes to draw a boundary between the followers of Jesus who are clean and holy and all others who are neither holy nor clean:

Inasmuch as he perceives the world as dualistically divided into the kingdoms of God and Satan, Paul sees no grey area, no neutral zone: one is either holy in God's realm or belongs to the kingdom of the evil one. A boundary is made that must be maintained. (Neyrey 1990: 83)

The boundary between God and Satan is effective with regard to the Gentiles, but Paul also sees the need to erect a wall between the Christian Group and the Jews:

Particularly in Galatians Paul compares and contrasts two kinds of covenants - the covenant with Abraham and that with Moses. This very act of rhetorical contrasting itself erects a boundary line that definitely separates the followers of Jesus who are the offspring of Abraham, from those of Moses. The language itself erects the boundary. (Neyrey 1990: 83-4)

This idea is developed in Romans 4, where Paul uses parts of the story of Abraham to illustrate how righteousness was reestablished through him after the judgment of the Fall. In three places in Chapter 4 (3, 9, 22) Paul repeats these words "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness." Because this took place before the giving of the Law to Moses it shows that holiness is given by God freely and not earned by observing the Law.

- 4.7 The ritual which most clearly expressed Paul's idea of crossing boundaries is the ritual of entrance into the Christian Group, Baptism. In **Romans** 6:3-4 Paul develops baptism in a surprising way:

Neophytes accomplish this transfer from the kingdom of Satan to that of God by imitating the ritual of Jesus himself - his death burial and resurrection. They die to sin and death, descend into the tomb and are buried with Christ but rise with him to new life.(Neyrey 1990:88)

Neyrey continues:

In short, candidates for baptism leave one world and cross to another world. The difference between the two worlds is itself expressed in terms of dualistic expression, the irreconcilable differences between the before and after state of the entrance ritual of baptism.(Neyrey 1990:88)

This leads to a reappraisal of circumcision which is the entrance ritual for the old covenant:

One cannot enter two covenants. One cannot be a follower of Moses and a follower of Jesus. To be circumcised, then, means to be "cut off" from Christ. Circumcision, then, becomes an exit ritual for Christians.(Neyrey 1990:89)

- 4.8 I would argue strongly that the return of Paul to the drawing of boundaries is a recognition that his earlier preaching, of a Kingdom of God which is open to all without exception, was leading to chaos. There was a multiplication of different interpretations of how to be a Christian, ranging from the radical ascetics and radical libertines of 1 Corinthians, to radical antinomians who wanted to do away with all of the Jewish law, including the moral code. The next chapter fills in the gaps left by the scholars in **The Romans Debate** in this regard. It is a detailed reappraisal of the place of the Jews in **Romans**, concentrating on those chapters which are still often interpreted with an anti-semitic bias. It also supports the evidence, which I have already presented, that salvation for the Gentiles depends heavily on God's faithfulness to the Jews.

5. A review of Paul's attitude to the Jews in the text of Romans:

5.1 This chapter is in many ways a re-reading of many of the mis-readings of **Romans** that have occurred in the past. It is an attempt to review, through the medium of scholars excluded from the mainstream debate, Paul's attitude to the Jews as he was writing **Romans**. I will move systematically through the letter, highlighting those passages which have been interpreted with an anti-semitic bias in the past. By re-reading these passages, the scholars included in this review are changing long held attitudes about Paul and the place of the Jews in his heart.

5.2 To begin, I will examine **Romans** 2:17-29 in its context:

... (17) If then you name yourself Jew and you depend upon Torah and boast in God (18) and you know the will and you discern the things that matter, being instructed from Torah, (19) you have confidence in yourself to be a guide for the blind, light to those in darkness, (20) a trainer of the foolish, a teacher of the young, having the embodiment of knowledge and truth in Torah: (21) Therefore the one teaching others, do you not teach yourself? You preach not to steal, you steal? (22) The one saying not to commit adultery, you commit adultery? The one loathing the idols, do you rob temples? (23) You who boast in Torah, through the transgression of Torah you dishonour God: (24) For "the name of God through you is being blasphemed among the Gentiles," just as it is written.(25) For circumcision on the one hand benefits you if you practice Torah: if on the other hand you are a transgressor of Torah, your circumcision becomes like having a foreskin. (26) If then the having a foreskin you keep the just requirements of Torah, will having a foreskin not be regarded as circumcision? (27) But you will be judged, by those who naturally have a foreskin who fulfil Torah, you who by virtue of the written code and circumcision are a transgressor of Torah. (28) For it is not the one who is visible who is a Jew, nor the circumcision which is visible in the flesh, (29) but the one who is a Jew in a hidden manner, and who has a circumcised heart in the Spirit not the written code, not the one whose praise is from people but from God.(My translation)

5.2.1 In the old interpretation of **Romans**, this passage is seen as a resounding condemnation of the hypocrisy of the Jews and their legalistic system of works' righteousness (Snodgrass 1986:72). This interpretation is based on a schema which understood **Romans** 1-8 as a systematic explanation of salvation and essentially ignored the rest of the letter. In more recent times the focus of attention has shifted more towards the recognition that Chapters 9-11 and 12-16 are important parts of **Romans**, integral to the message of the letter in their own right. The revision in the attitude to these later chapters of the letter, has necessitated a reappraisal of **Romans** 2.

5.2.2 The first step in this reappraisal is to consider not only **Romans** 2:17-29, but the whole of **Romans** 2 in the context of 1:18-3:20 which attempts to show that "all have sinned, not only the Gentiles but also the Jews" (Fraikin 1986:96). Sanders (1983a:127/8) has recognised that the source material for this section of **Romans** can be found in the Greek literature of Hellenistic Judaism most notably the Wisdom of Solomon. There is however a problem for Sanders in the contradiction between the condemnation of the Gentiles in 1:32 and the contention that some Gentiles follow the teaching of the law instinctively and will therefore be saved. Sanders does not know what to do with this idea because it does not fit into his idea that Paul is rejecting the law as an entrance requirement for the people of God (Snodgrass 1986:77).

5.2.3 Snodgrass' analysis of this section is in the context of a vindication of God:

That unrighteousness exists in the world and that much of Israel has rejected belief in the Gospel both raise questions about God himself. Does God ignore sin and has he been unfaithful to his people? (Snodgrass 1986: 76)

In this line of argument Snodgrass continues:

The issue of the vindication of God was also important in Judaism at the time and was closely connected to the theme of judgement according to works. Paul could say he was not ashamed of the Gospel because he saw the long awaited vindication of God was starting to take place with respect to both Jews and Gentiles. The revelation of the righteousness of God in Christ and the Gospel is the beginning of this end-time vindication. (Snodgrass 1986: 76)

5.2.4 To explain the Jewish view of justification by works he shows that it was accepted with qualifications. While there was emphasis on the weighing of good deeds against evil, there was a corresponding stress on the mercy of God because no one could be expected to fulfil the law perfectly. In this passage Paul is showing that judgement according to works applies equally to both Jews and Gentiles, and God's active mercy is available to all. In short it is a radical application of Jewish ideas on salvation to all people without distinction or privilege (Snodgrass 1986: 78/9). So God is vindicated because neither the unrighteousness of the Gentiles nor that of the Jews is ignored, while the Jews are not abandoned because there is equal opportunity for all in Christ. In Snodgrass' argument the sting is taken from the tail of those who want to present 2:17-29 as a condemnation of justification by works. We also see that there is no anti-Judaism in this passage, rather there is an extension of Jewish privilege to the Gentiles.

5.3 **Romans 7:7-25.**

5.3.1 **Romans 7:7-25** is an important passage in this context because it adds a new dimension to Paul's discussion of the law. We have seen in the argument of E.P. Sanders, that Paul rejects the law as an entrance requirement into the people of God. In the chapters preceding **Romans 7**, Paul has come very close to equating the law with sin in his efforts to explain its function in the new dispensation now that Christ has come. To rescue the law from this association, he uses two arguments: Firstly in **Romans 7:7-13** he gives the view that sin as an independent power has somehow hijacked the law and uses it to create transgression against the will of God. Secondly in 7:14-25 the law is divorced from sin but there is another "law" in the body parts which produces transgression, against the will of both the person and God (Sanders 1983b:51-52).

5.3.2 Traditionally this section is seen as further evidence that Paul is recounting his personal experience of the impossibility of attaining righteousness under the Jewish law. This view was reinforced by the use of the first person throughout the text. Since the work of Kümmel in 1929 (cf. Westerholm 1988:52-65) it has been recognised that this is unlikely to be the case, the use of the first person in the text being most likely a rhetorical device which aims to generalise the application of the words to all people. Sanders disagrees with the view that this application to all is the main aim of the passage. The real aim of **Romans 7:7-25** is to answer these questions:

What was God up to before Christ? What was the point of the law? How can one hold together the history of Israel (including the law) with God's intention to save all through Christ? (Sanders 1983b:55)

5.3.3 The purpose of the passage and its very tortured reasoning is an attempt to make sense of God's intentions and to vindicate the law from the accusations, partly his own, that it is tantamount to sin and death. Once again there is no question of anti-Judaism, rather Paul sustains his defense of God and God's law against any thought that they may be anything other than holy, glorious and good.

5.4 **Romans 9-11.**

5.4.1 There are major contradictions in the line of thought of **Romans 9-11**. In 9:1-5 we find Paul almost breaking down with sorrow because Israel has not accepted Christ. He also takes the opportunity to outline once more the proud heritage of the Jewish people. But he has to explain why they did

not respond to Christ. He begins with a complicated exegesis of the Scriptures in order to show: Firstly, that all Israel was never elected. Secondly, that it is a matter of free choice whether God has mercy on anyone or hardens them into disobedience. Finally he ends with the assertion that we have as much right to question God about our predestination for good or evil as a lump of clay has to question the potter who shapes it. At this point the argument begins to create its own problems:

Paul dictates a sentence that implies double predestination. He is not quite at rest with the notion however, and it is probably no coincidence that the sentence ends as an anacoluthon. The way of strict predestination which Paul has begun here leads to a dead end.(Räisänen 1988: 183)

- 5.4.2 Paul changes his tack here to stress the positive state of the elect and to include therein both a remnant of the Jews and the Gentiles. Later, in Chapter 11, he will claim that the hardening of Israel was for the purpose of allowing the Gentiles into the promise. In its turn the inclusion of the Gentiles was specifically engineered to make the Jews envious, so that they would finally rush to join the new Israel in the Church. The Chapter ends with the revelation of the mystery that in the end all Israel will be saved. The convolutions and contradictions of this reasoning are indisputable. Räisänen and Sanders agree that,

Paul had a problem of conflicting convictions that can be better asserted than explained, and therefore he desperately sought for a formula which would keep God's promises to Israel intact, while insisting on faith in Jesus Christ. (Räisänen 1988:195)

- 5.5 In this chapter and the two which preceded it, I have attempted to build the case for understanding **Romans** as an attempt to respond to the ethnic chaos in the Roman Community, with a call for a return to Jewish perceptions of order and purity. I agree with Sanders and Räisänen in their conviction that much of the confusion of the argumentation in **Romans**, especially 7-11, is precipitated by Paul's own confused attempts to back track on his own earlier mistakes. The chief of these mistakes was to preach that, in Christ, the old laws and boundaries no longer held force. Hence his confused attempts to create a system of moral behaviour, which embraces the spirit of Torah and draws boundaries around acceptable behaviour, but which is also distinct from circumcision and the dietary laws which mark the boundaries of Judaism. In the next chapter I will be outlining a model from the discipline of Ritual Theory, which I hope will elucidate this point. I

will argue, with the help of Clifford Geertz, that Paul is attempting to build a rationalised religious system combining a deep connection to traditional peasant values of Galilee, which he inherits from Jesus, with the new insight that God wants to be revealed to the Gentiles, and a respect for the rationalised code of the Jewish Torah. In this reading, which is essentially my own, I will look at the nature of Christianity in the first century and the ways in which that situation may have shaped Paul's letter.

6. The rationalisation of the Jesus Movement in Romans

- 6.1 This final reading of the purpose of Romans is my attempt to bring together the various readings I have presented so far. To do this I am using Clifford Geertz' model of rationalisation in religion, which explains how "traditional beliefs" need to be systematised and rationalised in order to fit the changing context in which they find themselves.
- 6.2 Geertz bases his model for rationalisation on the older model of Max Weber.
- 6.2.1 Weber's study of comparative religion led him to divide historical religions into two idealised types, the 'traditional' and the 'rationalised'. Weber defines the difference between the two by noting the relationship between religious concepts and social practices in each type. Traditional religious practices are in a fixedly stereotypical relationship to the social forms around them. Which is to say that in traditional religions the practice of religion and the practice of social custom dovetail to a very high degree and fit comfortably together in the flow of daily life. The opposite is true of rationalised religious concepts, which have become detached from social practice to such an extent, that religious worship becomes a self-conscious act which interrupts the flow of daily life. Essentially traditional religion is conceived of as naive while rationalised religion is cerebral (cf. Geertz 1973 :171).
- 6.2.2 The difference between 'traditional' and 'rationalised' is graphically illustrated by the structure of religious practice. Traditional religious systems respond to the world concretely yet haphazardly, so that each crisis, death, natural disaster or disease is treated as a unique problem which must be fixed by the appropriate rite or therapy from the arsenal of religious knowledge. In the same way each birth, marriage, harvest and celebration in life is accompanied by an appropriate ritual worked out for the occasion. The result is that religious activity ebbs and flows in response to the needs of the community which it serves.
- 6.2.3 Rationalised religions respond to the problem of meaning which results from crises in a more logical and generalised way. They address the problem of evil in abstract terms rather than dealing with the specific situation or concerning themselves primarily with philosophical rather than concrete questions (cf. Geertz 1973: 172). The development of a rationalised system seems to come about in an historical situation where the foundations of a traditional social system undergoes so fundamental a shake up that the religious and intellectual elite feel the need to begin ordering the sacred by abstracting it from its concrete base in the world and placing it into another realm. The bridging of the gap between this removed divinity and the world is thereafter achieved either by

developing a "systematized, formal, legal-moral code consisting of ethical commands conceived to have been given to man (sic) by the divine through prophets, holy writings and miraculous indications" or by " direct, individual experiential contact with the divine via mysticism, insight, aesthetic intuition... often with the assistance of highly organised spiritual and intellectual disciplines" (Geertz 1973: 173).

6.2.4 Weber sees these rationalisations as largely confined to the axial period of history when the great world religions arose (Judaism giving rise to Christianity and Islam and Brahminism giving rise to Buddhism and Confucianism). In this chapter Geertz is trying to argue for a continuing process of rationalisation at least in regard to Bali. He sees that the traditional religion (a local variation of Hinduism originally imported from India), which could exist unproblematically in the isolated world of historical Bali, faces the shock of adapting itself to the modern world and to being part of the Muslim Republic of Indonesia. Geertz (1973:181ff) notes that the response of the Balinese nobility to this situation is, to begin publishing traditional Scriptures and treatises on Balinese religion, to systematise the temples and priesthood, to establish contact with India and the sources of Hindu philosophy and to seek official recognition for their religion in the Indonesian constitution. All of these add up in Geertz' mind to a conscious move on the part of the religious and cultural to rationalise their religion in the face of a fundamental challenge to the foundations of their society.

6.3 I turn to this model from Geertz, because the situation he describes in Bali strikes a cord with my impression of Christianity in the first fifty years.

6.3.1 Like Bali, the Galilee of Jesus day was a traditional society which based their life and religion largely on the concrete needs of their daily life. So I see the Jesus movement largely concerned with the issues of over taxation of the peasantry by the Romans, along with their client elites, but also concerned with the religious reconstruction of Israel; the reforming of the priesthood, the removal of the burden of petty laws which oppressed the people and puffed up the petty authority of the local Pharisee scribes sent by Jerusalem.(c.f. Brown 1983, Borg 1987, Crossan 1991, Draper 1993, Pixley 1983) In short this was a religious movement unprepared for the demands of a Gentile world.

6.3.2 The readings of Romans I have already outlined show the growing complexity that the Jesus movement was beginning to face as it grew farther and farther beyond its Galilean homeland. After his initially euphoric preaching of the liberation of humanity from all law by faith in the crucified Christ, Paul began to realise four things: First, if Christianity was to appeal to Gentiles it must rid itself of the Jewish customs of circumcision and diet which had previously prevented "God-fearing"

Gentiles from accepting Judaism. Second, that the appeal of Judaism had always been its strict moral code and careful marking of the boundaries of what was acceptable, making it imperative that these be maintained in the new movement. Third, that the influx of Gentiles into the movement was stirring up all sorts of ethnic conflicts as its Jewish adherents struggled to come to terms with the shift in the self-definition of the average member from within the Jewish to the Gentile world view.

6.4 So in his letters Paul begins to deal with the chaos of a traditional religion breaking into a rationalised world by trying, often on a somewhat ad hoc basis, to establish his insights on Christianity as the norm. In the next chapter I will look at return to the literary focus of my study, by analysing the role that rhetorical devices played in Paul's attempts to persuade his reader/hearers of the rightness of his position.

7. The role of Rhetoric in Romans, then and now.

- 7.1 A focus on the rhetoric of Romans may seem a contradiction in a study of the role of the reader in the text. Rhetoric is essentially the study of the way an author manipulates her audience into accepting the message of the text she is writing or performing. Yet, as Jane Tompkins pointed out (c.f. Tompkins 1991b), at the time of Paul the ideas of rhetoric and audience/reader-response were closely intertwined. This notion has been rediscovered in recent years by some of the leading proponents of the rhetorical study of texts. My major source of information on these trends is a short article by Neil R. Leroux in the latest issue of Neotestamentica (Leroux 1995). However, as illustrations of many of his points, I will also refer to some recent rhetorical studies of parts of Romans including Jan Botha's (1994) study of the rhetoric of Romans 13.
- 7.2 Leroux's argument is centred on his attempt to stress how the rhetorical devices in a passage "can be discovered, named, described and understood, including how those phenomena can be critiqued for appropriateness and/or plausible impact" (Leroux 1995:2). In addition he is also interested in the way in which the author is affected in her use of rhetorical devices by the audience for whom she is writing. Ultimately the goal is the persuasion of the audience to accept the author's ideas or version of events or at least to "try it on for size" (Leroux 1995:2).
- 7.3 Leroux's thinking on rhetorical figures and forms is influenced to a great extent by Chaim Perelman and Kenneth Burke (c.f. Botha 1994:126-141). Perelman believes in the "principle that the purpose of persuasive discourse is that an audience grasp an idea or 'thesis'" (Leroux 1995:4). The whole point of this is not to get tied up in the complexity of traditional discourse on Rhetoric, which differentiates painstakingly between, and attempts to name, each of the different 'figures' in a discourse. The task is rather to "ascertain what type of rhetorical advance is sought in a particular argumentative strategy" (Leroux 1995:4). So Leroux is most interested in discovering whether an argument "works to achieve *choice* (directing attention to specific aspects of the subject matter), *presence* (making a subject more vivid), or *communion* (closer relations between the speaker and the audience)" (Leroux 1995:4-5). The last aspect of this principle of functionality is that if these figures of rhetoric are to work effectively they need to do so unobtrusively.
- 7.3 Leroux then turns his attention to how figures of rhetoric achieve their purpose. To do this he turns to the work of Kenneth Burke who, like the advocates of reader-response, advocates a greater role

for the audience of any communication, argument or text. In Burke's model then the author always has an audience in mind and her discourse is thus a social interaction where the form in which something is said is the key to understanding how it works:

An author fashions a work in which an audience can participate not only through the information presented but also through the forms into which the information is organised. Information can bring a satisfaction through its newness, but form has the capability to repeatedly satisfy because of its power to elicit our recognition of its rightness. Furthermore, Burke argues that this rightness - our cooperation with and ability to apprehend, appreciate, and participate in form (whether by agreeing with it, rejoicing at it, mourning over it, or being terrified by it, etc.) - is the work's psychology, that is the explanation of what makes it function (Leroux 1995:4-5).

There are four basic aspects to form.

7.3.1 Firstly there is form which creates a natural progression: "an argument advances step by step, a plot scene by scene, premises force a conclusion, a cause results in effects and effects cry out for causes" (Leroux 1995:6). The form creates an expectation of a certain outcome and when this is accomplished the desired satisfaction results.

7.3.2 The second aspect of form is that which repeats itself in other words to reinforce the message.

Repetition, then, is an attempt to make manifest an experience, for the purpose of evoking audience response to that experience: if the experience is inherently interesting and intense, an author may in many places resort to repetition to inculcate - nay to enact - those qualities. The reader whose own experience coalesces to some degree with the experience being described will have no trouble feeling the intensity (Leroux 1995:9).

7.3.3 The third aspect of form is for progression and repetition to work in combination. The classic example of this is a nursery rhyme like Three Blind Mice in which repetition of words and music combine with a logical progression to draw the audience into the narrative and to help them retain it in their memory for years to come (Leroux 1995:10-11).

7.3.4 The final aspect of form is that it is conventional. The audience may have many expectations of a piece of discourse which they cannot explain because they have been built up unknowingly over years as the regularities of a particular form are learned (Leroux 1995:12).

7.4 So Leroux would argue with Burke that, far from being the lesser part of the discourse, the mere receptacle of the important information, form is an inseparable part of the message that is conveyed

to the audience (Leroux 1995:6). So for effective communication to take place a careful balance between the content and form needs to be created. Therefore the effective communicator is the person who has an almost natural ability to tailor the form and content of a message to the audience that is being addressed.

7.5 There is plenty of evidence that Paul uses these rhetorical devices, figures or forms, discussed above, in his message to the Romans. Below are some examples which have been analysed in various recent studies. However the question that I ask as a reader critic is: How effective were these figures in conveying Paul's message? I ask this in the light of the picture of the Roman community that is emerging in this study. So the second question that I ask is: Does Paul have the ability to tailor his material to his audience? Those quoted below believe that he does. I on the other hand will reserve my judgement until the end of Chapter 8.

7.6 The following examples are taken from a variety of studies which have explored the rhetoric of selected passages in **Romans**.

7.6.1 In the first example, J.P. Heil (1990) points out that in the first chapter of the letter Paul attempts, "to establish a common bond with his audience as he informs them of his eager desire to come to Rome in order to spiritually strengthen them and be mutually encouraged with them through the faith they share" (Heil 1990: 286). This corresponds closely to the rhetorical figure which seeks to create communion between author and audience that Leroux discussed above.

7.6.2 The second set of examples comes from Douglas Campbell's (1992) study of the rhetorical figures used in **Romans** 3:21-6. They illustrate the consecutive use of the figures of repetition and progression in this short passage.

(21) But now, apart from Torah⁽ⁱ⁾, a righteousness from God has been revealed to which testimony is given by Torah⁽ⁱ⁾ and the prophets, (22) righteousness from God through faith in Jesus Christ to all⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ those who have faith in him. For there is no distinction, (23) for all⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ have sinned and failed to obtain the glory of God, (24) being made righteous as a gift of his grace through the payment of the ransom in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God offered as a sacrifice, through faith in his blood, as a demonstration of his righteousness, because of his remission of former sins. (26) By holding back, God was able to demonstrate his righteousness in the now age so that he would be righteous and the one who makes righteous those with faith in Jesus. (My translation)

- i) In verse 21, Campbell notices what he calls an antithesis between the two instances of *νομου* (Torah). This device is a variation on the repetition figure that was mentioned in Leroux's discussion of Burke. Campbell argues that, although the same word is used here, there is a "subtle and nuanced ... shift in the use of the word *νομου* within the antithesis, between the senses of ethical code and inspired oracle" (Campbell 1992: 86). Both of these senses are referring to the same set of writings so the repetition here leaves the audience with "an essentially unresolved conceptual tension" (Campbell 1992: 86). This destabilises the conception of these writings in the mind of the hearers, allowing Paul to reinterpret it.
- ii) In vs.22-5 Campbell notices another set of figures which he recognises as a parenthesis, a digression which ultimately helps the progression of an argument by clarifying or glossing a previous point. The last phrase of v.22 'there is no difference' seems a little odd at first until one realises that it is the beginning of an parenthesis. The word *παντες* (all) refers back to *παντας* in v.22 suggesting that this is an expansion of this concept. However the link of *παντες* with *ημαρτον* (sin) also creates a link to the whole previous argument in 1:18-3:20 showing that the whole of 3:21-26 is a progression from that argument (Campbell 1992: 86-9).

7.6.3 The way in which progression and repetition can work together more closely, to strengthen an argument is exemplified in Neil Elliott's (1990) study of the Rhetorical structure of 5:1-11.

(1) Therefore having been made righteous from faith we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) through whom we have access [through faith] to this grace in which we stand and boast⁶⁰ in the hope of the glory of God. (3) Not only this but we also boast⁶⁰ in suffering, knowing that suffering accomplishes patience, (4) patience character and character hope. (5) And hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. (6) For Christ, while we still were weak, at that very time died for the impious. (7) For rarely someone will die for a righteous person, and perhaps someone will dare to die for a good person: (8) but God set out his own love for us because while we were still sinners Christ died for us. (9) How much more then, having now been made righteous in his blood, shall we be saved through him from wrath. (10) For if being enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (11) Not only this, but we are also boasting⁶⁰ in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have received this reconciliation. (My translation)

- i) The thrust of Elliott's argument is, that the threefold repetition of *καυχωμεθα* (we boast) in vs. 2, 3 and 11 of Chapter 5⁶⁰, brings an extended discourse in Chapters 3-4 to a neat conclusion.

⁶⁰. My translation follows the text of the Nestle-Aland (26th Edition) and as a result has only two of these repetitions with v.11 reading *καυχωμενοι* instead. However my opinion is that this should not severely undermine Elliott's argument.

The progression of this discourse had been generated by the force of opposition between divine righteousness and human boasting (especially in the privileged position of the Jews, 3:27, 4:2). Now in Chapter 5, Paul wants to channel that force into a human boasting that is in line with the righteousness of God, so that Christians will boast in the 'hope of the glory of God' (v.2) or simply 'in God'(v.11) so as to "displace an[y] illegitimate boast in one's status in Christ... which would be tantamount to a boast against God" (Elliot 1990:227). The repetition of *καυχωμεθα* reinforces Paul's insistence on this Christian boast and, as Elliot would have it, thrusts the audience forward into an extended exemplification of this boast in Chapters 6 -11 (Elliot 1990:226-8).

7.6.4 Jan Botha's thorough rhetorical reading of 13:1-7 provides me with an example of Paul using highly conventional rhetorical argumentation to get his message across. Botha's argument is that the entire pericope is made up of a series of figures called syllogisms and a shortened version thereof called enthymemes. I will illustrate these figures below using my translation of the letter broken up into the various structures, as suggested by Botha. In the model below, the enthymemes and syllogisms are set out, with the initial premise and any other words implied by the structure added in square brackets.

(1) *[All souls should be set under God]
there is no authority if not from God,
and those authorities which are, have been set in being by God.
[therefore] All souls must be set under higher authorities.*

(2)a *[authorities are set in being by God]
So whoever is set against the authorities,
stands against the set command of God,*

(2)b *[God punishes those who resist what he has set in being]
[therefore] those standing against these
will receive judgement on themselves.*

(3)a *[Punishment causes fear]
[the authorities will punish evil]
[therefore] rulers are not a fear to good work but to evil.*

(3)b *You wish not to fear the authorities:
do good
and you will have praise from them:*

(4)a *[God always does what is good for you]
they are servants of God
[therefore they are] working towards your good.*

- (4)b *rulers are not a fear to good work but to evil.
when you do evil,
fear:*
- (4)c *[God is always angry at those who do evil]
they do not carry the sword without cause: for they are God's servant,
[therefore they are] the vengeance of wrath for those doing evil.*
- (5) *[The conscience necessitates righteous conduct]
Therefore it is necessary to be set under them
not only because of wrath but because of the conscience.*
- (6) *[The authorities collect taxes]
They are ministers serving God
because of this you also must make complete tax payments:*
- (7) *Give out to all what is their due, to whom tax, the tax, to whom tolls, the tolls, to whom
fear, the fear, to whom honour, the honour. (My translation, c.f Botha 1994 168 -176).*

Botha's argument is that this progression of logical steps and repetition of argument, suggests very strongly that this is traditional material from Greek Rhetoric. He expands this point with further references to the Jewish tradition:

*The fact that **Romans** 13:1-2 fits the model of Hermagorean school rhetoric so perfectly points to the gnomic and traditional character of this exhortation. This exhortation is not something newly invented in the Rhetorical situation of the letter to the **Romans** . There is good evidence in the Jewish tradition that people were exhorted to believe that authorities are ordained by God and should therefore be obeyed : Josephus BJ ii.8.7 140 ("Rule does not come from anyone apart from God") and Sirach 4:27 ("Do not resist rulers"), ... Part of its Rhetorical significance, therefore, does not lie in its 'content' as such but in the fact of its presence (Botha 1994 :171) .*

- 7.7 The rhetorical flourishes I have illustrated above are designed to convince an audience of a certain point of view. Yet the extent to which they have the power to persuade is also dependent on the character of the audience. As Burke has pointed above, the author (or implied author in reader-response terminology) tries very hard to tailor her rhetorical forms to the needs and likes of her audience, so it should follow that the further away the audience is removed from the original audience, the less the power of the rhetoric, or at least the greater the potential for misunderstanding. Therefore it is un-surprising that ordinary readers of the Bible in the present time, find much of the rhetoric of **Romans** extremely hard to understand. This is doubly true if we accept

Sanders and Räsänen's view that Paul was confused in his reactions towards his own arguments. Nevertheless the question which lies at the heart of this part of my study is the extent to which the original audience may have misunderstood Paul's rhetoric, and even if they did understand it, how far were they taken in by his arguments?

- 7.8 The power of rhetoric is its ability to persuade an audience that the author/speaker is articulating a powerful truth that is worth believing in. Yet, as Perelman, Burke and Botha have explained, the content of rhetoric is subordinate to the form. Form, in their view, is the ability to take what people already believe, even unconsciously, and convince them of its rightness. However when it comes to introducing new material, even the most brilliant rhetoric is at a disadvantage. In the following chapter I will explore another model from the field of religious anthropology. By this model I will try to show how resistance to the rhetoric of Paul's message, which sought to establish a new community in Rome by the force of persuasion, could arise from the very nature of the rhetorical forms that were designed to achieve its purpose.

8. Ritual empowerment and the resistance of rhetoric

- 8.1 This chapter is where the ordinary readers come into their own once again. Like Scott (1977), Catherine Bell's (1992) theory of ritual empowerment recognises that, the everyday efforts of religious authorities to establish their own power, by means of ritualized systems of behaviour, are dependent on the willing compliance of the people they are trying to convince. Most often this compliance will only be partial. The necessity of the ritual elites to negotiate these power relations, will often empower the ordinary people, or the little tradition, to surface and resist these attempts at ritual hegemony. So it seems once more that it is the audience or ordinary readers who have the power to declare any religious system a success.
- 8.2 Catherine Bell's book is an exhaustive study of Ritual Theory from Van Genep to Geertz, taking in Marx and countless others on the way. My interest in this essay is on her final chapter which focuses on the power of ritualization and ritual empowerment of the participants in a ritual act. In the following paragraphs I will follow her own summary of ritualization to its conclusion.
- 8.2.1 The first point about ritualization is that it involves among other features, special space set apart to which only the initiated have access, setting aside specific times and seasons, using a distinctive language or codes of communication, high formality of dress and gesture, well-defined personnel, ritual objects and Scriptures, claims to universal significance of the words and gestures. All of which is another way of saying that ritualization is about ways of acting and the differentiation and privileging of particular activities. All societies practice ritualization but the extent of the ritualization depends on the culture. Bell's own example is that of American culture which is now so effectively secularised that there remain only a few activities still ritualised to any significant degree (Bell 1992: 206). In essence this idea is not radically different from Geertz's model of rationalization in religion which I described in Chapter 6. However Bell takes her theory a step beyond the workings of the religious elites who spearhead efforts at rationalization or ritualization in religion:

The deployment of ritualization, consciously or unconsciously, is the deployment of a particular construction of power relationships, a particular relationship of domination, consent and resistance. As a strategy of power, ritualization has both positive and effective aspects as well as specific limits to what it can do and how far it can extend.(Bell 1992:206)

8.2.2 The most effective way in which ritualization serves power and domination is its ability to construct the schemes and sources of those in power, in such a way, that those who have been socialised into that particular culture will fail to recognise them . The strategy most often used is the projection of power onto divine powers or ancestral traditions so that they seem to reflect the self-evident reality of an ordered cosmos (c.f. also Berger and Luckmann 1967). Catherine Bell expresses it this way:

Within the intricacies of this objectification and embodiment lies the ability of ritualization to create social bodies in the image of relationships of power, social bodies that are the very relationships of power. If it is at all accurate to say that ritualization controls - by modelling, defining and moulding, and so on - it is this type of control that must be understood. (Bell 1992:207)

8.2.3 Yet even as ritualization attempts to control the people in favour of those in power, Bell claims that it also empowers them through the processes of "consent, resistance and negotiated appropriation." The consent with which participants in controlling rituals take part should not be seen as false consciousness or unquestioning obedience because each person brings with them " a self - constituting history that is a patchwork of compliance, resistance, misunderstanding and a redemptive personal appropriation of the hegemonic order" (Bell 1992:208). In other words a person can consent to ritual out of her own self-interest and doesn't necessarily buy the objectifications which she is supposed to embody. So the participant in fact negotiates her participation in the ritual, she consents to bring her physical body to the ritual in return for the expected good that flows from on high. The example which Bell gives is Jean Comaroff's study of Zionists in South Africa, where they have appropriated the hegemonic order of Christianity but have transformed it so that it becomes a cycle of healings, exorcisms and baptisms, which heal, drive out and wash away the pollution of apartheid dominance. This is a strategy of protest and resistance which re-invents the world in their favour.

8.3 So, through a process of negotiation, the ordinary reader has the power to accept, modify or reject, the stratagems which the powerful employ in their efforts to rationalize or ritualize reality into a resemblance of their ideal.

8.3.1 My previous experience as a trained reader, reading with ordinary readers, has shown me the strength of their resistance to ideas which are not "meaningful, powerful and true", in their

experience. This study has only served to confirm my conviction on this score. I would, however, also expand my analysis with the observation that these ordinary readers are also constantly in negotiation with Paul, the implied author of the letter. They are also in negotiation with their own church traditions, about the passages of Romans they are willing to accept at face value and those which they are unwilling to accept until they have been questioned and reinterpreted into a form which meets the needs of their situation.

8.3.2 My own opinion is that this process of negotiation with the text has been ongoing since the time of the first readers/hearers to whom Phoebe read the letter. One need only look to the evidence that I have presented in this study to know that this is true. On the one hand I think that it was Romans, above all other letters, which settled Paul's reputation as an apostle and as a founder of Christian Theology⁶¹. Perhaps, it was the demand for copies of this letter from ordinary readers in churches around the Mediterranean that established Paul's reputation as the Apostle to the Gentiles and opened the way for his correspondence to be included in the canon. Even if this is not the case, Paul could not have asked for a better result from his attempts to stamp his authority on the fledgling Christian movement, than the amount of energy that has been expended, in the last 1800 years, on attempts to understand this letter. On the other hand in the process of the appropriation of his message by the Church, much of what he said has been turned on its head. The very passages in which he attempts to establish the priority of Israel have been used to punish and dismiss the Jews for centuries. What is more the Church has largely ignored his pleas for holiness, unity, purity, tolerance and acceptance of other's weaknesses, by fighting and schisming its way all through its long history.

8.4 My conclusion from this part of my study is, that ordinary readers, both at the time of Paul and among the participants of the present study, have always had a mixed reaction to this letter. In the case of the former, this is due to a variety of factors: Firstly, the Apostles own confusion in his attempts to argue his case for acceptance of the Torah without circumcision and dietary rules. Secondly, the situation in Rome where people, embroiled in internal conflict and changing self-identity, could have as easily followed or ignored the advice of an outsider who did not know their local conditions. Thirdly, the religious convictions of the "weak" and the "strong" parties, which would have lead them to accept or reject parts of the letter as it suited them. These reasons are

⁶¹ Bultmann R. 1952 New Testament Theology London, SCM

much the same in the case of the latter: Firstly, they react in the same way to the confusion in Paul's arguments and added to this is an unfamiliarity with Paul's rhetorical style. Secondly, they have many of their own concerns which lead them to ignore Paul when he makes no sense in their context. Thirdly, their differences in religious conflicts cause them to react in different ways, as Catholics or Anglicans or Evangelicals or a combinations of these. At the same time there is much that an ordinary reader can accept in Romans, the evidence of 1800 years of readership has proved as much.

E.

GENERAL CONCLUSION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ORDINARY READER EXEGESIS FOR ROMANS STUDIES

- 1.1 In this essay I have been trying to show how ordinary readers interpret one of the most important texts in the New Testament canon. In addition I have proposed that the reaction of the ordinary readers in Rome, who initially heard this letter read, was, at the very least, analogous to that of ordinary readers in Pietermaritzburg. This common reaction, consisting of a mixture of acceptance and resistance to the rhetoric of Paul's message, is the most significant finding of this study. Further research could expand these findings to a much more representative sample of ordinary readers from a variety of cultural and denominational backgrounds. If this were to be done, I believe that those findings would bear out the findings of this study.
- 1.2 The significance of further research into the interpretation of Romans by ordinary readers, would be to shift the emphasis of the study of the letter. The contemporary debate is a confusion of academic combats. Scholars are engaged in long standing disputes as to the composition and destination of the letter. I do not want to make any claims of particular altruism, for the people engaged in ordinary reader studies, but I do believe that the nature of these studies is necessarily more co-operative. Rather than having a personal stake in a personal interpretation of the letter, scholars would be representing the readings of a community which had already been negotiated and so they would be more willing to negotiate further to find the richest possible interpretation of Romans.
- 1.3 Leaving aside any positive behavioural consequences of ordinary reader study, the finding of this study also have significance for those who continue to study the "great" tradition of New Testament Studies. Firstly, the findings that ordinary readers have a mixed reaction to Paul's rhetoric could temper the claims of rhetorical scholars for the effectiveness of the rhetorical forms which they are analysing. Secondly, the observations of ordinary readers could give those scholars

engaged in the analysis of various passages in Romans a fresh insight into the meaning of that passage. Finally, my arguments on the authorial intention of Paul in Romans, are my contribution to the ongoing debate on that subject, which will need to be explored by further research.

APPENDIX ONE:

FIELD NOTES ON THE INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS OF THE GROUPS

Group One:

5/5/95

5 Conversation at the beginning was wide ranging, from comments on how to spell Anna's name to the state of the country. Talk about salaries and wage negotiations at the university. Fay miffed at the higher increase for academic staff. Problem of emergency meeting and the deadline for salary negotiations now that Durban have rejected the pay offer. Harry talked about the Library's attempts to get their salaries pegged to teachers and about his problems of being in an acting post while they are obviously looking and looking for a black person. Considering leaving his job because of the promotion ceiling on white males. Talked about a young woman who refused a position she was head hunted for because she did not want to take a job that she was not qualified for just because she was black. Robert's story of a Black personnel officer in a black firm who appointed white woman saying that they appointed on merit and nothing else. Will be too old by the time affirmative action begins to wind down. Then we talked about leave conditions because Tim Warner had gone off to Disneyland after only a few weeks in his new job. Robert works so hard he loses more than a week's leave each year. Superior in JHB miffed because he took Friday 28 April off. Fay and Mary were tired. Mary talked about babysitting dogs for a friend and all the strains of looking after strong dogs who can knock her over and fear for the well being of the beloved dog. Harry's car was stolen this week from the centre of town. Looking out for a second hand BMW because it has more frills and is more reliable than comparable second hand cars from other makes. Talked about the rip off of insurance and the certainty that his car will now be irretrievably lost. Comment that the police take 12 hours to broadcast a description unless you know someone in the unit who will do it quickly for you.

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Martin was late because he was detained by a meeting at School. After the meeting: Complaints about the telephone and the number of languages on Telkom's recorded messages that tell you that there is a problem. Could not get her daughter because she has given up her ordinary phone and gone cellular. It is hard to get her because she does not remember to look at her messages. Fay and I suggested that she try and use e-mail. Mary's daughter has been transferred to Cape Town. Talked about knee surgery because we were going to pray for Sarah Anne, Mary's granddaughter who had a knee op. Talked about the marvels of modern operations on knees which get you up without pain in a few days. Other prayers were for a family whose teenage son had

committed suicide, for my mother and giving thanks for Marty's good news. Roberts prayer for my mother was very insightful, re. her lying awake at night and feeling depressed and worried. He prayed for healing and joy in her situation. I was very pleased with that prayer. Also made his usual prayers for the country especially the present dispute over mediation with IFP and the ANC. Also usual prayer that God would expedite the church building and give her approval of the project in this way. Prayed that Harry would get a new car soon. After the prayers more talk of theft , crime and the inability of the court system to cope. The problem of lack of respect and low morale in the police. Problems of Blacks in responsible positions with racist over tones.

11/5/95

Having set up a list of things we talked of last week in the hope that I could just tick them off this week I found that the conversation hardly touched any of these topics. Apart from brief discussions about family and illness the main discussion was church building. Grace Fellowships great big new building and our own new building which Robert hopes will start next week and be finished in 4 months. The diocese is lending the money which will save a packet in bond, architect and professional charges which are astronomical. Robert is promising to have the whole site strictly under control as far as cleaning up and keeping on schedule. The other topics of conversation were a church barn dance on the 26th which Martin thinks they will boycott and go for a weekend at the cavern instead. Fay would like to go this week because she is exhausted again. Robert was talking about being interviewed on Radio Maritzburg and having his own questions an answers prepared. Harry's brother was there at the same time and was glad that he say Robert or he would have let them ask any questions they liked. Robert does like to be in control. The prayers followed some of the pattern of last week. Robert's prayer of thanks giving was for the safe return of Tim and Anna from their travels, for the freedom to meet as Christians in SA and for Paul's excitement for the Gospel. Intercessions, as I have them in my notes we prayed for the mine disaster at Vaal reefs the day before, the building of the new church to God's Glory (Robert), about family and illness, my mother's health and the flu that is also recurring in my system. Anna prayed for Tim's mother's hand which had been operated on. Martin prayed for the continuing impasse between the ANC and IFP in KZN and prayed for God's interventions so that men of peace would come together without posturing. Prayed fro safety for Harry's son flying home from London. Also for a family after the death of their mother and that Mary will get rest and peace after her arduous house sitting duties. I asked Anna and Mary to be my interview subjects at the end of the month.

18/5/95

Gloomy scenario as I arrived with talk of the collapse of education because of the protests at tertiary institutions. Talking all about the collapse of Zim schools and how our education is going from bad to worse. Talked about the pro's and con's of emigrating, there is no where to go where we can afford to live as there was for the Zims who came here. Note how there are all sorts of people who are returning, even old people and despite the fact that health is going down the tubes. The main problem with overseas is that the people are not nice and that it is not really home. Fay says the thing that would make her emigrate is the litter and the dirt and the fact that nobody will take any initiative to clean up. Lorena from the church phoned the council to give them hell. Tim and Anna said that there were no bins anywhere, Renee said because of bomb scares in the past. People are now pissing in the lanes in broad daylight. Fay and Anna both agreed that even the blacks don't like it but no one will make a move in the political climate. We then got on to affirmative action again and Harry repeated all the woes of incompetent black librarians and show they can't promote good indian or white people. Anna says she has no objection to people getting jobs as long as they get the training to become expert at them. Harry repeats about the chief's daughter who wants promotion on demand and about a black librarian who is leaving but who is better than most white ones. Barn dance woes, Fay and Martin will go away to avoid it. Martin picks up a point with Anna about the School French tour not going through an ASATA travel agent and how rude and aggressive the woman was. Anna says ASATA is necessary to maintain standards while Harry says it is a cartel to fix prices, no conflict but a light banter. I told a story about a travel agent not connected to a computer who would regularly fail to confirm my flights from swaziland. Finally we established that Mary could not come because here car had broken down and that Robert was in Harare and he had engine trouble on his big plane after cancelling his flight on a small plane. But there are so many crashes of small planes. Other discussions about how the tolerance of religious faiths would do away with all the important Christian holidays. Harry suggested that all should have their own set number of days off but Martin said that this will only add to the chaos and mayhem in the country anyway. Opening prayers by Martin for the safe keeping of Mary and Robert especially when Mary goes to JHB to help Jane move to Cape Town. Also to bless us as we study and gives thanks for Paul. Prayers after the meeting. Opening by Martin repeats the thanks for Paul even in our exasperation with his arguments. Thanks that we learn as we battle with his language. Pray that God gives clarity. Pray that we should have even a small amount of Abraham's faith. Give thanks for answered prayers and should have faith in God's promises. Prayers continued with the demonstrations and destruction at Edgewood and Harry's daughter being caught up in it. Thanks for Washington Okomu's mission that he is a man of God.

Bless AE also in their mediation efforts. In this vein more prayers for the healing of the IFP/ANC troubles and violence. Prayer about the despair of white, Martin said people, in this time of change, give them,us, hope in the situation and keep them,us, with a sense of balance through these troubled times. Ended off the prayer with a special plea for protection on each of us and especially on the Dillons while Robert is away.

5 25/5/95

I arrived to find that Robert and Harry were still at the Ascension Day service. Renee said Robert was probably late because he was inspecting the foundations of the new church. Somebody commented about falling into foundations and I then told the story of falling into our house foundations carrying a load of bricks. Martin followed with stories about how he used to fall into water at every opportunity when he was a boy. This led onto a discussion of swimming and how black children in Zim used to just jump into the deep end and expect to float. This is now happening in our schools where black children are learning to swim for the first time. Problem also with the women who give after care at some schools because they are too old to rescue children who are injured in rough childhood swimming games. They also noted that Black children can eventually learn to swim well. There are already black swimmers in Natal Schools and the instructors at Vic Falls white-water rafting are black. Harry finally turned up and said there was a good turn out for the service but Robert would probably be late because there was a crash just as he left. When Robert turned up we found out that somebody had dropped a bottle of communion wine. The conversation moved to medical ailments. Tim's niece has been found to be allergic to dust mites, which means she has to live in a practically sterile environment. Anna is hoping that she will grow out of it in time. Fay said that kids will often grow out of childhood ailments by the time they are 8. We got onto tonsils. I told that Kyle had his out very early. Renee said that this was better than late. May of her old people have tonsils out and it is so much more painful. Robert had his out at 25 was a pain to live with until they healed while her granddaughter Gaby was fine the next day. Robert's mother brought him orange juice with a shot of brandy to cheer him up after his tonsils but in fact it made him so sore he was worse. Martin comments that people bring strange things to hospitals, someone once brought him a six pack (it was in Zim of course). Anna said that the worst thing was having her wisdom teeth out because they had in grown into her Jaw. She has had many bad medical problems but she says this was the most painful. Fay' sister has a problem with her jaw and a broken tooth and is waiting for the courage to have them both seen to at once. Following the meeting we talked a little about the world cup rugby because of Martin's comment at the end of the study. I said that they had commented in Xhosa because rugby was big in the E.Cape. Harry said that he found it ridiculous that we should have commentary in so may languages for the final

and Martin suggested he just use the english radio commentary with the TV. When asked about the situation at Edgewood, Harry said it was calmer but the problems were not resolved. Some students see the SRC as unrepresentative but only a few blacks came forward for nomination. He could not understand why this racial polarization had happened after it had been so peaceful last year. Maybe it was because of new students coming in from other institutions where ther had been trouble. Harry was very angry with the Tribune report which glossed over the damage and mayhem and reported a peaceful demonstration. He thought it was biased in favour of blacks and Anna said she hated when that happened. He says that many white students have packed up and gone home so he thinks Clare is very brave to stay on, but at least there is someone close by who can rescue her if anything goes wrong. He ended with a comment that maybe these students will come to their senses when they see how bad there exam marks are and how much work they have to do. As the meeting broke up Harry asked if anyone knew a reliable brick layer. There were all sorts of jokes where Robert offered Renee to do it at R90 an hour and when it was suggested that Harry do it himself he said he only did artistically crooked brick work. Before the meeting we Martin prayed with thanks for our freedom to worship and also for the work I have done to bring the study to them. Also for God's blessing to be with us. After the meeting Martin opened once again. Paul makes us aware that we fall short in so many ways and we have so much to sort out. He prayed that God would illuminate those things we need to deal with so tat we can strive to be whole. He gave thanks for the questions raised in our minds by the study. Other prayers were for the schools unrest to be settled by authorities and by people realising that they are at school to learn. Prayer for the ANC/IFP works, that they would be serious about finding a solution to the violence and the political impasse. Finally prayed for Mary who is feeling unsettled and unclear. Help her to find peace especially about Jane's move to Cape Town. Also pray that her family will be sensitive to her limitations and do not call on her so often. Pray that God would watch over her, keep her strong and surround her with love.

1/6/95

The meeting began with discussions about families. Pregnancies and births among members of our congregation and neighbours. News of Mary' family, her daughter is safely in Cape Town despite the cold and wet. The best thing is that she has a yacht at her disposal. Her granddaughter's knee is better but her mother, Mary' daughter in law, has put out her back. Mary' son was running around the country getting the last week of voter registration done. The Wintertons are not sure if their registrations have been accepted and are worried about getting to the front of the queue and finding they are not on the list. Whole discussion with Anna of passports and SA citizenship and getting visa's. After the meeting I received some cautions on citing the group members

by name. Fay has been cited by someone in a way that makes her vulnerable and Harry was plagiarised in an MA. I will need to get clear approval for any citations I use. We ended with updates on Harry's family, his son's girlfriend had her car stolen and the situation at Edgewood is calming down. Clare is very keen to take part in the vote to end the crisis. The prayers centred on the family, healing for the sick and help for the new parents. Prayed for a family whose father died while watching the Rugby match. Martin prayed that we would hold onto Paul's cry that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. 8/6/95

When I arrived Anna and Renee were telling the group about the terrible day Robert had in Cape Town with delayed flights, rain and countless other mishaps. To top it all while he was away there was a strike at the factory. Renee then told us about getting caught up in the Cosatu Mass Action. She parked her car in a deserted Longmarket street only to look out of the window later and see this hoard of blacks coming down the street. She was initially very nervous but then impressed by the way the marshals carefully led the marchers round her car which was the only one for miles. She noticed that most of the protesters looked very sombre and tired. Some discussion of the nature of protests in which Harry said that he walked through a protest at Natalia the other day in which everyone politely gave way so that he could reach the barricaded door and then go out again.

After the meeting coming out of our discussion of Paul wanting the Jews to convert to Christianity Anna cited the example of her host parents in America where the wife had converted to Judaism to marry her husband. Anna could not understand how someone could do this because she felt, and the others agreed that the logical progression would be from Judaism to Christianity. Anna also wondered about the children who had Methodist grandparents and as a result celebrated Easter, Pesach, Chanukah and Christmas in a kind of cultural overload.

The conversation inevitably led to Jewish people Renee knew whose son converted to Christianity, Jews for Jesus, and to Anneline Kriel and her much publicised conversion to Judaism for her marriage and her present attendance of Rhema services. Some deliberately jibbing comments about women being willing to convert to anything for their husband at which Anna protests she would never have converted for Tim and seems rather to have converted him in some way. Then the discussion turns to intra-Christian conversion in marriages between Catholics and Protestants. Also the often thorny relations between the different branches of our faith. Martin comments that if Christians have so much trouble relating to each other think how unpalatable Paul's message must have been to the Jews to ask them to get on with Gentiles and vice versa. As the meeting closed there was once more a decrying of the declining moral state of the world where the Anglican church seems to be condoning cohabitation, adultery, divorce, homosexuals and gay marriage all of which was trying to be too open and leading to an insidious erosion and degradation of the church. Of course Harry and Martin say this all

started with women priests and the conversation becomes a little raucous for a while as Anna and I give a spirited defence of women priests. Prayers were for the whole tension around the Shell House killings and that God would turn the potential for violence into peace. Also for the homeless people on the cold night and a general committing us all to God's care and guidance.

5 15/6/95

Discussion at the beginning of the cold and how Anna feels it. Fay says she suffers more in the heat. Leads on to a

10 discussion of exercise in the morning and some sexist comments on how the presenters of exercise programs should look. Some discussion of Cancer, son of parishioners operated for a cancerous growth and a report form me on the latest news of Marty. Also discussion of answering machines and E-mail. Harry will not talk to a machine, neither will many of the others, but he really does like the internet. The main discussion at the end was about women priest and the alarm bells at the parish council meeting when Rodgers suggested that Bev take three services in a row. The group feels that Rodgers is unaware of the depth of feeling in the congregation against women priests and especially in the group. Fay would leave St Matthew's if we had a woman rector.

15 They all go on to say that their fear of women priests, pilots, dentists and doctors is often not personal but simply a mistrust of their ability to do a 'mans' job. Usual type of prayers, for the cancer patients, for a person killed in an accident and family, another family where the son was killed who have no church support, prayer for the country, peaceful strikes, IFP/ANC rapprochement, free and just society where the homeless are given homes and the authorities are filled with the Spirit of Christian service and do God's will rather than serve part/
20 self interest.

22/7/95

25 Anna and Tim were missing because Anna had taken sleeping medication having not slept for a week because of a change in her diabetes medication. Mary is missing because she is suffering from the flu. Most of the time before the session was taken up in arranging time for the people in the group to do interviews with me. Fay was particularly resistant to the idea of a taped interview but she seems to have come around in the end. After the meeting the conversation turned to the preaches at church and how long some of them take. I offered to do another sermon and get it over in 15-20 mins. Fay says there is a good preacher at her parents church in JHB who packs a punchy message in 15 mins. Martin notes that the chaplain at St Johns had managed to keep the girls riveted with the right mixture of humour and seriousness that week, he usually seems to err on the side
30 of Humour. Discussion of the funeral of the young man killed last week. The whole sadness of a funeral where

no one is a believer, knows a priest or has any kind of Christian support net work. The sister of the young man makes a point of telling Martin she doesn't believe but is the one who insisted on using the St Johns Chapel to give him a proper send off. Prayers were for Alan and Mary, For the family of the cancer patient as last week, Mart and for the family and funeral mentioned above. Usual prayers also for the country.

5 GROUP 2:

16/5/95

Everybody was pleased to see me and I was introduced to those who I had not met. The main topic of discussion when I arrived was a TV program about Sheena Duncan. The main anecdote was of an immigration official who asked her occupation, when she said National Chair of the Black Sash and her other leadership roles he put down housewife. This struck a cord with all of the women because they are all technically unemployed but do hardly any work around the house except in their spare time. After the meeting Nell read some extracts from the writings of the Dalai Lama who she admires immensely. A life of prayer and meditation makes a wise person. In our life we are dependent on the kindness of our parents when we are children and of our children and others when we are old so the least we can do is be kind to others in between. Mental peace is to release ourselves from anger and attachment. Meditation does not help mental peace, this comes from the rational realisation that anger is a destructive force. You should handle your anger like a difficult relative, neutralise it by treating it with extreme care and attention until it goes away. Introspection and reasoning create the inner life of a person. You learn tolerance from your enemies amongst other things, because of this they are precious. They teach you to grow outside of your set ways and have strength beyond your normal strength. If the chinese had not invaded he would probably have been more conservative and more intolerant. Nell has a respect for Buddhism because it seems to make the unremittingly hard life of the chinese and eastern people make more sense.

23/5/95

Everyone had just arrived back from a lunch at Crossways where they were hearing about Nell's trip to Nepal and Tibet. One new person has joined the group, Hilda who would appear to be a Dutch or Swedish Catholic. Pam is leaving us and going overseas so she will not take part in any more of the reading. I arrived just as they had got in from lunch. Nell offered me tea which I gratefully accepted. Hilda and Lynne had dropped off Pam because she needed to get her car because she was off to a St Vincent de Paul meeting. Nell commented that she had not known that women could belong to it and then she told an amusing story about a woman on he trip who had confused Vincent de Paul with Da Vinci designer clothing. The main discussion was about Tibet

and Nell's amazing photo's of Everest. She said how good the prints were because Nepal has so many tourists that they have developed high quality processing. I asked if she had seen any unrest. She said no but they had been warned not to take in pictures of th Dalai Lama or they would probably be deported. Prayers: A short opening prayer by Lynne to the effect that God should help us to learn and absorb my learning. Also thanks that I had come to share with them.

6/6/95

Talking about the cold house and how to get make cheap coats made out of Arctic Fleece. There was also a discussion of the abolition of the death penalty which was enacted earlier that morning. Talking also about death penalty and corporal punishment. Problem of Christian orphanages who beat the faith out of their children. But also note the example of the Ugie Koshuis a huge orphanage which took in children of the 1918-19 influenza, but that it was run very successfully by a man who did not believe in corporal punishment. They were excited about the idea of discipline without beating. They wondered what Paul would say. Lynne has been elected president of the AWF which is why she has not come today. Nell's opening prayer was that God instill in us a spirit of peace and an awareness of the message so that we make it part of our lives. Also prayed that God would be with Pam and Lynne. The meeting ended when I had to rush off to the Taize service at the Luthos chapel.

13/6/95

Good friend of the group has died of pneumonia after having had a stroke, it is seen as blessed release. Liz who missed last week wanted to know how we had tackled 5:9-12 but none of us could really remember apart from obvious things from reading it now. Liz asks us to be punctual in future. The prayer before the meeting was led by Gladys who led us in relaxation and meditation for a few minutes. After the meeting we all said our own short prayers coming out of our experience of the discussion that afternoon. When we were finished Hilda commented about reading THE CHANGE by Germaine Greer and being so struck by some of the views on women who are regarded as good as dead once the menopause comes on. All agree that they could not be like those European women who dresses in black and practically resigned from life. Nor could they be grand mothers like their own grand mothers who spent all their time baking and babysitting. They are all happy to be busy with so many things and general expression of contentment about being the age they are. Gladys's Joke is that the menopause is just a short break in getting your man.

20/6/95

Interestingly enough the chat in this group was closer to what it normally is with the others. there is talk about the crime rate and defending ourselves form crime and robbery. There is also distress for Gladys who had been to two funerals one of which was very distressing because it was that of a young woman who was the victim of violent crime. Also for the first time in the prayer Liz mentions the idea of God bringing peace into the political turmoil of KZN.

27/6/95

There was much more talk at this weeks meeting. It began with talk of the serendipity flower arrangement on the front step. Then also the smell of onions and the dinner that Nell was preparing for that evening. However the danger point was when we began to talk about the gastroenteritis bug, this led to a discussion of the All Blacks tummy troubles and a descent into the Rugby Euphoria. The Rugby brought the nation together. We should keep the Springbok because it has become so popular all over the world. All about the way Mandela in his Rugby Jersey wiping out all the ill feeling about sport that has embittered us through the years. Hilda wondered if God might not have let us win to bring the nation together. All sorts of worry about the idea of Rugby and Cricket having divine intervention and all about the Christians in the Sports and their very fundamentalist views. Nell had a lot to say about fundamentalism especially that they don't care about people unless they are "saved". There was no prayers today a fact which gwen lamented in a later interview.

4/7/95

Not much discussion beforehand except that Nell had quick exploratory surgery that evening. Also I talked about doing Galatians with them as a sort of Thank you present.

APPENDIX TWO:

WRITTEN REACTION TO ROMANS: RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Group One:

5 PLEASE WRITE ME AN EXTENDED COMMENT ABOUT YOUR REACTIONS TO ROMANS. I WOULD APPRECIATE A CANDID AND HONEST REFLECTION ON ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING YOU CAN THINK OF WITH REGARD TO THE LETTER. WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES. CONTINUE ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE IF NECESSARY.

10 Tim: I found Romans to be a very good guideline, to be a good Christian. If you follow what is said in Romans and you can keep to the words, then we would all be better people. When I read Romans I can only think of a late friend of mine. He was almost a photo-copy of Romans. He was a good example to follow.

15 Anna: I like Romans in it Paul gives a thorough outline of how he believes Christians should live and how everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, can find peace with God through faith and belief in him. A person can live by God's law but it must also have faith in order that they might live in righteousness.

20 Renee: I cannot remember the contents of Romans and so I find it impossible to answer the following questions. When I do my daily Bible reading I normally don't take much notice of the book from which is taken, but concentrate on who said what and why and the message that God gives me through his word.

25 Robert: Immediate reaction, without re-reading Romans is fairly superficial and a broad overall comment would be: Paul is attempting to put into perspective what the behaviour of a Christian should be: how individuals have their own place in the community which compliments that of other Christians eg. "the body is made of many parts." Behaviour requirements are clearly stated. Reaction and response to secular laws are also defined eg. "give unto Caesar what is due to him." Much of the book could be written in a much more concise and easily understood statements almost in the form of the 10 commandments. Anyone following a lifestyle as described in Romans would conform pretty well to God's requirements.

Fay: It is not my favourite book. I don't really enjoy the question and answer type reasoning - but you could see Paul arguing like this in a group or synagogue. There are many well known verses - "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us", 6:8-10: Wages of sin ..., For what I want to do...: Words of verses also appear in Choruses eg. "That if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart..." 10:9, "Ever knee shall bow ... 14:11. Doesn't mention the Holy Spirit often, I found 15:13, 16:19,30. Before I reread **Romans** to complete the questionnaire I was pretty blank - having reread it I realise that I am familiar with much of it and have studied many bits before. There is vitally important material here for all Christians and many of the verses are key instructions that come to me at various times.

5

Martin: I have always felt that **Romans** is a bit like a legal document - you can get the gist of it, but not having a law degree the finer nuances (and the small print) are incomprehensible.

10

Harry: My knowledge specifically of **Romans** is not held in RAM, I can make no comment at all.

Mary: No response

2. HAVE YOU EVER READ THE WHOLE OF ROMANS?

15

YES Tim, Anna, Renee, Robert, Fay, Martin, Mary	NO Harry,
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3. DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE VERSE, PASSAGE OR CHAPTER IN ROMANS ? PLEASE WRITE OUT THE VERSE IN FULL OR GIVE THE REFERENCE

Tim: **Romans** 3: 10 - 18

20

Anna: **Romans** 3: 22 -24: "God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ because there is no difference at all: everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free."

Renee: Don't know Robert: Don't know

25

Fay: Not a particular one, though I go back to the "love" passage 12:9, renewing the mind, and some others from time to time.

Martin: **Romans** 8:38-9 Harry: No

Mary: 12:17 If someone has done you wrong don't repay him with wrong.

4. IF YOU READ THE BIBLE IN YOUR DAILY DEVOTIONS, HOW OFTEN (APPROXIMATELY) DO PASSAGES FROM ROMANS OCCUR? PLEASE TICK THE BOX WHICH MOST ACCURATELY REFLECTS YOUR ANSWER TO THE QUESTION.

ONCE A WEEK	FORTNIGHTLY	ONCE A MONTH Robert	ONCE A YEAR Tim, Anna, Martin
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- 5
Renee: Don't know
- Fay: I do read daily but can't say how often Romans comes up. I do look at certain passages to reinforce teaching/ encourage/ redirect myself.
- Harry: Can't say.
- Mary: I cannot give an honest response to this question because I don't dwell on the book a passage is taken from.
- 10

5. HOW OFTEN ARE PASSAGES FROM ROMANS READ IN THE SERVICES AT YOUR CHURCH?

ONCE A WEEK	FORTNIGHTLY	ONCE A MONTH Robert	ONCE A YEAR Martin
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- Tim: Never taken note how often.
- Anna: Can't Remember. Renee: Don't know
- 15
Fay: Don't know how often, but I know we have had readings and sermons on "Many members of one body", "grace not works", "love 12:9 -21", "submit to governing authorities", "love your neighbour".
- Harry: Don't know.
- Mary: I cannot give an honest response to this question because I don't dwell on the book a passage is taken from.
- 20

6. HOW OFTEN ARE SERMONS PREACHED ON PASSAGES FROM ROMANS IN YOUR CHURCH?

ONCE A WEEK	FORTNIGHTLY	ONCE A MONTH	ONCE A YEAR Robert, Martin
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- Tim: Never taken note how often Anna: Can't Remember.
- Renee: Don't know Robert: Twice a year.
- 25
Fay: See above Harry: Don't know

Mary: I cannot give an honest response to this question because I don't dwell on the book a passage is taken from.

7. COMMENT ON WHETHER YOU THINK IT IS EASY TO READ ROMANS?

Tim: I found the letter fairly easy to read

5 Anna: Paul's letter is written in a personal friendly manner (although in places he does have some harsh things to say) which makes Romans fairly easy to read.

Renee: Don't know Robert: No response.

Fay: Out loud no. No some portions are so drawn out I get fed up. There are passages I can almost quote verbatim (now that I've reminded myself they are in Romans!).

10 Martin: Not easy see 1 Harry: Read - no.

Mary: No Response

8. COMMENT ON WHETHER YOU THINK IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND ROMANS?

Tim: I found it difficult to understand at times.

15 Anna: Paul tends to be repetitive and jumps from one train of thought to another - this requires concentration. The overall picture of Romans is not too difficult to understand. (perhaps my version, the Good News, is easier.)

Renee: Don't know Robert: No response.

Fay: Some of it is fairly direct although obviously one can get more depth with further study. Some is horribly convoluted.

20 Martin: No see 1

Harry: Understand - maybe (as I find with most of Paul's writing)

Mary: No Response

9. DO YOU PARTICULARLY LIKE ANY PART OF THE MESSAGE OF ROMANS? TRY AND EXPLAIN WHY.

25 Tim: Yes I do, Romans 3 where he says no one is righteous. It is so true of how people are today. It just makes you think more deeply.

Anna: I particularly like the fact that Paul has stated that all people, Jews and Gentiles, are alike under the power of sin and it is only through their faith and belief in God that they shall be righteous and live.

Renee: Don't know Robert: No response.

- Fay: 12:1-2 "renewing the mind" - isn't this the key rather than going through the motions or doing what you should. I feel if we could get to think like Jesus, we would be able to react/act 'correctly' in all situations and hear God as he did. So - I am trying or hope I'm trying, to eventually reprogramme myself - or to grow more like him. Years ago a ladies group took on a motto "what would Jesus do?" and undertook to call this to mind as often as possible - it was very challenging.
- 5 Martin: 8: 28 - 39 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ" The idea that Christ's love for us is boundless beyond our understanding, is a very comforting thought - especially when there are hardships and one is going through tough and bad batch.
- 10 Harry: No, I cannot recall anything specifically about Romans .
- Mary: Life in God's service. That we should endeavour to live as God would have us live, that we should use our different gifts which he has given us. If we could all learn to love and honour all others we could then hopefully live in harmony with each other and perhaps find a peaceful solution to life. 7:31, If God is for us who can be against us.
- 15 10. DO YOU PARTICULARLY DISLIKE ANY PART OF THE MESSAGE OF ROMANS? TRY AND EXPLAIN WHY.
- Tim: No I don't dislike any part of Romans . The only thing is that he does tend to repeat himself a lot.
- Anna: There are no parts of Romans that I dislike. I just find that if Paul had written more concisely, the letter would have been a little easier to read and understand.
- 20 Renee: Don't know Robert: No response.
- Fay: No response.
- Martin: 7:7-25. I have always found the argument so convoluted that just as I am beginning to grasp it, it seems to slip cogs.
- Harry: No, I cannot recall anything specifically about Romans .
- 25 Mary: This may not be pertinent to the question, but what disturbs me when I read Romans is the fact that despite Christianity being a way of life to so many, we see to have made little progress over the years. Even today, as in Paul's time so much sin exists: Fraud, embezzlement, thieving, murder, sexual perversion etc. to name but a few.

11. WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE RELEVANCE OF ROMANS FOR YOUR LIFE AS A Christian? EXPLAIN IN DETAIL.

Tim: These are the rules God wants us to live by. If we follow these rules we will be prepared for later on.

5 Anna: Romans gives us a good set of rules by which to live in our relationship to God and with other people.

Renee: Don't know Robert: No response.

Fay: The statements of "truth" are the nitty gritty of faith. The instructions on how to live are clear.

10 Martin: The message of the New Testament is the sum of all its parts. All the books are part of the fabric and Romans covers a wide spectrum of Paul's views and teaching.

Harry: No, I cannot recall anything specifically about Romans .

Mary: To do unto others what you would want done to yourself. To make others aware of the Lord's constant care of you and yours if you allow him to.

15 12. ARE YOU EXCITED BY WHAT YOU MIGHT LEARN FROM THIS STUDY OF ROMANS?

YES Tim, Anna, Renee, Robert, Fay, Martin, Mary	NO Harry,
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13. EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER TO 12:

20 Tim: I said yes because it is nice to go into more detail and find out what other people can bring out of the letter which I might have overlooked.

Anna: I am excited about what I might learn because Romans is a book that covers a great deal about Christian life. From my personal study of Romans I can see that a more in-depth group study of the book will enable me to have a better understanding. Although Paul does have some harsh things to say in the book I also found myself feeling comforted by his words - knowing that by my faith and belief in God and his son Jesus Christ I will live.

25 Renee: No response.

Robert: The study, I believe will have good historical and Christian background. It will probably be presented with a different viewpoint to the less academic and more orthodox studies I have done in the past. It is always interesting to follow a study prepared by a friend. This gives the opportunity for discussion which is not possible with unknown authors.

5 Fay: If we don't dwell too much on arguments like the relationship of Law/Sin

Martin: I have never studied Romans in a group before, therefore I expect to have my knowledge broadened, my understanding deepened and hopefully my Christian life strengthened by this study.

Harry: Interested - yes Mary: No response

10 14. NOW THAT YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL THESE QUESTIONS IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON?

Tim: No Anna: No

Renee: No response. Fay: No response.

Martin: No response. Harry: No.

15 Mary: Billy I am no scholar in this field as you know. My church has always been there for me and I am so aware of the Lord caring for me and mine. I live simply, am simple and have a simple belief in the word of the Lord. No more and no less.

Group Two:

PLEASE WRITE ME AN EXTENDED COMMENT ABOUT YOUR REACTIONS TO ROMANS. I WOULD APPRECIATE A CANDID AND HONEST REFLECTION ON ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING YOU CAN THINK OF WITH REGARD TO THE LETTER. WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES.
5 CONTINUE ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE IF NECESSARY.

Hilda: I have never read through Romans before.

Jane: I am familiar with only two verses of Romans , 8: 28, 39, and have never spent time with the whole of Romans so I am unable to comment.

Gladys: No response.

10 Lynne: On reading this questionnaire and looking through Romans I find that it is the most underlined book in my Bible. Over the years i have read it with great love. Have been to many lectures on St Paul and find him the most interesting personality psychologically, a great personality as well. But far from easy to fully understand. Necessary to realise this epistle is written by a man who influenced the whole history of the world, other than Jesus. Paul was the first great
15 theologian of the Christian Church.

Nell: No response

2. HAVE YOU EVER READ THE WHOLE OF ROMANS?

YES	NO
Jane, Gladys, Lynne, Nell	Hilda,

20 Jane: Skimmed over it!

3. DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE VERSE, PASSAGE OR CHAPTER IN ROMANS ? PLEASE WRITE OUT THE VERSE IN FULL OR GIVE THE REFERENCE.

Hilda: No response

Jane: Verses as for (1), 8: 28, 39,

25 Gladys: 5: 3-6, 6:3-4, 8:14-15, 24-5, 28, 35 -9.

Lynne: Many

Nell: 2: 12-16, 3: 23-4, 8: 18 -25

4. IF YOU READ THE Bible IN YOUR DAILY DEVOTIONS, HOW OFTEN (APPROXIMATELY) DO PASSAGES FROM ROMANS OCCUR? PLEASE TICK THE BOX WHICH MOST ACCURATELY REFLECTS YOUR ANSWER TO THE QUESTION.

ONCE A WEEK	FORTNIGHTLY	ONCE A MONTH	ONCE A YEAR Nell
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5 Hilda: No response Jane: No response

Gladys: Depends on the lectionary

Lynne: Frequently

5. HOW OFTEN ARE PASSAGES FROM ROMANS READ IN THE SERVICES AT YOUR CHURCH?

ONCE A WEEK	FORTNIGHTLY	ONCE A MONTH Nell,	ONCE A YEAR
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10 Hilda: No response Jane: No response

Gladys: Depends on the lectionary

Lynne: Depends on the lectionary

6. HOW OFTEN ARE SERMONS PREACHED ON PASSAGES FROM ROMANS IN YOUR CHURCH?

ONCE A WEEK	FORTNIGHTLY	ONCE A MONTH	ONCE A YEAR Nell
-------------	-------------	--------------	---------------------

15 Hilda: No response

Jane: Maybe once a year, there are three readings to choose from and I think Romans is not often chosen.

Gladys: Depends on the lectionary.

Lynne: My parish priest has great respect and knowledge of the writings of St Paul.

20 7. COMMENT ON WHETHER YOU THINK IT IS EASY TO READ ROMANS?

Hilda: No response Jane: No it isn't

Gladys: No - not the easiest of the epistles, I think! I stumble over the arguments. Necessary I realise.

Lynne: No but a challenge.

Nell: No, not as easy as the other epistles, but there are passages that flow easily and one can relate easily to.

25

8. COMMENT ON WHETHER YOU THINK IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND Romans ?

Hilda: No response Jane: No it isn't

Gladys: Some parts are easy and have great power and carry great conviction. The long complicated arguments I find rather tedious and not very relevant to me today.

5 Lynne: No, far from easy.

Nell: No I don't think so - in over 20 years of belonging to Bible Study groups we only did Romans once, with the William Barclay commentary. I don't know why, we usually opted for the synoptic Gospels, Corinthians I or Ephesians, I think it is because we thought they would be 'easier' to study.

10 9. DO YOU PARTICULARLY LIKE ANY PART OF THE MESSAGE OF ROMANS? TRY AND EXPLAIN WHY.

Hilda: No response Jane: No response

Gladys: I particularly like the fact that Paul argues so strongly for salvation by faith and by this alone. That our salvation is wrought within me through Christ's redeeming love and by the power of the Holy Spirit convicting me both of my sin and separation from God and my salvation through Jesus - and the fatherhood of God as an ultimate loving relationship that nothing can break. I like Paul's honesty (his love, power, authority), his integrity, his transparency, I don't appreciate his views on women, marriage and a few other topics.

15

Lynne: 8:18, The future Glory I find overwhelming and of great hope. 8:31, The assurance of God being on our side once we have accepted his grace. 8:28, Further assurances, 8:38, God's love, 12:6, The responsibility of being a Christian but realising that we are all different and unique in God's eyes. His very special love for us.

20

Nell: Yes, for me Romans 2:12-16 confirms my belief in the salvation of all people who follow the light which they have been given, and that one does not have to adhere to any particular creed to be 'saved'. I like it because it is a good argument against fundamentalists who argue that all outside the Christian faith are in error.

25

10. DO YOU PARTICULARLY DISLIKE ANY PART OF THE MESSAGE OF ROMANS? TRY AND EXPLAIN WHY.

Hilda: No response Jane: No response

Gladys: Chapter 13, the duties to state authority which was used in SA to uphold the Nat Government - system of apartheid, oppression, and stifled the voice of conscience and protest very effectively.

30

Lynne: 12:20, I don't particularly dislike it but it is good to know that great minds are also confused by this passage.

Nell: Romans 13 because it was so often used to justify the validity of the government and confirm that we should adhere to the rules made by those in authority.

5 11. WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE RELEVANCE OF ROMANS FOR YOUR LIFE AS A Christian? EXPLAIN IN DETAIL.

Hilda: No response Jane: No response

10 Gladys: For me the relevance is the loud and clear message that I am created new in Jesus Christ through his love. That I am set free again and again to make a new beginning and that God's love is unconditional, I don't earn it. A lesson I have to learn again and again because I was brought up in a Calvinist Methodist (Welsh, similar to Dutch Reformed Church doctrine) home - much emphasis on being good - obeying the law of the church, home and parents - particularly my father - so my image of God as Abba was very tainted - I got caught on the legalistic treadmill always trying to do better. Like Luther I was excited by this teaching of faith and grace being the basis of Christianity, not the Law.

15 Lynne: I find it so up to date, it helps me understand what Christian freedom is all about and that even Paul was confused at times - and great minds are also confused by Paul's writings. 15: 4 Full of hope.

20 Nell: The fact that we are saved by grace alone. As a Catholic I was brought up in the belief that one was 'saved' by doing good works and living a righteous life. That if one died in a state of 'mortal sin' you would go to hell. So even and inadvertent sin could jeopardise your chances of going to heaven (eating meat on Fridays). We were taught that salvation had to be earned and was seen in terms only of what happened when you died.

12. ARE YOU EXCITED BY WHAT YOU MIGHT LEARN FROM THIS STUDY OF ROMANS?

25

YES Hilda, Jane, Gladys, Lynne, Nell.	NO
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13. EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER TO 12:

Hilda: No response

Jane: It is great to be able to discuss one's own ideas with others and better still to have academic guidance.

5 Gladys: I think because I am 'freed' to reread Romans as a totality instead of reading my favourite pieces.

Lynne: Always open to new input - that is why I belong to a Bible Study and richly enjoy sermons and teaching seminars.

10 Nell: Simple - I have always wanted to have a more academic understanding of Romans but have never had the opportunity to go through it with anyone who was able to offer that before. I have always put Romans and Hebrews together as rather inaccessible letters and so I am excited at the thought of getting more insight into the former.

14. NOW THAT YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL THESE QUESTIONS IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON?

15 Hilda: No response Jane: No response

Gladys: For me Romans helps to quieten the negative voices within me that are critical and contaminate particularly the child part of me so that the internal dialogue matches 7: 18-25.

Lynne: No response.

20 Nell: As I skim read Romans in preparation for our second group meeting, I recognise a lot of familiar passages from the readings at Mass, so though Romans has never been part of my private devotional life I recognise that I have been exposed to it in the liturgy. So I am looking forward to studying it as one letter and not odd extracts throughout the year.

APPENDIX THREE:

FIELD NOTES ON THE FORMAL MEETINGS OF EACH GROUP

Group One:

5 5/5/95

I explained to the group about doing an ethnography of their reading. When we got to the point of trying to do the questionnaire the reactions of the group were that they could not give sufficient or useful answers from a cold start. Out of this we agreed a course of action where they would answer what they could during the meeting and then write more extended comments after refreshing their memories about Romans over the next 10 week. This does not meet my aim of getting cold reactions but I think it is realistic in a situation where people are not constantly immersed in texts as trained readers are. So we spent most of the meeting with me writing comments and them writing what they could. I have asked them to distinguish what they wrote during the meeting from what they write at home, this may make interesting comparison. Robert

15 began asking questions about the note on *δουλος* at the beginning of chapter one, wanting to know if this meant a slave was better than a servant. I answered that Paul was claiming a davidic and prophetic title from the LXX to show that he was like them. To end off I talked about the five divisions in Romans and how we would try and get through them in 7 weeks. Next we will look at 1:1-17 and then make a start on 1:18-3:20.
11/5/95

20 The formal part of the meeting began with the handing back of questionnaires and jokes about having completed MSC's. Harry was especially self depreciating in terms of his knowledge of Romans "It's in the New Testament isn't it?" Note that when I asked Mary and Anna at the end of the meeting if they would be willing to give interviews they were both equally self depreciating about the possibility that they could know anything about Romans. Repetition of the initial comments on ethnographic research for Tim and Anna who have come back from Disneyland (Does Tim have difficulty reading aloud? Dyslexia?) First questions they raised were 25 technical. Harry asked why sometimes the name was written Christ Jesus and then Jesus Christ. I replied that it was a title and as such takes position before name or after, [much like Lord Jesus and Jesus the Lord]. Robert asked if Greeks and Gentiles were the same because GNV has Gentiles where I have Greeks. My reply was to the effect that most Gentiles in Jewish eyes would at that time be Greek speaking so here the terms seem to be interchangeable. [perhaps here it is also meant to be flattering

and later he use *εθνη* when he no longer needs to flatter them] When we had read 1:1-17, I asked for initial impressions and they replied that it was very difficult to read, (aloud? Fay) Harry felt that at least my version was clearer than the KJV. Anna had to look at her Bible to make sense of some parts notable v.14, Martin Also! Fay remarked that we should all be like Paul in v.15 and not be ashamed of the Gospel. Harry asked if v.17 was the famous one taken up by Luther and I said it was but it could also have been Galatians. They noticed the contradiction in Paul's greeting between applauding them for their faith and then telling them he wants to share a gift with them. When I asked why they thought Paul had done this they initially thought Paul was sucking up to the Romans before knocking them down, but then they softened it to say: Paul wants to share support and mutual encouragement with them. He is also preparing them for his message in a diplomatic way, Martin used the analogy of writing to an errant child when you start off nicely and then go on to tell them what a little horror they are. Martin also had a smile at verse 7 which was often quoted by a visiting preacher at Fort Vic. school. He went on to tell the story of a boy who during a speech competition was given the word grace and quoted this to great effect because he had the entire school in stitches for the rest of his minute. Brief diversion into a story of a black girl who was given the word sponge at the same competition and was a little confused by it. Then Harry wanted to know how the other group was doing, [definitely a hint of competition], was disappointed that they had not started, Jokes about then being laboratory rats. Robert raised a question about Greeks and Barbarians and the question of Greek chauvinism towards all others who were not Greek speaking. Also asked the question about Paul's nationality, Greek speaking Roman Jew and whether he may not have shared this prejudice. I talked about evidence from Philippians that he belonged to a Hebrew speaking congregation as well. Comment that despite my three versions of v.17 they all essentially say the same thing. Then we finished the discussion of the prologue at about 20h15, or in half an Hour [with the next group I must consider this just an introduction and get on with the rest of the letter]. Then we read 1:18 - 32: When I asked for their initial impressions the group was unanimous in its shock at how little the world seemed to have changed from the situation Paul seems to be describing in vs. 29-31. Some talk about how we always imagine our time as being more moral than those who come after us. Mary was sure that when she was young the world actually was a better place. She always had the impression that all evil stemmed from America and people in England and SA were somehow better. Then some recognition that in the past we were often protected from the way other people behaved and that a lot was covered up. Now everything is exposed by the media. Robert suggested that the one way we may have made progress is that we no longer worship idols. But others suggested that money, sports, films and their stars had simply replaced primitive idols. Noted how many of the things that Paul

5 abhorred are approved of in our society. When I asked who it was that Paul was talking about in these verses
people were unsure. They suggested the obvious idea of Romans , but then said that maybe it was Jews
because of all the talk about knowing God and rejecting him. Romans were more shoddy in their morals than
Jews? But the question was raised whether these people knew God? Then the suggestion came that these were
10 people who were not Christians or even not Pauline Christians? Then it was suggested that this referred to
everyone. Fay suggested that verse 18 - 20 meant that these people had not been taught so that they were
probably heathens. In the impasse I refused to give a straight answer to their inquiries about who these people
were and instead suggested we read on. As it turned out it was unnecessary to read all the way to 3:20 and
we continued by looking in detail at 2:1-12. There was much talk about the contradiction of Paul saying we
15 should not judge and when he has been seeming to judge in verses 1:29 - 31. Did Paul see himself above sin
or that God was judging through him. Robert suggested that Paul should have put a few "or's" into his catalogue
of vices because now it seems that all people do all of these sins all of the time. When I asked if the people
in 2:1-12 were the same as 1:18 - 32, the initial reaction was, Why shouldn't they be? But then Martin
suggested that I may be wanting then to recognise the first group as Gentiles and the second as Jews. He took
20 his hint from 2:12. To round off the discussion I volunteered the information that I believed that 1:18-32 was
a series of conventional Jewish accusations by Jews against Gentiles. At this point Martin again suggested that
this may have been a set up for the Jews, just as they were nodding at Paul's condemnation of Gentiles he
turns the accusation round on them in 2:1- 11. The last part of the discussion was taken up with Fay's question
whether the original audience would have enjoyed the type of argument he used. Robert suggested that they
25 would have Gone home and complained that they had another of those awful letters from Paul. I suggested that
the audience must have seen something in the letter or they would not have preserved it so that it came down
to us. I also suggested that we must think of this being dictated by Paul especially as we have his secretaries
name at the end. Robert suggests that the difficulty of the language must have meant that he had a few
secretaries to capture all his convoluted reasoning. To this I added that this is even more evidence of the letter
30 as a sort of oral performance with Paul not clearly refining his arguments but saying them as they came out.
We ended the discussion and went on to prayers. Note to myself, I must not try to push their reading beyond
one paragraph at a time, this actually keeps their interest and saves the time of reading long passages.

18/5/95

30 Began with 2:12-25. Asked if there was any questions about these verses. Martin recapped that we had been
dealing with the contrast between Jew and Gentiles. As he follows on his argument the people of our group felt

that Paul makes rather a meal of the argument and should really have written it more simply. It was very difficult to read, especially in my translation, but also in their normal translation. There was however a general agreement that using and reading different words is good because it makes you think about things you would normally just gloss over. They are feeling that Paul is wanting to emphasize his points but we are not used to his way of reasoning, we are used to economy of words and less complex arguments. Who is the main addressee? v.17 points directly to Jews but maybe also talking about the innate goodness of people? We then moved on to 2:25 - 3:4. We notice that in v.27 that Jews who don't fulfil the Torah will be judged by Gentiles who fulfil the Torah. Gentiles can be true Jews and shows the Jews up. This relates back to 2:17 -22 that the Jews should be teachers but are Torah breakers instead. 3:1-4 is a contrast to the above because it says that God will be faithful even if we are unfaithful, Fay was really taken with this idea. Then we moved on to 3:4 - 20 . This is also very difficult and convoluted, people really felt that they had to turn to their own Bibles. But it is possible to get to the argument which is basically putting some counter arguments and coming round to the conclusion. Noted especially 3:19 that all the wrong arguments are futile because we are all liable to sentence. Even those who are under the law? The Torah shows up the sinfulness of people. Fay and Anna felt that they could rewrite this in simple terms, but at the same time Anna appreciated being forced to struggle with the language in order to understand. Fay feels she has got the message and is not really interested in how he gets to his conclusion. Harry and others felt that this was how the educated people argued and that the plain people would have written in a much more straight forward manner. I suggested that we need to be looking at which points Paul is complicated and at which points he is simple and what this tells us about what he is writing. 3:21-31: Harry is sure this is another scribe who can follow Paul's reasoning better because it is so clear and straight forward. Perhaps the earlier parts were his rough notes which he was coming to edit later. Harry also noticed many things that were familiar about this passage and that it seems more relevant to us because it is talking about faith and good works which are things we know about. Renee felt that all the arguments about the Torah and especially the use of the word Torah make the previous passages seem very distant and irrelevant to our lives. Martin suggests that we are now seeing the Gospel message shining through and this also makes it clearer. Renee/Fay suggested that this was maybe a reflection of Paul's journey from legalism to faith. The complicated arguments arise from his legal training but this simple passage is a message from his heart. We decided to go on to chp 4 and read the whole thing so we could press on. Once again some very difficult passages, even I had trouble reading my own translation. The message that came through for Fay was that faith is what counts and that we need to have faith that God will do what is promised. Martin noted that Abraham

believed before Jesus and now we should have even more hope in the promises because in Jesus we have the example of the resurrection. Conclusion from Martin that Paul is much better at laying down rules than he is at arguing. As we finished the study there was some more informal conversation about Paul and women. Harry said facetiously that he did not like Paul but he did approve of the way he put women in their place, Martin joined in and Anna said he should watch out for Fay. But Fay said that she was not into women priests or ministers and Renee added women doctors and dentists. Fay mistrusted her woman locum dentist even though her small hands were better at working in her mouth than huge male dentist. Very conservative view that women can't really be trusted with responsible jobs. The subject of women moved us into the recent franchise for women in Switzerland and then moved to the coldness of the Swiss and Northern Europeans as opposed to the warm Italians. Moved back to Paul, was he cold or warm? Suggest that all the warmth of his greeting in the letters was added by Tertius. Fay talked about the experience of writing letters for blind people and wanting to add funny and warm bits to their very formal style.

25/5/95

A somewhat pedestrian reading of the central parts of Romans with some long silences. 5:1-11 -- Renee commented that it was much easier to read and then wondered if v.3-5 about suffering producing character and hope really happens this way.

Harry wanted to know what the difference between a good and righteous man v.6-8? I suggested we should see them together as a parallel in contrast to our being impious sinners. Martin asked if it were possible to be good and not righteous which led Anna and I to the same conclusion that perhaps righteous means in correct relationship to Torah while good means correct behaviour outside of Torah. v.10 Anna's translation says that we are made friends with God through reconciliation. v.11 Robert who had just come in from the ascension service suggested that Paul talking about boasting did not sound humble and had negative connotations for us. I suggested that we should think of Paul using the word positively and not water it down as most translations do to rejoice.

5:12-21 : Harry thinks there is a problem with Paul's logic in this passage because it seems to suggest eternal death reigned from Adam to Moses and included both Noah and Abraham in direct contradiction to chp. 4. I suggested that this may be a result of the blurring of Paul's use of terminology where he uses death and life (both physical and eternal) interchangeably. Here he is probably talking about physical death (v.12-15) but by the time he talks about life in v.17 he is talking of the eternal variety. Martin suggested that the point of the passage is that death came through Adam and eternal life came through Jesus (v.18 following is the clearest

part). Harry and Robert are very surprised by the idea of the Torah sneaking in to bring sin. I said I thought that this is because Paul had a very negative attitude to Torah at this point.

6:1-11: Renee says this is all about being dead to sin and alive to christ. Robert is encouraged by verse 6 and the idea of our old self being crucified, this should help us to forgive and forget our won past. Harry chips in that it is difficult to forgive but even more difficult to accept forgiveness.

6:12 -23 There is a long silence after we have read this passage while everyone thinks of something to say. Robert wants to be sure that what he says is constructive, useful and understandable. Fay asks what it is I am looking for here and I reply that I want whatever they have to give me. Eventually Harry says that v.19 suggests that Paul somehow does not have the weakness of our flesh. Fay concurs and says that Paul is being simplistic if he thinks we are totally evil and then suddenly totally good, these are such cut and dried terms. Paul does not seem to recognise that goodness is a process which leads to eventual perfection, he wants perfection now. Martin suggests that this is encouragement to spur us on to perfection and also to tell us that from the moment of our salvation we can be perfect and be in expectation of the reward. Fay suggested that perhaps Paul uses the word for military wages in v.23 because life is a battle.

7: 1-13: Fay says that v.7 is true because if we did not have the 10 commandments we would believe that anything goes. Martin suggests that this applies to any system of law even secular and pagan laws we follow before we become Christians. The group related this idea especially to the idea of freedom of speech and how this leads to all sorts of pornography being produced, even secular people who believe in free speech want to be free of unsolicited pornographic mail. Harry feels that the 10 commandments are pretty basic to all religions and societies. This brought us onto a debate about the difference between polygamy and adultery. The debate went into the mormon justification of their polygamy by interpreting adultery only in purity and racial terms, ie you can marry as many women of your own race as you like. Also talked about polyandry in Ladak. 7:14-25 Very convoluted and twisting argument. Paul seems to be talking of some sort of foreign power in him which does the sin rather than he himself. Paul by denying his own weakness here seems to give people an excuse to deny their own sin and blame outside powers. Harry has a big problem with Paul's seeming rejection of all things physical and the joys of the physical nature. Robert felt that Paul should acknowledge his weakness, but he also thought that this was a good picture of Paul's frustration at not being able to live as a good person. Martin wonders if the idea of a foreign power sinning in him was a more acceptable argument in Paul's time, he wonders if there is a concept of a conscience at this time. Harry feels there must have been. Fay: Paul is setting up a dualism of the mind and the flesh which may not be a good thing. Martin's NIV notes say that this

passage is not a cop out from sin but a description of the power of sin. Fay: you should be so full of the Spirit that there is no room for sin. All this argument never could quite get round to defending Paul even when Martin suggested that he did acknowledge his own sin v.24.

5 As we were ending off Martin commented that he often feels that you need to have gone through the same education system as Paul to really understand him. His arguments are like rugby commentary in Afrikaans or Xhosa, a lot is familiar but then the other parts are completely obscure.

1/6/95

[This information is written up almost a week later, however I hope to make it an accurate reflection of my field notes]

10 We began at the beginning of chapter 8 looking at 1 -11. Fay thought that the real crux of the passage was 1 and 11 and we should leave out all the rest. Renee was happy with the passage because she felt it was more familiar because there was a song based on v.1.

Martin found verse 3 tricky. Anna felt that it was saying that the law did not work. From her NIV Fay felt that it was saying that Jesus was a sin offering and that God makes us righteous through Jesus who is sinless.

15 8: 12 -17:Comments by the group were: Anna, if you live by human nature you will die but if you live by God you will be heir to God - Martin added coheirs with christ.

Harry : reasonable scribe at this point, v.17 tells us to take up our crosses and that we will have tribulation in the world. I was moved to correct my translation of the Greek to say "in order that " instead of "so that".

Robert and Renee: this is not any old suffering but sharing christs suffering.

20 Martin is worried about not suffering, Fay thinks our suffering may be lighter because we are Christians or that we don't notice it as much. But she feels that suffering will find us so we don't have to worry about looking for it. Anna points to v.18 as a possible solution.

Harry then wonders if it is a problem if your glory is only going to be proportional to your suffering.

Fay thinks that we should not be grading sufferings just as we should not grade our sins.

25 Martin says that v.15 is also an assurance that we will make the grade in God's eyes.

8: 18 -30: Again the group had some troubles and I am going to check the Greek of v.19 to see how it can be changed. They also feel Paul was getting bogged down in his own arguments in the middle of the passage. NIV of v.24c reads who hopes for what he already has. Martin feels this whole central section is a tangent on hope which seems to have no relation to suffering.

Fay likes my translation of v.26 because it gives a powerful and strong view of the Spirit. Robert thinks that the unutterable lamenting of the Spirit may be like tongues. Anna feels that God hears us lamenting through the Spirit. Fay - likes to think of the Spirit taking over and praying through us, making our feelings of compassion into a prayer. I added that the connection of lamenting in v.22, 23, 26 gave the feeling of the Spirit taking up our laments in sympathy.

Martin says v.28 is often quoted, but Fay says she wishes we could see it happen more often.

Harry takes issue with the seeming predestination of v.28 which he feels cancel redemption and is incompatible with Christianity.

Robert thinks predestination is to functions and jobs from God but not in every action and not in what determines our salvation.

Fay says that God's plan for all to be saved could be seen a predestination.

Robert believes we must have the free will to reject or accept God, but he could save us anyway if he wanted to.

Harry - God intervenes in our lives but does not predetermine them.

Fay - humans are too limited to understand all the things of God.

Martin - Martin quotes Boethius via Lewis and says that God holds all our choices in his sight.

I tell them that most commentators believe that this is a marginal argument and that Paul abandons it when he realises it is a dead end.

8:31 -39: Paul is giving a sweetener after all his tortured argument. Fay feels he is talking from the heart. Harry thinks that these verses are quoted more often than others is because they have the clearer message. There is a general consensus that Paul is trying so hard to understand God philosophically that he gets tied in knots, but his statements of faith are clear and authoritative.

A kind of summary to 3:21- 8:39

After looking back over the headings and paragraphs in their own Bibles for 10 minutes the participants felt the following:

Fay: the message is encapsulated in Jn 3:16. God makes provision for us the way no other God does.

Harry: That we have an absolute salvation

Robert: That faith and not the law puts us right and gives us peace and glory. Also that faith cancels out any idea of predestination. Fay adds that God gives us the grace to make our own choices.

Harry ends by wondering why Paul had to make a simple message so complex, Robert says maybe he was paid by the word.

8/6/95

As we began Martin pointed out that 8:28 -31 had been read in Church on Sunday and I had missed it. If
5 nothing else they are now taking notice when Romans is read in Church.

9: 1-33 . there is no convenient break in chp 9 so we read the whole chapter. The group noted that there was some very convoluted argument. Martin felt that Paul was almost answering questions from a crowd, but also taking no argument. He builds up a picture of predestination and then says we can't argue with God about the unfairness of such a system. The question in his mind is why Paul would write such things.

10 In an effort to try and look at the reasons for this and following chapters I send them back to 9:1-5 in their own translations to see what they think it is about. Martin as spokesperson suggests that it is saying that Israel had it all from God and they have now lost out. When I have pushed them a little more the group is willing to agree that 1-5 are about Paul wanting the Jews to add salvation through Jesus Christ to their many other gifts from God.

15 I then point them to 6a and as them in the light of this verse, why it is that Paul wants the Jews to be saved. I am trying to make them see my point that it is necessary for Israel to be saved in order for God's promise to be fulfilled. Anna on behalf of the group persists with the idea that Israel has misunderstood and rejected the promise of God when it came in the form of Jesus Christ.

20 Martin and Anna - (Combining 6 with 30-1) The Jews have all they need but they reject Jesus, so they have failed because they were trying to hard to keep the Law, meanwhile in accepting Jesus the Gentiles have been saved almost by accident.

Fay picks up verse 6 and suggests that the true Israelites, in Paul's opinion, are those who follow Jesus.

25 Anna brings us Back to the prophecy at v.25 which she had tried to bring in earlier. I insist that they must look at the two prophecies 25 -28 together. Renee expresses the conclusion that this means that both Gentiles and a remnant of the Jews will be included in the new kingdom.

10:1-21:

Harry - 9-10, you have to have faith. Fay - 14-5 are a call for us to go out and preach. Anna picks up the desperation in v.1-2 in Paul's desire for his people to be saved. Martin notes that Paul believed that Jesus was the accomplishment of Torah and that it was completely meaningless without him v.4.

Harry notes from v.16 that not everyone will become a believer. Then he wondered if v.20 was in any way autobiographical for Paul, but the rest of us thought it was clearly referring to the Gentiles. Martin sees the Gentiles making a quantum leap into faith without the aid of the Torah. Anna notes from v.19 that the Jews have been missing God's message since the time of Moses and since that time God has been trying to make them jealous of other people whom he loves. Harry says he feels sorry for the Jews because it was necessary for them to reject Jesus in order for us to be Christians now. Martin however felt that even if all the Jews had accepted Jesus there would have been some other spur for the Gentile mission.

Harry brings up something that he has heard which says that the Jews have been allowed to survive and suffer to show the world what happens to those who reject God. We all felt this would be very harsh and Martin said that they must surely survive because God's promise to them as his chosen people endures. Harry and Anna say that considering all the Jews have gone through over the Centuries the fact that they have survived and hung on must be because God wanted them to.

11:1-24:

Fay sees the argument as very complex but she figures out that the Gentiles will be saved through the disobedience of the Jews and the Jews will be saved by becoming jealous of the Gentiles.

Martin and Harry note that Israel can be grafted back into the olive tree, but will that only be when all the Gentiles are saved, if so it is effective exclusion because all have not and are not being saved. I and Alana say it is not all Gentiles but a fullness or a sufficient number of Gentiles.

I say that I believe Paul wants everyone to be saved but in this case especially the Jews.

Martin says we cannot understand the ways of God and that is not surprising since we cannot even understand the writings of Paul.

Unlike J.D. the group really think they would have preferred a 3 page precis rather than wading through the whole of Paul's complexity in Romans .

15/6/95

Another reading from Romans this week in Church, this time from 5:1-5. Fay comments that she would probably not have noticed it if we had not been doing the study. I was nice for them to encounter something they felt they knew more about in a church reading.

Started by reading 12: 1-21: Most comments on v.1 and 2.

Harry - 2a is about not conforming to the world by having women priests.

Quite a few comments including Robert, Fay, Anna and Harry about how different 2b is from other versions, mine suggests that we change ourselves while most others interpret it as us being changed by God in some way. My comment was that I liked this idea because it was an active role in our lives rather than being simply passive to God.

5 Martin wonders whether v.1 means that we should all be perfect in the sense of being body builders. Fay interprets it more after the conventional teaching of respecting your body and not corrupting it with, tobacco , sex , drugs etc. as well as some sense of keeping fit. Her example is of a person discovering diabetes and deciding on the strength of this verse to control her body so that it would be fit and healthy for God. Anna who is diabetic gets very angry with people who won't respond positively to diabetes and live to control it. Some ribald jokes from Robert about really having to build up your body, he is a body builder of note.

10 v.11 Martin and Renee like the idea of a boiling spirit. But Martin is not happy about the idea of being patient in suffering.

v.19 about God taking revenge. Fay's dad felt strongly about this though sometimes she felt in a rather unkind or even challenging way towards God. Harry gives an example of being slandered by a colleague and being very upset, but they let go of it and were pleasantly surprised when she found herself sacked a few months later. The main point is that they did not waste time and energy in anger and revenge but they saw God's justice done.

15 Warning that we should not use this as a way to challenge God to take revenge on our behalf.

I ask them Why Paul would but in the kind of teaching in chp 12 in the light of early chapters and even 9-11. Fay answers that it is to show them that Jews and Gentiles have different gifts and are all useful for the Church.

25 Example of a modern use of this verse is to say that all denominations have different gifts and perspectives so we should meet to learn from each other. Example of this was an American pentecostal group who went to Poland and found the eagerness and reverence of the people very inspiring especially how as Catholics they had an even greater reverence for the Bible, because of scarcity, than these Protestants. Anna gives a similar example from Russia.

30 Move on to 13 :1-14: they find 1-5 a very difficult passage. Robert can't understand why Paul would say this when it is often demonstrably untrue in governments everywhere. How can bad governments be seen as God's servants. It is all a great strain on the nerves and the credulity especially when these governments use it to justify their power and to squash opposition.

Harry believes that if this teaching is to be accepted it also means that we should accept the government we have.

Robert believes that the section on tax is right on the nail because if a government is spending money on people they have obligation to help pay for it. he does however recognise political problems where some people are taxed for the benefit of others. He thought may be the Romans did a high proportion of good for their people I disabused him of this notion by describing the tributary mode of production . Harry somewhat provokingly said that this was the basis of all civilization.

I then tried to probe them on the matter of why Paul would give such teaching and asked them first to note the contrast between 7 and 8. Fay felt that the contrast tied in with the render unto caesar saying of the Gospels, contrasting the rigidity of the tax structure with the freedom Of God's love.

I asked Why Paul would want to contrast these things?

Harry suggests that Paul is telling them that the end is near and they should not be worrying about earthly authorities but about the king dom. I agree that he is getting warm.

Martin feels he is telling Jewish groups who are obsessed with rebellion that they should rather be looking for the coming of God's kingdom.

Robert then says that Paul may be telling them and us that we need governments to prevent the collapse of society. Anna and Fay agree to some extent but also suggest that government are often as responsible for chaos as for order and peace.

Fay says that it may be challenging us to listen more closely to God when we vote for our leaders.

I suggest to them that we should not see 1-5 in isolation as a absolute law to be applied now but should notice how 8-14 softens and tempers the strong message. Fay has a problem with categorising some teaching as relevant for now and other as not. She believes we need discernment about what we believe and be controlled by our conscience. We could otherwise become like the C of E and be moulded to every which way movement of the contemporary opinion.

Martin notes that it is problematic when chp 12 is so clearly universal teaching to come across 13:1-5 which has doubtful relevance. Harry feel we should use the common sense approach to interpretation.

14: 1-23: Another very complex argument. Harry also finds it a dangerous one especially when you know people who try to use it to push their own view on certain issues especially alcohol.

But Fay says the main point is that it is about Jewish and Gentile reaction to dietary laws. Telling the Jews on the one hand that their ideas are out dated but also calling on the Gentiles to be more sensitive in their attitude to Jewish dietary sensitivity... basically telling them to love one another.

5 Martin has heard a very good talk by a Rabbi on the use of dietary laws as discipline which prepare people for the greater disciplines in life. Some discussion of the different types of contemporary Jews from the reform Jews who eat bacon and eggs for breakfast to the Chassidim who still dress in black suits and furry hats. Robert also has a story of a Jewish colleague confronted with an array of sandwiches all of which had pork, ham or bacon. Or Martin's mum having to phone her boss to check if he had an orthodox visitor before sending in ham rolls at teatime.

10 Fay says she has been reading a book about how we as Christians should tolerate each other's hand ups and problems especially when they are doctrinal.

Harry does not feel he wants to tolerate the growing charismatism in the Anglican church.

Robert feels we should not be getting bogged down by our petty differences. Martin comments on how hard it must have been for Gentiles to understand Jewish dietary laws.

15 Harry feels that 17 and 18 are the crux of this passage.

22/7/95

This is the last session with Group One and it is concerned with Romans 15 and 16.

15: 1-13. Having read this section we realised immediately that it rightly belongs with Chp 14. Fay notes that it follows on the theme of being a stumbling block with one of building up. She is very approving of my translation of v.7 because it has a very graphic image which suggests intertwining of lives and involvement with each other, much more than just a tolerant acceptance.

20 Martin notes that from v.8 there seems to be a new theme. Robert supports this by saying that his Bible there is a paragraph break at this point. The argument is a little technical and I point out that all breaks and punctuation in the text are interpretation or conjecture because the original manuscripts have none of them. The new theme seems to be justifying the inclusion of the Gentiles in the kingdom. Martin says this must have been addressed to Jews because it would not impress Gentiles to have Scripture quoted to them. I suggest to the contrary that many Gentiles may feel very encouraged that the Scriptures specifically support their inclusion in God's kingdom.

I also ask them to note the connection with 14:1f which talks about Gentiles being tolerant of Jewish dietary laws especially since these Jews may have been thrown out of their synagogues for being Christians. 15:8f is a balancing passage.

Harry asks If I know what the ratio of Jewish to Gentile Christians was in the first 50 years. I say that there is no concrete evidence but one should presume that because there are inevitably more Gentiles than Jews that they would soon form the majority of Christians.

15: 14-31

Martin and Harry remark immediately that this seems to be a winding down of the letter. Fay notes v.20 and says Paul seems to be contradicting the saying of Jesus that one will plant, one will water and one will tend the crop. Paul seems to want only to plant and not to water and tend. Renee says he wants to be a pioneer everywhere. I say they should notice that this contrasts with his desire to preach to the Romans expressed in 1:14.

Fay also notes that she had never been aware of any plans by Paul to go to Spain. Harry asks if he made it? I explain the problem of conflicting evidence between Acts and the letters. Acts suggests his arrest in Jerusalem and impending trial in Rome but gives no account of his death. Letters end here with Romans and the so called prison letters, Col, Eph, and the pastorals are disputed. There is no strong tradition of him making it to Spain but there is a Tradition that he was executed by Nero during his purge of the Christians after the fire. Since there is no more comment I draw there attention to the collection which is mentioned in all the undisputed letters. This is seen here as a kind of Symbolic gift, from the Gentiles, that Paul is taking to Jerusalem in imitation of passages that I seem to remember from Isaiah and Ezekiel.

16:1-27

I point out to Harry how many women there are in the list of Greetings and how many of them are mentioned as working hard for the Lord as missionaries. He says he doesn't mind the idea of women as camp followers. More seriously he and Fay add that they have nothing against women having ministries in the Church they are just against them being priests.

Martin has squeamishness about greeting each other with the holy kiss in Church. I suggest that it may be the Italian/French kiss on both cheeks. Martin wonders if the Jews would have gone around kissing each other. All the men agree that this is the kind of thing excitable continentals would do and it is all very un-Anglican and disorderly.

Harry notes Tertius' comment at the end and Fay tells her story again of writing letters for people.

Martin asks whether the long list of greeting means that Paul already knew a lot of people in Rome and that there was a large community before he got there. I say that undoubtedly he knew some of them who he mentions as his friends but it is also possible that this is a list of house church leaders to whom Phoebe had to pass the letter of to whom she should read it. Many of the people Paul may only have known by reputation.

5 I tell them that some have suggested that the whole point of the letter seems to be to mobilise all the groups together so as to be an effective support for him in his Spanish venture.

Having read the whole book I ask them for some final remarks.

Robert: We have looked at Romans in more depth than we have ever done in previous studies.

10 Fay: We are now aware that here are many well known verses in Romans that we had noticed were there before.

Robert, Martin, Fay: Paul's ministry seems to just fade away after this and there is no mention of the bang which we would have expected. God seems to have chosen him as a sort of pioneer among the Gentiles and then let him fade away into obscurity.

Fay: There seems to be much less of the Holy Spirit in Romans than there is in the other letters.

15 Renee: We learn a good deal about the complexity of Paul's method of arguing.

Robert: The letter seems to have a point in Chapters 6 and 7 and to drift off into Generalizations at the end. [note I think Robert has missed our discussions of 9-11]

Harry: [adds to Robert] perhaps by the end Tertius has got bored and was just noting down the general points.

20 Fay: I can't see myself ever being converted by the message of Romans the way I can with say John's Gospel.

Harry: Well of course not because it is written to a group of believers and not as a conversion Document.

Me: We should note that Gospels are missionary documents and have an evangelising function. Paul's letters are usually written to correct the mistakes and misunderstandings that arise from his evangelising.

25 Martin: I would like to do Romans again because I have the feeling that there is a whole lot of the message which we have not grasped yet. I don't feel this way about other books you seem to be able to get all you can out of them after one thorough study. [Note to myself: perhaps Martin is reacting with incredulity at having discovered that this famous and pivotal book of the Bible might have far less substance to it than he would have suspected.]

Group Two:

16/5/95

5 Because I had not come prepared to start the meeting but merely to discuss starting it I was a little taken aback by their enthusiasm to start. So having explained to them that I was doing ethnographic research and would be taking notes on the whole meeting we began. We read 1:1-17 at which point I asked if there were any questions. Looking through the text again they were soon bombarding me with questions. Nell first asked about v.4 and the whole idea of Jesus being made the son of God by an act of power. This forced me to go into a whole explanation of Davidic vs. adoptionist christology, the contrast of *σαρξ* and *πνευμα* and the way Paul had redacted an early Christian confession. In my notes I have commented that this group was much more inquiring and intellectual than the other. indeed by this point i was feeling quite dry from all that talking. Nell's next question was to pick up on whether the idea of the trinity could be discovered here. I felt we could already see a separate father and son in v.7. Lively discussion also including Gladys and lady in the corner (must learn names) Jady and other lady much more quiet but still interested. Then there was a whole discussion about how the Gospel got to Rome and if Paul was talking to Christians here. We all felt he was talking to Christians but I did not want to go too far because we would deal with this issue next week. Nell asked the question because of her experience of meeting a "landlord" youth in China who was a Christian and travelled to the Gualin church but did not know about denominations. She was surprised at finding a Christian so far off the beaten track, which made her think of the way Christianity may have spread in the first century. Talked a little about official and unofficial churches in china and the attempt of the state to control them. General approval that there was a religious movement in China in contrast to the sterility of atheist communism. Someone picked up the unusual contrasting of Greeks and Barbarian in v.14. He normally contrast Jews and Gentiles. Suggest that Paul is here trying to appeal to all types of people. At this point we closed because I felt we had covered all we could in the time and would only be rushed if we went further into uncharted text. Nell said she was glad to be studying Romans because she had not studied it or Hebrews. I also assured them that they should feel free to leave questions blank on the questionnaire if they so wished.

23/5/95

30 We started by reading 1:18-32. When I asked who the group thought was being addressed they suggested the society of the time in Rome since the letter was to the Romans . Nell noted with interest that they were accused of knowing what was good but of having deliberately rejected it. I then asked what they felt Paul's attitude to these people was? Jane felt he was furious that they were blocking the truth with evil. Nell thought

that their rejection was very arrogant. Jane and Gladys: Most people are still this arrogant in their rejection of God and in their way of life. Gladys: This is a kind of background to explain why Christ had to come into the world, to die?, and it is not condemnatory. Nell and Lynne: Paul is being condemnatory of what they are doing. Nell has been reading, Henri/Paul? Nouwens and picks up the idea that it is the circumstances of our life that bring us to this sort of depravity. Hilda: What he is describing is typical especially of sexual morality in these days. Pam : It is hard to imagine God being so tough and wrathful if he is also supposed to be loving. Jane: Paul is showing us how we are and how God loves us still the same. Gladys: Maybe we should think of this wrath as loving rather than a dies irae. Lynne: God or Paul is disappointed in us rather than vengeful. This appears to be a message to all people. After this we moved on to a discussion of 2:1-11 and I asked if they felt that these were the same people being addressed as above? Gladys: These are Jews? Pam and Nell: Contrasting the society with the church? This lead into a discussion about whether the church should be involved in telling people how to behave, Nell felt that the Pope should not be imposing contraception on people who did not believe in it. Gladys: The Church should be good and not be telling others to be good. Hilda: We should follow Christ rather than the church in these matters? Nell does not want to impose our Christian way on others. Gladys and Lynne: Paul is talking out of his experience of being freed from the law. Nell is raising questions about evangelisation and the role of telling others in our world today. My notes perhaps reveal something of the dead end of the point. So then I was asked to offer my opinion and I pointed out that 1:18f is a typical Jewish stereotype of the Gentile world which Paul is using because his Jewish hearers would agree with it. Gladys asked if there were Jews in Rome and I said there is evidence for them at this time. I also said we should not see Paul as agreeing with this but in a way showing the spiritual arrogance of the Jews before cutting them down to size and saying that they were no better than the ones they despised. General agreement is that times haven't changed especially when we note that the same kind of racial stereotype that the Jews put on the Gentiles is often put on the Jews themselves these days.

Moving on to 2:12-29. Nell was very pleased with v.15 because it was the best defense she knew for unbelievers against the fundamentalist assertion that they would all go to hell. She believe in a kind of natural or innate Gospel. Jane : the heart not the law is the criterion of salvation. Nell : don't follow the Torah but the natural Law of goodness. I suggested to Nell that she should beware of this argument because it could be turned against here in the mode of 1:18ff and the good unbelievers could be condemned for not becoming Christians when the natural law of goodness would naturally lead them to it. Jane: God's Spirit makes you a real Jew. Jesus puts us right through a heart/love relationship with God. Gladys: fulfilling the law is not as important as

love, Paul knows this from his own experience of trying to keep the Law. Jane God has now been brought near to us in Christ in a way he never was to the Jews. Then we moved on to 3: 1-20. I asked what Paul is trying to prove with his very difficult argument here? Nell: all are under the power of sin. Gladys :we do not earn righteousness it is a gift from God. The Law does have a value but it is not all important. Jane feels that she cannot accept the idea of Jesus taking our sin on him and she feels that reading this passage has shown her that what rather happens is that by being in a close relationship with God we are helped not to sin. Lynne and Gladys though reinforce the line that when we sin we make Jesus suffer and hammer nails into his cross. God suffers in the way a loving parent suffers when she sees her child doing something wrong of falling foul through their mistakes. Pam chipped in here the question whether any of them felt burdened down with sin and they all responded joyfully in the negative. 3: 21-31 : This passage caused some heated debate because Nell said she could not accept that God sent Jesus to be a sacrifice. She is influenced by Theo Kneifel's idea that Jesus came to spread the good news that God wanted to save us through his love but that message was rejected and Jesus was killed and ended as a failure in Human terms. I said that I thought that the new research on the Historical Jesus was showing that Jesus mission was a success and I thought that the fact that we are still here today was testimony to that. Hilda and Pam protested at this because they felt that if Jesus had not died and risen our faith would have no point to it. Nell was somewhat contradictory because she then went on to say that our salvation was accomplished through the sacrificial death and that this death was part of God's love. Jane and Hilda felt that Jesus and God had planned his sacrifice together because they knew that we could communicate much better with Jesus than with God. I can't quite remember how we got onto Albert Schweitzer, but it lead me in to an explanation of his idea of the apocalyptic, hysterical Jesus and how he was a very disillusioned and sad man. This rather upset Hilda who felt that he was a good man who had given up his life to help the people in Africa. Nell however backed me up and said that Schweizer was patronising and really racist to the africans he treated. He felt they were inferior and they sometimes felt they would rather die in the bush than be mistreated by him. Hilda did not think that his attitude to black people disqualified him from reverence because many people still agree with him about the black people's lack of development. To round off the discussion with the letter I asked them what they thought Paul was telling them in this last section for the day. Hilda: Faith is what is really important. Jane: Christ is the means of salvation and belief in him leads to a close relationship with God.

6/6/95

After reading 4:1-12 the general consensus was that the argument was very tortured. Jane asked if these views would not have been very revolutionary for Jews who believed in circumcision and the law. Hilda - Even now it is very hard for us to believe that we have been saved by grace and not by our works.

5 Jane - Paul is tripping over himself in his excitement to tell us that Jesus' death has brought God near to us. Nell wondered if the reference to wages at 4:4 was in favour of good works, but I said I thought it was a straight forward illustration of a worker getting wages for a day's work. At the time I did not see that Paul was using this against the idea of earning salvation, because he says that our righteousness is a gift not a wage. There was then some discussion about how and when the Catholic Church preaches that good works are the
10 basis of salvation, but I seem to have missed the central point. At the end Jane commented - Why is there not more preaching about Romans in church because it seems to be so basic to our faith.

Following this there was a discussion of circumcision, how it was originally a hygienic ritual which became a boundary marker for Jews. Then there was some discussion of modern circumcision, Hilda's sons had been at the insistence of their father, Jane's hadn't at the insistence of their GP and both were done on the grounds
15 of hygiene.

Moving on to 4: 12 -5:11:

Nell wanted to know if I felt that idea of Abraham's faith was based on his belief that he would have a child. I said that I thought it was because a child holds so much promise for the future and so much of the promise to Abraham depended on him having a son. Suggest a change of translation from "because of" to "for the sake
20 of"

Discussion of 4:18. Gladys really likes the idea. Hilda felt it should be a kind of moot for our Christian lives. Jane - we hope for the impossible with a hope that is different from worldly hope.

Nell - the whole Bible is filled with this hope of good times in the future but they have not come yet. [Hilda - the hope is for when we die] Even the disciples expected Jesus to return in their lifetime. [General question:
25 when did Paul expect Jesus? I said we should wait and see what the text tells us] Nell sees so much disappointed hope and people enduring without hope, but here we have Paul who seems to think that hope grows out of suffering.

Gladys however sees 5:3-4 talking about how we co- create our hope with God. Jane agreeing says that we are responsible for creating faith and hope in seemingly hopeless situations.

Then the question was raised whether hope and faith were the same thing? Jane felt that faith was the much more absolute state, while hope has a softer connotation. From 4:18 Gladys thinks that hope leads to faith. Jane - we have to have the faith of abraham to dare to commune with God, that faith is that Jesus has made us right with God.

5 Nell and Hilda agreed that faith and hope were gifts that were given to us. Gladys - Faith is our response to the gift of God's love

Hilda - the problem is that we cannot give others the gift our faith ,hope and belief they have to create it for themselves. That is why Jane so liked Gladys's idea of us co-creating faith and hope with God.

10 This discussion lead on to the idea that people go to renewal meetings because they want what other's have and they are disappointed when they do not get it instantly. This naturally takes us onto the Toronto Blessing, Hilda has heard that it produces very good fruit of faith and hope, but Nell was rather shocked by the kind of fits that people seemed to be having when she saw something of it on TV. Nonetheless everyone agreed that they would not go to a Toronto meeting because they felt it was the same as earlier renewals which they had participated in and it was not really part of their worship culture.

15 Moving on to 5:12 -21. Jane thought this was also a very complex passage. At this point Hilda asked me why I made my own translation when there were so many others. I replied that I wanted it to be a literal rather than a interpretive translation which would give them a better idea of the Greek argument.

This group also had a problem of Paul's death and life terminology.

20 Gladys was particularly concerned because of a Hospice lecture where a pastor seemed to suggest that we die because of our fallen nature. This suggests that death is a punishment and an aberration of life rather than a part of life. I tried again to explain the complexity of the death and life terminology, but I seem to have made it even more complex for myself. Gladys suggests that real death is the absence of abundant life, people can die years before they are buried.

25 Looking at the complexity of the argument Nell felt that we must see that Paul is not infallible. Jane - Paul is falling over himself to get his ideas across. Everyone else agreed that Paul veers in and out of complex arguments and the way to handle it is to go in and read for what is meaningful. A case in point was v.20 comment that this is a very strange concept but the would rather leaver it than get into complex arguments. Gladys/Jane/Hilda - amongst all the complex argument there are some treasures we can hold onto.

I was asked by the group to try and give an explanation of what I thought 4 and 5 were all about. I felt no problem with this because I could no longer tamper with their reading but I wanted to meet their desire to understand what is going on.

Commenting on what I had to say Gladys summarised the message with the old saying that God has no grandchildren so we need to build our own faith. Jane feels that Catholic rules made her feel like a Jew rather than a Christian who is free. Jane is very excited by Paul's excitement of the idea of God being brought close. I did suggest to her that the idea of Jews thinking of God as far off and being trapped in legalism, is a misconception. Paul's real excitement is about the coming of Jesus which has changed all the rules about salvation and about how you get into the kingdom of God.

13/6/95

After we had read 6:1-11 Nell reckoned that the Romans must have been very confused by Paul's arguments. Her summary of the complexity was that Christ died so that when we die with him we will die to sin.

Liz sees it in a different way of rising each day to a new beginning in Christ. Hilda suggests that living in the Spirit should mean that we are free of sin. Gladys disagrees and suggests that we are made aware of our sin through Christ and the Spirit so that we can turn and ask forgiveness.

Nell asks what we mean by sin. Gladys thinks the main sin is not doing God's will, sins of omission and falling into a kind of self centred lethargy instead of going out there and doing what God wants. Lethargy is induced by counting the cost beforehand. Liz feels the worst sin is not being aware of our acceptance by God under his grace. Gladys and Liz though do agree that it is hard to recognise grace when we are overburdened with guilt.

Nell reminds us that the two unforgivable sins of Catholic tradition are presumption of salvation, eg. Voltaire God will forgive because it is his trade, and despair of salvation.

6:12 -23:

Liz wants to know what I think of verse 15 which is about not living under Torah but under grace. I respond that I think Paul wants to have his cake and eat it he wants us to obey the Spirit of Torah but at the same time be saved by grace. I think that by sin here he means disobeying the commandments of Torah. Gladys says that this sounds logical to her because we must on the one hand live according to God's precepts while on the other hand we have to be flexible enough to choose to break laws for a greater good. Hilda and Jane agree that discernment is important for our actions. Nell wonders if this is against the rigidity of legalistic life and whether Paul was against the fulfilling of the minutiae of the Torah. If we are so busy fulfilling all these complex laws there will be no time to do anything else. From verse 21 Jane says that she cannot believe that we are made

100% free from sin. Nell thinks this is a simplistic view of salvation. I say that this is why I sometimes think that Paul is very naive, he really believes that once you have the Spirit you will have the ability to fulfil the whole Torah easily. I am willing to soften this to say maybe he is just over enthusiastic in his pronouncements. Liz does not think that Paul is naive. Nell says this is a bit like people who believe that if you give your life once it is for all time no matter what you do afterwards. Liz says she believes that no Christian can claim to be reborn because we really have to die to sin and rise to life daily through Jesus.

The conversation begins to lean towards Paul's own inner struggles which seem to belie his naive faith in being free from sin so we go on to read the whole of Chapter 7:1-25. For Gladys only the last two verses are really comprehensible. Liz thinks that they are a real cry from the anguish of his soul. So then I ask them the question what if this cry is a contrast to the argument that comes before and what if the whole chapter is not about the struggle of the inner life.

When they have read through it again in their own Bibles Jane suggests that it is about separating the physical from the spiritual and not being responsible for your physical actions. Everybody says they strongly disagree if this is what it says. Liz is absolutely insistent that this is an intensely personal passage because of the use of I and because of her husband's theory that Paul was a manic depressive. I challenge her to produce any real evidence of this state in Paul's writings. Everyone is insistent that this is a very personal testimony by Paul which is very comforting because it really matches their own inner struggles and they feel Paul is telling us how he deals with them. Hilda does however feel depressed about the idea that sin lives in us. The others reassure her that this only makes us need God more and challenges us to daily make the choice to do what is good.

At this point after assuring them that their interpretation is valid I sketch the difference between guilt and honour/shame culture and explain how our culture is one of growing guilt which is why we interpret this so personally. Then I go on to explain how this passage can be seen as a defense of the Torah from the idea that it is sin or causes sin. In the end Paul must say there is a dualistic physical and spiritual Torah and he then gives up his argument by saying it all does not matter anyway because Christ has saved us.

Once again we are in the discussion that Paul seems to complicate everything with his arguments and then oversimplify them in his statements of faith. Nell says the complications explain why nobody wants to preach on most of Romans in church. Liz however is encouraged that even such a brilliant mind as Paul's can make such a foul up in an argument.

Then we come on to discussing guilt culture and the problems of destructive guilt. Nell says that some of it is good like the Nun who was always so cross but then always felt so guilty and was always asking God to take

it away but the priest counsellor felt she should stay that way because it was the guilt and the constant forgiveness that kept her close to God. We also discussed the idea of confronting our guilt and becoming liberated from it. Gladys and Liz felt that it was healthy sometimes to embrace and accept our dark side and our guilt for things in our past especially in SA where we all have or have had intense feelings of guilt.

5 I ask Hilda and Liz if I can have an interview, Liz is very flattered. Hilda and Jane are a little concerned about how I will quote them. Nell hopes that I will at least speak or write comprehensibly unlike a person at St Joseph's who spoke about squatters in such high philosophical language that no one could understand. Comments that Paul is sometimes like that in Romans .

10 Short discussion with Jane about the Gospel of Thomas and the difference between intellectual religion of the privileged which produces aphorisms and the religion of the people which produces stories like those of the four Gospels.

20/6/95

15 After we had begun by reading chapter 8: 1-11 there was quite a long silence before Hilda asked me what the Torah of sin and death was. I responded that I thought it was related to the bind Paul was in at the end of the previous chapter and he has to try and resolve the problem that he has created of a Torah in the physical body which brings sin and death.

20 Nell feels she cannot accept the idea that anyone who does not have Christ is under death. Liz tries to reason it out by saying that perhaps it only refers to people who have heard the Gospel and rejected it. Gladys sees it more along the lines of being open to the Spirit of Christ which allows us to do what is good and life giving. Nell says that if we say that whatever we do that is right is done through Christ then we are imposing our interpretation of reality on atheists and hindu's etc. who would reject that interpretation. But again it is problematic because if we believe that the Spirit of Christ is what brings goodness and life into the world then we must evangelise. I tell them of the work of Vinay Samuel in India who evangelises by building mosques and temples in slum areas and then telling people that they don't need to change their culture and religious practice to be Christians but must take the Spirit of Christ into their lives and transform it that way. Gladys for one is very pleased with the idea because of all the harm done by missionaries who have imposed their culture on people all over the world.

Gladys elaborated on her earlier point that living in Christ is a response in Love to God, we do that by being open to the Spirit in our daily lives.

Jane wonders where Paul gets the idea of separation of the physical and spiritual bodies, she cannot agree with the idea? I suggest that he is still trying to get himself out of the bind he got into in Chapter 7. I think that by v.11 he has found one solution which is to talk about the indwelling spirit reanimating the physical body and thereby uniting the two again.

5 There is also now some discussion about intolerance in Christians and in other religions. This arises out of our earlier discussion of evangelism and imposing our standards on others. the group is in general agreement that such fundamentalism comes from the belief that one has all the answers. Proper humility precludes fundamentalism. Also in answer Nell's earlier comment about people outside Christ being under the Torah of death i suggested that we should put it alongside his earlier comment that we would not know sin if the Torah did not tell us what sin was.

8:12-30

10 Nell says 18,19 is where Marx gets his idea that Christianity believes that the message is about pie in the sky when you die. Others comment though that this was often the case and it brought great comfort to blacks as slaves and oppressed minority in America. they had the church and the hope of heavenly joy was a comfort in their suffering.

15 Others have different views of heaven. Hilda believes it will be peace after all the anxiety. Jane says she hopes for growth. Nell and Gladys think they will have grown enough by then and they would rather have rest. They discuss it a bit longer and realise that they can come to an agreement of heaven being a growth into perfect wholeness, peace and rest. Hilda talks about looking forward to celebration and Gwen adds that the best thing about that celebration will not be having to cook for it. Hilda continues that she sees no point in life if there is no heavenly reward. Liz talks about starting our heavenly journey in life and being citizens of two worlds. Comment from Nell that the Psalms talk of heaven as cloudy skies because they were used to the heat of the desert while we would rather think of it as sunny skies.

20 Continuing the discussion Nell talks of Martin Prozesky taking the part of an atheist and his contention that they want to make the best of this world because it is the only world we have got and only one life to do something in. Nell thinks that this may be a good attitude to have but she also wants there to be justice and recompense at some point in the future. This leads to a discussion of judgement and whether God would condemn people forever. Nell reminds us of the allegory of judgement at the end of the Narnia series when people pass through the gate and confront Aslan, then they accept him having always believed in him, or they recognise him for the first time and realise that they have always believed in him, these two groups of people enjoy a new world. The

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third group of people are those who look on Aslan with hatred and because of this they cannot see the new world but they think they are in a dark stinking stable. The point being is that they live in darkness by their own refusal to recognise the light.

Father discussion of judgement revolves around the Catholic idea that if you died in mortal sin without confession you could be condemned to purgatory or even hell. Now the Catholic members of the group see this as misinformation by the church.

v.20 a suggestion is made that God made creation meaningless so that we would turn back to him.

Jane sees the image of children of God as illustrating her idea that Paul is excited about how near God is to us in Christ having been far away before. Nell talks about Chassidim who have a very close relationship with God.

Gladys suggest then that perhaps it was Paul who felt that God was far away before. In response I tell Nell that I think her illustration of the Chassidim is anachronistic because they are a C19 east european phenomenon, but I also did not think that most Jews ever believed in a distant God. I tell Jane that I think Paul is so excited because he now realises that God has changed the rules of entry into the kingdom so that all people can come in. I also suggest that the images of Kingdom and family are not so different because they have similar resonances, families are larger than nuclear, and within ancient kingdoms one would often regard other citizens as fictive kin or family.

The discussion on the remoteness of God led to a discussion of the cult of Mary and the saints. I rather spoil my earlier idea of taking Christ into your own culture and religion by telling them how all sorts of disreputable old gods were Christianized as saints. I do however suggest that this usually happened when Christianity was imposed and when the image of God was of a stern king who preserved the kingdom and the status quo. The saints or old gods were much closer to the ordinary people than the imperial God of the church. Also discussion of Mary, how her virginity and motherhood set her up as an impossible ideal because a good woman can only be a virgin or a mother. This is a way of putting women's spirituality down and saying they cannot live up to the Christian ideal.

Some comments as we draw to a close on this section. Nell observes that v28 is often used in a very trite manner.

Jane wonders if all the talk of suffering suggests official persecution. I suggest that at this stage it is probably just the general suffering of the poor people who probably made up the bulk of the community in Rome.

I make some comment on predestination passage, simply that they should note that it is a short passage which is not repeated or reinforced by any other part of the letter.

8:31 -37

This is very encouraging for the group and they really love this passage. after some discussion we also agree with my suggestion that the arbitrariness of predestination just before is counteracted by this message that if we accept Christ and live in the Spirit of the Torah nothing will separate us from the love of God.

5 Gladys suggests that this whole passage is worth going through all his convoluted arguments. It is a real comfort for people suffering persecution especially since we know it was written by somebody who knew what persecution was all about.

Nell points out the problem of the idea of v.31 being used on both sides in a war.

10 To end off there is a question about why I study Romans and I reply it is because so much of the interpretation is stuck in the C16 and I want to be part of bringing it up to date. Liz makes the comment that even though interpretation and theology may be behind the times she feels that Paul is always up to date. I add some comments on what I feel about the necessity of reinterpreting Paul for the needs and context of each generation.

27/6/95

15 Today we read the whole of 9-11. I was trying to get them through the whole argument so that we could maybe push on to something else. I does seem that this rather backfired as we seemed to go off track once the initial points had been reached and we ended up miles away in another debate. It would probably have been better to stick to reading by paragraphs and we would probably all have got more out of it. Gladys commented towards the end of the reading that it was finally beginning to make sense. I asked them what sense it seemed to be making. Hilda thought it was all about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. Jane expressed the
20 idea that it was talking about a complicated plot on God's part for all people to be saved.

Hilda picked up on the idea of Paul's pain about the lack of Jewish conversions and wondered if this was Paul's famous thorn in the flesh. I said that I did not think that it was and I was unconvinced whether the whole thorn in the flesh came from the undisputed letters.

25 Hilda and Gladys talked about the Jews problem of believing that faith was the criterion of entry to the people of God and not keeping the Torah. If they accepted this it put a question mark over the effectiveness of the entire OT.

Liz added that they would not accept Jesus as Messiah because they were expecting another type of Messiah.

Jane commented about Paul's strange argument about the hardening of the Jews leading to the salvation of the Gentiles. Gladys says she finds it very hard to identify with this type of God.

Returning to their theme above Gladys and Hilda talked about the difficulty of accepting God's grace without any rules. This requires a lot of faith because the offer seems too good to be true. Gladys says this is because we are trained to be independent and balk at the idea of being dependent on God.

This lead into a discussion of the Rugby and the way that Francois Pienaar thanked God on th rugby field acknowledging God's help in the victory. Nell says that we need to be aware about the role God plays in our achievements and acknowledge it.

Liz commented that we can only do thing by God's grace. Nell strongly objected saying that she did not believe in the saying " there but for the grace of God go I" because it implies that the person in trouble or adversity is outside of the Grace of God. Jane says she always says this with a feeling of compassion. But Nell says we have to think about the words we are using.

Liz acknowledges this point and agrees with Nell that we should not be judging the amount of God's grace that other people might have. Jane comes back to the original point which is that we need to be working with God to maintain our faith and that is in itself a grace. Gladys quotes Ignatius of Loyola saying that we should work as if it depends on us and pray as if it depends on God. Hilda says we need to acknowledge that God is present in everything. Nell says we should limit this to see God being present in the people who are there and especially not supporting one or other side in a war or sport situation. Hilda does think that God was with the Bokke in a special way on saturday because the South Africans as a nation needed the victory much more than the NZ's. Much effusion from Liz about how the rugby brought the nation together in a way not seen since the election. I stopped them at this point and asked them why they thought Paul felt it was important for the Jews to be saved.

Jane hit the point on the nose right away by saying that God cannot be seen to be choosing a people and then dumping them when something better comes along. I reinforce this by saying that it is important that God be seen as being consistent to the Jews or he would be as suspect and capricious as all the Gentile gods. Noting that in the previous section Paul is ruling out the Torah and circumcision as entry markers for the Kingdom so he has to find a new way to prove the faithfulness of God. This is done by the complicated arguments about hardening hearts and grafting in wild and domestic olive branches but finally he simply states that all Israel will finally be saved.

There was some discussion about the image of the olive tree whether Judaism or God was the tree, I thought God was the ground, the Jew/people of God were the tree into which the Gentiles are grafted.

Nell asked a question at this point about how many Christians were of Jewish origin. This was difficult for me and I got a little bogged down in an explanation of the problem of moving from Jesus to Paul's preaching of Jesus and the way Jews were left behind by this preaching and the growing Gentile character of the church and those who remained both Christians and Jews were finally branded heretics. Paul preached only about the death and resurrection of Christ and not about the historical person of Jesus.

Liz said that she did not think that Paul was unaware about the historical Jesus because he would have known about it from Luke. I said there is no proof that the person who wrote Luke /Acts knew Paul. This promoted another problem from Hilda that all these theological arguments were destructive of our faith and she preferred to keep it simple and practical.

Gladys said that she had no problem with there being different Gospel and Paul having different slants on the truth. John says that Jesus is the truth the way and the life so may it not be that all those that talk about Jesus have a part of the truth. This prompted a whole discussion about what is truth and whether there is one truth. Nell's opinion was that those people whose religion showed love and tolerance to other people were those nearest the truth of God. Jane comments that this is quite an indictment of the Catholic Church.

Jane picks up the idea of the truth will set you free and says that she thinks true freedom is knowing the truth about yourself. Hilda says this is a great idea but she finds so often that she gets setbacks in loving herself. Gladys comments are that she has no problem with different Gospels having different positions, she does have a problem with Paul's arguments but has great admiration for the way he focuses on Christ and this is what really matters for him.

Nell agrees and says that she likes Paul's despite his outdated views on women. I stupidly feel the compulsion to defend Paul and we descend into a fruit less argument which ends quite well but destroyed the focus of the group.

4/7/95

We agreed to go through each chapter as it comes rather than trying to rush like last week which was not a good practice and did not even save time. Liz said it gave her mental indigestion.

12: 1-21

v. 3-4 really speaks to Liz in a salutary way. She is encouraged that we are all given a personal type of faith. She backs this up with the assertion that Christianity is such a personal religion. This leads to some discussion

of last weeks discussion on fundamentalism. Nell says she has tempered her thoughts in some way about this idea because she has read some where that while we like to think that the truth comes from orthodox places it really comes from the fringes in fundamentalism and in packages of lostness. There is more discussion with Hilda saying that it does not matter what people believe as long as they do good for the people around them, like the TV program where a whole lot of sports people give testimonies. But the others disagree saying that often these groups do not allow room for growth or are so much into prosperity and praise that they do not take into account brokenness, poverty and the suffering of the cross.

Gladys brings us back with a question about what Paul means by faith in v.3. Her Jerusalem Bible says it is more than personal faith but about faith that builds up the body. I agree with her and say that we are taught about Paul's ideas on faith apart from works, but her he is clearly telling us how our faith can be shown through our works in our actions and ministries.

v.15 Gladys comments on this verse and says how hard it often is to find someone to really share your joy with. Others agree, Nell tells the story of her friend who would drop whatever she is doing to help a friend who is sick but never comes to see her when she is well and they can have fun together. We agree that we often have a morbid kind of sympathy for sick people and forget them when they are well.

v.18 Nell and Liz really like this verse. Lynne talks about the privilege of being a pastors wife and to meet so many wonderful lowly Christians along with the politicians and bishops.

v.20 Hilda says this verse should make us think about how we spend our money, on our enemies rather than just on friends. Also talk from the Group on how much stature and respect Mandela has gained for his lack of bitterness and his forgiveness of his persecutors.

Comment from Lynne particularly about how wonderful chp 12 is and how much there is in it. I point out that it is Paul's advice about how we should be living our faith.

13: 1-14

This chapter passed surprisingly easily. Hilda commented that she is sure Paul would be shocked if he could see how his words had been misused by evil governments. She went on immediately to suggest that this passage should be neutralised by Paul's eschatological beliefs. I pick up on this immediately and point out the juxtapositions of the first and second half of the chapter and the contrast of v.7 and 8. The group have obviously had some teaching on the chapters, because they have heard all the taxation theories etc., so the issue is not critical.

14: 1-22

Nell says this chapter is a convincing argument for not judging. I ask why and she says it is all to do with dietary laws and being patient with those who follow them.

Comment by Lynne that the contrast between our society and theirs is that food is not such a big thing in our religion so we have few taboos about it. She sees this passage mainly in terms about not abusing the gifts, like food, that God gave us. Gladys feels that Paul is looking about the mixture of the community in Rome and calling for cultural tolerance. Lynne says he chooses food because it is so basic to life. He is encouraging those who are not Jewish not to look down on those who cannot leave their Jewish dietary code. Hilda and Nell say they can sympathize with this because there are so many things that Catholics still dare not do because of their tradition. Examples are like contraception though younger Catholics are breaking this. More difficult is the example of a woman who died of Cancer rather than break the prohibition on abortion. this is very tragic but very admirable.

Nell talked about a friend who gave up drinking on the principle of not encouraging young people to drink.

Lynne agrees with the principle that as Christians we should not be giving people things which they will be tempted to Abuse

At a later stage this was all linked up to a discussion of the pornography laws in SA and about the way it touches and ruins lives. Nell would have liked to tell the guy on the phone in who owned a sex shop v.7 which talks about us all being beholden to one another and to God. The whole pornography debate and the Harry Grant affair leads to a short discussion on the shadow side in us all which lets us do good things on the one hand and contradictory things on the other. Prime examples are of people like Paul Tillich, Martin Luther King and J F Kennedy who did many things that were about morality and Justice but whose sexual morality was very suspect. The shadow seems to look for the opposite to what you are and exploit it. The conclusion of this is that we are all imperfect sinners and we should not be judging others.

Gladys is puzzled by v.22-3. I say that I think it is all about acting in consistency with your faith and not forcing yourself to eat food of any kind unless you really have faith that what you are doing is the right thing.

15: 1-13

v5 Hilda says that it is a pity there are so many denominations when we should be of one mind. the discussion which follows is mainly about having different temperaments about worship but we should have the same stance on Moral issues. Lynne acknowledges that she has many silly prejudices about how she worships including what to do with your hands when you sit rather than kneel to pray. I suggest that this may be in the context of the

letter and encouragement from Paul merely for the Christians to be of one mind and form a joint community. The Group Buys this argument but also talks about the fellow feeling we have with other Christians wherever we meet them like Nell's encounter in China. We agree that our instinct is often to trust those who believe the same as us until they prove themselves unworthy of it. Lynne says this is why we should be so careful about parading ourselves as Christians. v.3 Gladys wondered where the quote came from. The rest of the chapter did not present any real problems, I explained a few issues to them as with Group One. The main thing was to talk about the list in Chp 16, this is not Paul mentioning everyone by name as liz believed but a kind of address list for all the groups in Rome that Phoebe had to deliver the letter to. Lynne says this is like a Bishop's circular to the parishes.

APPENDIX FOUR - INTERVIEWS:

Group One:

Anna

Billy To start with, a question about the group. I just want to know when you joined.

5 Anna Soon after we joined St Matthew's ... that was in 1992. We joined St Matthew's in July and it was in about August that we started going to the Van Genechten's group. Dora Bass was leading it at the time and it was a fairly small group as well, so that's when we started.

Billy Ja: and then you joined our group when?

10 Anna Um, only this year when, because then when the Van Genechten's stopped having a Bible study group to have um prayer group meetings on a Monday night. So then they didn't have a group any more, so Harry was taking us for a while, then Caitlin left and Elizabeth left. Because Caitlin was finding it too much with her job and everything and then still to... We went on a Tuesday night. And then Elizabeth left because her son didn't like her driving at night so she goes to the ladies group on Wednesday morning. The group was getting too small so Harry just said let's call it quits. So then we joined the Dillons.

15

Billy Okay, right. Answer questions about the Bible. I would just like to know why personally you study the Bible.

20

Anna I don't know: I just feel it's important to know more about... Personally, I prefer the New Testament: I find it easier to read and more beneficial to me, I suppose. I love the story of Jesus and his life, how the, um, his birth right through until his death and that sort of thing. I enjoy reading the Gospels and, um, I just find it makes me - when I'm reading the Bible I'm relaxed, I'm calm, and I can just forget about everything else and everyday life and it is, you know, it just helps me to put things in a better perspective.

25

Billy Right, okay. Um... okay, just as a bit of a follow-up, in what ways do you see the Bible as important in your life and then, also, what is your view of the Bible, its role in our society?

30

Anna Well, I don't think enough people read it, for starters, and I just feel that if more people were influenced by the Bible we wouldn't have the problems that we have today. And, um, personally I think by reading the Bible it makes me a better person because, you know, if I am about to do something wrong and then I think this is not right, I shouldn't think this, or I shouldn't do this. and, you know, it makes me think, it makes me more conscious of what I am doing right and wrong, by reading it, you know, the Bible, and I just feel if more people read it, you know, there would be more people conscious of that fact and less people would be doing things wrong. We'd probably make the world a better place to live in.

- Billy Right. Then, to relate that to the group, your answers to 2 and 3, what we've just talked about, how do you think they compare with other people in our group:... the same or different?
- 5 Anna I think we've got a pretty good group. Um, you know, there's obviously a few differences of opinion every now and then on certain subjects, but, in general, I think all the people in our group use the Bible as a guideline by which to live. I don't think there's anybody who does anything really different. And although, well, I mean like, you, Tim and I are the young people in the group, although everyone else in the group is a bit older, that... I actually prefer being in older people's company because I find their conversation very interesting. I've always preferred to be with older people, even as a child, and I like to listen to what they have to say because they, you know, then I am going to learn something from it because they've got that much more experience.
- 10 Billy Okay. To come onto Romans now. (Anna. Oh, no! Laughs) I just want to, the first thing I want to talk about is what understanding do you think you have developed from Romans so far?
- 15 Anna Okay. Well I think it's a very strong message from Paul to the people of that time. A lot of it is relative to today, but I don't think all of it is. um, particularly in how people should live, um, and that sort of thing, but... it's a good book to read, and I must admit I've only ever read it through once fully and that was when I was at school and, you know, so my understanding of Romans isn't all that marvellous because I haven't read enough to really absorb everything.
- 20 But, to me, it's - the biggest thing I get out of it is Paul's lesson to people on how they should live their lives and that, unless you have faith in the Lord and not only live by the rule, you know, you can't have one without the other, you've got to have both together.
- Billy Right. Okay, then, a bit more detail then. So what have you liked about Romans particularly and then about the way we've studied.
- 25 Anna Okay, I like my version better (laughs), I can understand it a bit easier than yours. A direct translation from Greek is obviously a lot more accurate than mine but, it is a little bit harder to understand, especially when it's going off on all these tangents, and that sort of thing but, no, it's definitely a very relevant book in the New Testament.
- Billy Okay. Then the other question is what have you disliked about Romans .
- 30 Anna The way Paul keeps going off on all his tangents! (laughs) Basically I think the message that he is trying to put across is very good, um, at your basic, your fundamental rules of being a Christian. Okay, so you can learn a lot from that and, you know, in order to be saved and become righteous, you can't only live by the rules, you have to have faith in Jesus, and that sort of thing. So, his basic message, I think, is excellent but just sometimes how he words things, and that sort of thing is, you know, a bit hard to sort of grasp when you're trying to sort out which are the most important pieces in the book. And, also, I didn't like the bit about authority, the (?) authority are put there by God, and I don't believe that's always the case.
- 35

Billy Okay. And just the last question. Anything else, what else would you like to say about the group, the studies we've been doing, any sort of general comments?

5 Anna Okay, as I said, I like the group because it is not just everybody saying the same thing and agreeing, you know, there's discussion and you know, you sort of thought something one way and you listen to how somebody else puts it and you realise that there are all the different viewpoints, that there is a different way of looking at something, not just your own way. And, um, I find I really enjoy this group. You know, I wasn't... you know, when Dora was around and we were in her group, I loved that group and she is a wonderful person, I have always loved Dora, and when she left, I wasn't really settled until I came to this group and, you know, 10 I find it much, much better, and you know I like the discussions which we have which we never really had before. Everyone used to just keep their mouths shut, so, it's nice that everyone talks and gives their own opinion and what have you and the studies we have done have been helpful to me and, basically, just because, you know, I haven't always been at an Anglican church, I was baptised an Anglican and I went to Anglican Sunday School right the way through junior school. And, when we left Zimbabwe, I was at a convent in Durban so you know, that was all the Catholic side of Christianity. I was there for a couple of years and then when I moved from the convent to Westville Girls High, I was going out with a Catholic so I was still going to the Catholic church. So, you know, I haven't been back to an Anglican church from the time I was a little standard five, twelve years old, until I moved to Pietermaritzburg when I joined St Matthew's in 1992. So, it's sort of given me a better understanding and, you know, it's been nice for me to help Tim along as well because when I met Tim he's never even been baptised and although his father is a Catholic and his mom's a Methodist, his father is very anti the church, um, I think because he was force fed it as a child, he wasn't given any option and he never, ever encouraged his children to go to church. So, when met Tim and he wanted to get engaged, I said sorry bud, I'm an Anglican and you are going to have to go through the whole rigmarole too so that we can get married in an Anglican church, and that's when we joined and we have been very, very happy at St Matthew's, I think it's a wonderful family. So, I am still sort of new at the game, and Tim was very new as an Anglican. He hadn't had any dealings with the Anglican church before so, it was good for both of us and I remember on our way to one Bible study, Tim saying to me 'You know, I really missed out on all this as a child. I'll never ever do that to my child, I'll always give him the option'. So, it felt good to me that he was happy in his life and happy that he had become a Christian and attending church. And he does, you know, we talk about it. I think we're both better people for it. I was very volatile and had a quick temper. Sort of, you know, I can put things into a better perspective now and not blow up so quickly and I can think about things ... it just makes things a lot easier for me.

Harry

Billy Okay. So, the first question I want to ask you is just how long you've been involved in the Bible study group and how did you come to be involved in our group?

5 Harry I came to be involved in that particular group because I was earlier in a group with the Van Genechten's, soon after we joined St Matthew's, when we came to Maritzburg, and their group disbanded or changed its nature and became more a prayer group and Tim and Anna were also in that group. We had a short period where we continued with that group, meeting mostly at our house, and I sort of fumbled around in leading it and then it was decided that it would be better to join other groups because our group had actually got smaller and the Dillon's group was also looking for people so Tim and Anna and myself joined the Dillon's group and that was about nearly a year now I should think.

10

Billy Ja. Okay. So then can I ask you then, just coming out of that, why do you personally study the Bible?

15

Harry Uh, I think it's a good discipline, um, it's a learning process, there's always something new, one has never got to the stage where one knows it all. Um, and also to interact with other people within the church. And I think that builds up the church community. So that's basically why I support this group.

Billy Okay, this follows on a bit, then, in what way do you see the Bible as important in your life and your view of the Bible as important to society?

20

Harry I think its importance in our life is like coming to church. You know, people come to church regularly: there's teaching, there's receiving the sacraments. Studying the Bible is another aspect, it's another facet of one's growth in the human life, um, and it's like, you know, it's like having, you know, you've got to have three legs or four legs to a table, and it's one of those legs.

25

Billy Right. Okay, um, can I ask you to tell me about what other understandings you've developed of Romans so far while we've been studying it?

Harry Understanding of Romans or of Paul? (laughs)

Billy Well of Romans particularly.

30

Harry Um, well it's a lot clearer than when I first read it. I think also it comes out very strongly that Jews and Gentiles must be welded into one new grouping, rather than the traditional separation where the Jews and Gentiles were in two camps.

Billy So then, can you tell me what you've liked, what particular things you have liked about Romans and how we've studied it?

- Harry I think I liked the... I'll tell you what I didn't like...
- Billy No, tell me what you liked first
- 5 Harry The thing I liked was the way there was actually a natural progression through the book, which I hadn't seen before, possibly because I hadn't studied it in those sort of bites which we did, and there is definitely a progression. And if you just whipped out something in the end... You have to see it in its context and in its entirety, otherwise you could get a sort of skewed view.
- Billy Okay, now you can tell me what you dislike.
- 10 Harry What I didn't like was some of the long, drawn-out ways in which a particular theme, or a particular aspect was written. I think it could have been said in a more shorter way without losing its message. On the other hand, we are used to things being pretty short and precise whereas in those days maybe it was the normal way, like Victorian novels that go on and on and on. So, you know, I can accept that, but in the modern context, it does seem a bit drawn out. Some parts, not all parts. There are some really very punchy parts in there where it flowed quite well.
- 15 Billy Okay, so just to end off, anything else you'd like to say about Romans , the group, whatever?
- Harry I think, I think the way that you have lead this and the way that it was presented has actually drawn the group a little bit more closer together. Um, and I think people are more, you know, it's more of a unit than it was, that's what I feel, than it was before. Um, I may be wrong, that's my own personal perception. I'm not say that it wasn't united or unified before, but I think it has welded a little bit closer, which I think is good. That's about all.
- 20 Billy Okay, thanks very much.
- (picking up the interview later when I noticed I had missed a question)
- 25 Billy Sorry about this. The question I wanted to ask you... we were talking about your view of the Bible and your Bible in society, and I just wanted to know if you think that the other members of the group share your view of the Bible and its importance?
- Harry Ja, I think they do, otherwise they wouldn't be there. I think, the impression I get from other members of the group is that the Bible is pivotal in one's daily life. Um, I don't know to what extent they see Bible study and coming to church as two aspects of the same thing. That I don't know, because, well, they come to church but I can't speak for them, but. ja, I certainly get the impression that regard the Bible as being vital to their daily lives.
- 30

Tim

Billy Right, so I just wanted to ask questions about the group and about Romans as you've encountered it. So, the first question is how long have you been involved in the group and how did you come to be involved?

5 Tim Well, we were with Harry and Lydia's group and it slowly stopped because everyone, they were all old ladies and that and they didn't want to travel at night and what have you. Then we moved to the Van Genechten's and they decided that they wanted to put more time into praying for the country, I think it was, over the election period and that's when we moved to that group, because we were asked to go there.

10 Billy Okay, so the next question is why do you study the Bible personally?

Tim To get a better knowledge of what's happening, what happened in the Bible, because I'm a very new Christian and I think it's important to study the Bible and to know the facts and everything, and, uh, just to follow it is the correct way to live your life.

15 Billy Okay, so it's a follow on, so asking about the ways in which you see the Bible as important in your life and how to you see the Bible as important in our society?

Tim I think it's very important because if everyone lived by the Bible it would be a much better place, this world. I don't think we'd have as much problems as we do.

Billy Okay, would you say that the rest of the people in the group would agree with your answers to two and three about the Bible? Do you think the rest of the group agrees with your views about the Bible?

20 Tim I think they would, ja.

Billy Okay, and then we talk about Romans . I wanted to know how you're coming to understand Romans . What sort of understanding do you have of Romans after the study?

25 Tim I think, after that study, it's a good way to live your life. If you go by what's in Romans , it's like the basics of Christian life, if you follow those principles and that, you're living a good life.

Billy I wanted to know particularly what you liked in Romans , anything in particular that you liked?

30 Tim (long pause) Mm,.... just the way he writes and explains everything, the principles of Christian: if you follow those principles to become a better Christian.

- Billy And was there anything about the way we studied Romans that you liked particularly? You know, actually, the way the group studied rather than what Paul says?
- 5 Tim I liked the way that you chose, like Romans and we had a few questions on it. I'd never read the whole of Romans before so that made me read Romans and I still had the chance of hearing other people's views and that, what they think about it and I've learnt a lot from that.
- Billy Okay, so then to ask you if there's anything which you particularly disliked about Romans ?
- Tim Disliked?... In some places he's confused me a bit, the way he just goes on and keeps repeating himself. He confused me a bit, but, apart from that there wasn't much I disliked.
- 10 Billy And anything you particularly disliked about the way we were studying it together in the group?
- Tim No, I don't think I have any dislikes about how we studied it.
- Billy Okay then, just the last question. Anything else you's like to say about the group, about, ja, about what we've studied. anything, just sort of final remarks you might have?
- 15 Tim Well, I feel that being such a new Christian and being in that group I've got so much to learn from those people because of their knowledge and experiences over the years, that they've had. It's really helping me a lot and you might think that I have been very quiet and that but I'm a listener and I don't talk a lot. I like to listen and listening to people with experience and that, I'm learning a lot.
- Billy Great. Okay, thanks very much.

Martin

Billy Okay, so you've read the questions already?

Martin I've just glanced through them, I didn't really absorb them.

5

Billy Right, so the first question I wanted to ask you is about how long you've been involved in the group and how did you come to be involved.

Martin Didn't we work out that it must have been five years or something? (Billy :At least) At least five, yes.

Billy Did you form the group about the time I joined?

10

Martin I think just before you joined, I think we formed it. We had been in a group which had then sort of disintegrated, with the Joneses. I can't remember who else was in it but it was one of those groups that started and then the numbers, the people sort of left the church and stuff like that. And then there was a whole re-organisation of house groups and we found ourselves in the Dillon's group, purely sort of accidental like.

15

Billy Okay, so we say it was, we say about five years. Okay, so the second question is about the Bible and its, for a personal reaction, really why you study the Bible?

Martin Why I study the Bible?

Billy Yes.

20

Martin Why I do Bible studies? I suppose a desire to really understand what it's all about and perhaps more than just a glimpse, superficial... surface Christianity, but to really try and sometimes get more to the nitty gritty of what it's like, for everyday living. I really want as much as possible to have it related to where I am and what I'm doing and does it affect me personally and that sort of thing.

Billy Right. And to follow that up, then. Um, ja, in what ways do you view the Bible, or how do you view the Bible, mainly as important for you life and then as important for society?

25

Martin Very difficult when you say important for society because, of course, it depends on the nature of society as such, you know. Some people for whom the Bible means nothing whatsoever but, I mean, if we were to limit society in the narrow sense to Christians, then it's vital. It's the handbook: it's what we base everything on. But then you can't prescribe for non-Christians, you know, so, I don't know. I don't know how non-Christians view the Bible, it's impossible to sort of fathom how they would see it. I wouldn't be interested in reading the Koran, for example, or revelations of whoever it was, the Mormon thing,

30

The latter day saints.? (Billy: Joe Smith?) Joe Smith.. So, it's a bit, sort of the whole society, you know, Christian and non-Christian, a bit tricky.

Billy Okay, I would just be interested to know if you compare your responses to questions to two and three, how would you see the rest of the group? Would they agree with you or not?

5 Martin I think more or less. I think they would be, I shouldn't imagine that we would differ greatly. I might be wrong, just my initial reaction certainly would be that I would say that most of our group would say much the same.

Billy Okay. And the fifth question then is what understandings have you developed of Romans so far, or now that we have finished really?

10 Martin I don't know if I've got the whole picture as such, you know. Certainly a much better overview than I had before because I don't think, even just reading it, you know, I have read Romans through, sort of thing, but, I think your mind often tends to switch off to the early bit when you're reading the latter bit type of thing. Naturally studying it is different, reading it out aloud or having it read aloud as you're following it, and then talking about it, and then rereading bits and all that, certainly a much better grasp than I had prior to it. And, um, also, I suppose just because, while we've been studying it, its cropped up so often in church services both at St Matthew's and at St Johns, um, we're suddenly aware, but I know that quote, I know where it comes from, I actually can put it more into context, and we've talked about it and we know what it means. You know, so it's been quite exciting from that point of view.

20 Billy Okay. Um, just if you have more detail, I wanted to know what you have liked about Romans and then about the way we've been studying it.

Martin The bits where Paul is very clear cut on what he wants to say, I have liked. (laughs) The bits where he's presented a sort of, I don't know, I think of it as a sort of Hebrew legal argument, sort of trying to encircle you so that you, no matter where you look, he's cutting you off before you can get there. I find that a little bit hard to cope with. Where he's clear cut, it's super. But even the other, um, has left me with a sort of feeling I would like to study it again at some stage. You know, perhaps in more detail, perhaps with more input, I don't know. Um, but because we've been through it, um, I don't know, but somehow because we've been right through the whole book and we did not do it word by word, or verse by verse, I'm still enthusiastic about it whereas, had we done it verse by verse, I would myself be saying 'Well, maybe in ten year's time I'll look it again'. You know, it hasn't killed it for me but I've enjoyed the fact that we made progress. Sometimes, perhaps, too quickly, but it wasn't totally laboured. I've been in Bible studies which were laboured and I never want to do that study again.

35 Billy Okay, the next question. You've answered mainly but, if there is anything else you disliked about Romans or the way we studied it?

5
Martin I think, as I said to you before we started this, sometimes I felt you were holding back on information and I wasn't sure whether I should force you to part with it or not. Um,.. and perhaps that's also unfair because it puts the pressure on you to know the current thinking and the theological background and all that. But sometimes there were odd bits where I felt that we needed... No, not we, I felt I wanted to know more of the sort of historical context or the context in which Paul was writing that particular sort of things.

Billy So, you would still like that information?

10
Martin Well, that's why I say I would still like to study it again at some stage, you know, perhaps to be even more informed historically or contextually or whatever, I don't know quite what I want on it, you know.

Billy And then the last question is, um,. just anything else you'd like to say about the group, the studies we've been doing about Romans , you know, any final comments?

15
Martin No, just that I enjoyed it, you know, and, alright, I know the group tends to get facetious and throw out odd things and all that, but all that sort of group dynamics I think is in fact quite healthy and good. And I think that it was a sign that they were relaxed enough to occasionally be a little bit stupid was a good thing. We didn't feel totally that we were under examination all the time. You know, I did enjoy it, I did, it was good.

Billy Okay, thank you.

Fay

Billy The first question is about how long you've been involved in the group and how you came to be involved?

5

Fay Well, longer than you've belonged to it so, what's that about more than five years and we belonged to a group and then there was a mix-up and reforming and that's how I joined this particular group.

Billy Okay, the second question is, why do you study the Bible?

10

Fay Why do I study the Bible. So that I get to know it better and understand it more for two reasons, one, because if you don't know what the Bible says, how are you going to live as a Christian, because that's where you learn how, and, two, so that when you hear some of the teachings that are around and about, you can actually test them for yourself. If you don't know the Bible you don't know what you're going to test them against. And it's the word of God.

15

Billy Ja, right. Okay, and then this really follows on about the way you see the Bible as important in your life and your view of the Bible in society and its importance for society?

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Fay Well, in my life, because I am a Christian and because I believe, if I am seeking to be a disciple, I must know what God teaches from his Bible, from studying it myself and from other people's studies and what they have to say, but also illuminated by the Holy Spirit to direct it for me personally. Um, for society, it should really be the keystone for how society functions and how it operates. Unfortunately our society is not a hundred percent a Christian society, so, in that respect its teachings are for the Christians: how they should function within society and relate to other people.

25

Billy Okay, now I would be interested to know, if you look at your responses to two and three, um, how would you see those as comparing with the rest of the group? Would they agree or disagree with your, with two and three, your answers?

30

Fay I would think that they would, if you talk broadly. Now, on certain things we might disagree in our interpretation on what it teaches but, broadly, I think they would agree. Whether they would all use it quite so consciously to test what they're taught and hear, I'm not sure. We once had teaching on that and ever since then I have been very aware - if I am listening to preaching in church, I will be seeing whether it's what I can identify with what I've learnt from other parts of the Bible and that sort of thing.

Billy Okay. Then to move onto Romans, what understandings have you developed of Romans during this study?

Fay What do you mean by that, reading it through in bits and then questioning? (Billy Ja) Well the very first thing when you gave us the questionnaire, that was a very bad day, I'd had it from work and when and when I thought I was going to have to try and think some thoughts it was impossible my mind just went totally blank and then you said, no well take it home and you can sort of riffle through Romans and refresh your mind. Once I started riffing and picking up things, then I started to function. You caught me on a bad day, there. Um, well I've said already that it was good to have a different translation because it made you concentrate on it. It's good to have other people's input, um, and when we discuss it, a passage that might hit me won't be the same phrase that's hit you, for whatever reason. Um, it's probably good at the end to have to stop and evaluate whether you actually have learnt anything or benefited from it at all.

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10

Billy So, then, just some final comments, anything you would like to say about the group, the studies, about Romans ?

Fay Well, I like the group because we're relaxed with each other now so we can do what we like and how we like, I mean, Harry's comments on women priests and things. Nobody there is really going to take up what he says or be mortally offended or have their faith totally undermined, or anything like that. So there is a freedom in that group. Um, sorry, what else did you say?

15

Billy Anything else about Romans or the study.

Fay Well, it's made me very much more aware of Romans and it's been uncanny how, since we've studied it, there's been a reading or a prayer, or a quoted verse, or a chorus that's had a line from it every single Sunday since we've done it. So, in that respect, yes, it has made us aware of what comes from Romans . I am particularly bad, I will be able to say to you, somewhere in the Bible it says such and such, but I won't be able to pinpoint it. So. from that point of view, in making me more aware of what is in Romans , even the things that appear in other letters or elsewhere, it's quite good to know that they are in Romans .

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25

Billy Okay, thanks.

Mary

Billy Okay, the first question is how long have you been involved in the group and how did you come to be involved in this group?

5 Mary Billy, you know, when you say 'this group' we started off at St Alpheges. Clara and I were in a group there and I have been in one ever since, which is twenty odd years, and when St Matthews opened a number of people went across to St Matthews. But, because I lived on this side of town I chose to remain at St Alph's but they were kind enough to say well, you're welcome to come along to the group. Which I've done, much to the dismay of one or two people at St Alph's. Not many people are aware of it but one of the church wardens said to me on one occasion it's wrong for you to belong to St Matthews. I said well that's where I'm happiest and so that's where I've been.

10 Billy So, who was in the group, I'm thinking of when you joined a St Matthews... officially a St Matthews group rather than a St Alphs group?

15 Mary Oh, there was Andy Gladstone, I think Robert and Renee because they were living on the other side of Hayfields at that stage and we used to go there. Um, uh, Nick and..(Billy. the Allensons), and then there was her sister and brother-in-law, people who have gone to live in Australia, um, because they lived in Isabel Beardmore Drive. And, of course, we used to move from one house to another in those days. So I find it very difficult to tell you...

20 Billy So, from that group, the St Matthews group, it's really you and the Dillons who were the original core..

Mary And Clara Maingard

Billy ...and Clara. So, how long ago was that, when was St Matthews formed?

Mary I don't rightly remember but ...

Billy Wasn't it about ten years ago?

25 Mary Well, it's ten years or so since the idea was formed. It could well be ten years, it could well be and, as I say, we didn't start off at the Dillon's home when we went across, we moved. I'll tell you another couple who were there, Germaine and Paul Carroll-Burnett.

Billy Right, okay. So, ja, but I was just talking with Martin, and he says the group as we are now has been going for about five years.

30 Mary At least five years. I tried to work it out the other day.

- Billy Because I've been in it five years, ja, just over five years, and the Dillons,... well the Wintertons joined just before I did.
- Billy So then the next question is why do you study the Bible?
- 5 Mary I don't rightly know how to answer that question because, you see, my mother was a very good Christian, law-abiding, church-abiding. My father didn't often go to church but my mother was a regular church-goer. She had been brought up that way and I have just lived the same kind of life. I had two brothers. They both went as boys, they were younger than I was. They both went to church as boys. Frank was a cross-bearer in the choir: my mother was the choir mistress - that was in Johannesburg at St Peters Anglican Church where I was originally married. And I've just always belonged to a group. But I am not a deep thinker about it. I just know that there's a Lord above me who takes care of me and my children and anybody else that I ask for help for. And for me, I don't really need much more assurance of that. It may just be a very light hearted manner of putting it.
- 10
- 15 Billy Just to put the question in a slightly different way, what way do you see the Bible as important in your life?
- Mary I haven't got the same deep feelings about it, I just know that I can read the Bible and I know what is considered to be right and wrong and I'm fortunate really, I sometimes wonder how much progress we've made when I see some of the things that are still going on. But I'm not a theology follower: I read it for my own pleasure: I have lots of other Christian books that I read, but I'm not a deep thinker, I must be quite frank about that.
- 20
- Billy Okay, then I'm interested to know what is your view of the Bible in society, or the importance of the Bible in society?
- Mary I'm not sure that I know how to answer that. For me it is a necessary book to have, um, I've always had one, my family, there have always been Bibles in our family, uh..., but we didn't sit down as a family and read the Bible, I must be quite frank about that. I don't think I've answered that question very well but I don't know how to put it.
- 25
- Billy Okay, that's fine. I'm interested to know, though, whether you think your view of the Bible, whether you would see other people in the group generally agreeing with how you feel about it or whether they see it some way different?
- 30 Mary Uh, that's even more difficult to answer. I suppose the thing is that I tend to accept what is said in the Bible rather than to disbelieve. I'm not saying that anybody in the group disbelieves. They may question. I don't actually question what I read in the Bible although I do question happenings in life. Not to any great extent and I do tend to say, when people say 'how can you say that there's a God when such and such and such and such, when He allows such and such to happen', I just have to give them different incidents where how can you not believe that there is a God.
- 35

Billy Right, I know that you haven't been in all the groups on Romans , but what I'm interested to know in what you've done, if there was anything that you particularly liked or disliked about what you've been reading in Romans ?

5 Mary Billy, I'm going to be quite honest with you and tell you that I haven't done enough of it, purely because I have had lots of other things on my mind and, unfortunately, I've become preoccupied with things that are happening in my family's life, so I cannot give you an answer on that, I really cannot. Not a truthful answer. I mean I could make up something but I'm not prepared to.

Billy There's nothing at all that's standing out in your mind that you can think of?

10 Mary No, not at present, and I have tried to think of it over the last couple of days but I can't.

Billy That's perfectly fine. And the last thing I want to ask you is there anything you'd like to say, any more comments about the group, the way we study the Bible, just anything in particular...

15 Mary Well, let me tell you that, for me, it's a place of safety. I know that on one or two occasions my daughter has said to me 'your church and your group are a crutch that you use'. I said, well, if you see it like that, that's fine. I don't consider that it's a crutch but I know that there are people there for me if I need them, and there are times when I need them, and merely being in their presence is what I need. Fortunately I have seldom had anybody in a group whom I've felt that I wasn't comfortable with or we didn't see eye to eye. I suppose in the twenty years, I'm just quoting a period of time, I don't suppose that there have been more than three people in that time that I have felt a little ill at ease or uncomfortable. But, other than that... when I say that Jayde said it was a crutch, she knows that I cannot do without my church and my Bible study, or Bible group, and, I don't know. You see, her argument is that I don't have to go to church to be a Christian. But it's quite funny, when things go wrong, how they suddenly find that the church is there. I mean, when my children were young they went to Sunday school and they went to church. They were told to and they said they didn't want to go and my response was 'well, what are you going to do in the time that you would normally be at Sunday school or church?' Whatever their response was, I would say you could still do it after you've been to Sunday school. But, of course, when they became adults, it wasn't quite the same. And they know what my feelings are, and I don't even have to tell them, I only have to look at them.

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Billy Okay, thank you very much.

Robert

Billy The first question I have is about how long you've been involved in the group and how did you come to be involved?

Robert In the particular group I'm in at the moment?

5 Billy Ja.

10 Robert It's about eight years, nine years, in its current form. Maybe um slightly longer: it may be about ten years in its current form. We belonged to a group in Hayfields, which we'd been in for five six years. When we moved house eleven years or so ago, it was also decided that all the house groups in the parish were going to be jiggled around. And it was also convenient, with us staying a bit further away from the church, to have one that suited a few people in that area as well. So we left the group we were in, which we ran from our house in Hayfields, and just started a new one. A lot of our people moved into other groups and a lot of other people moved into our group. The only person that really stayed with us was Clara.

15 Billy Right, okay, so it's been a fairly long process. The next thing I want to ask you is, personally, why you study the Bible?

20 Robert Well. Um, I accepted quite some years ago, particularly in the days when Renee and I were courting, so that goes back about thirty years ago when we started courting, and we used to go to a Bible study evening together at that time, while we were courting. And, whilst I'd always been a sort of nominal Christian, and for the, probably the four years prior to meeting Renee, I taught Sunday school at St Saviours and St Peters, it became more and more obvious, particularly when I was teaching Sunday school, that when I was trying to talk about the Gospel to children, I had to understand it properly myself, and have as much theoretical knowledge of myself as well as wanting a feeling about your relationship with Christ. And I found, probably over the last thirty five years, that every time I read the Bible, there is something new in it that's relevant to where I am today. I'm convinced I could pick up my Bible now and I could just flick through a few pages and my eye will catch on a verse and it will be relevant to a problem I've got at the moment or a need that I've got or just encouragement. It's also absolutely essential for me to understand as much as possible about the Gospel and about what Christ was saying. And I must admit that I'm more of a new testament person than an old testament person. Um, I find a lot of old testament very tedious. Malacchi can be gruesome, but I enjoy the first couple: I enjoy Genesis and Exodus. I'm also strange in that I enjoy Revelations: I find it incredibly, it's not taxing, it makes me think much more deeply about the ultimate end of humanity and the world etc., which one tends to neglect if you read just the Gospels and don't think through to the ultimate. So, I find reading it, then, also gives me a long term understanding, attempted understanding, of where mankind and myself are going relative to where God's ordained we should be going.

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Billy Right. I'd be interested to know how you see the Bible as being important in society.

5 Robert It's a book of rules to start with. If everyone lived by the instructions given in the ten commandments and in the Gospels, even forgetting Acts and Romans and Corinthians etc. etc., just taking the Gospels and ten commandments, if everybody lived by every statement made there, there would be no problems in the world, because everybody would love each other, respect each other, which is probably one of the most important things, respect each other, then we wouldn't get conflict in the way we do from petty fighting over a football match to major international conflict and war. Um, it's the basis of all sound social structures. And even if one was a Buddhist or a Moslem, or whatever these strange things are, if you take 10 a lot of the basic philosophers that they live by, they really are scripturally correct from a Christian Bible. I don't think society in our context can survive without the Bible being the background of it. Everywhere you find conflict, anywhere in the world, even when it's Christian on Christian like in Northern Ireland, it's because they are not using the Bible as it should be used, as a basis for their behaviour in their society.

15 Billy Ja, okay, um, your view on the Bible, which you've just been expressing in answer to questions two and three, would you say that the other people in the group would share that view of the Bible?

20 Robert I would think that the views held by our group differ quite a lot. And the reason I say that is because I know that, out of the eight regular people in the group, we all have quite different views on certain social aspects of society, and what is right in society and what is wrong, and our understandings of other people's behaviour. And for that reason I don't believe we all view it, the total meaning, the same. I think we all are convinced that it has to be the backbone of society and we have to use it to establish rules, regulations, laws, etc. etc. and moral standards and ethical standards. It has to be the basis of it. I think we all agree on that but 25 I think our individual interpretation does differ. And I think I can say that quite confidently that probably the two mostly diametrically opposed views would be between yourself and myself, when it comes to social aspects. And also our understanding of the simple thing, simple or complex thing, whichever way you want to look at it, of how a woman fits into society and how they fit into a church environment. I think we all have quite different views on that. And 30 also, within our group, views are held much more strongly by some than others. For instance, I would guess that Martin, in general, Martin and Fay, in general, probably feel the same as I do about where a woman's place in the church and in society is. But I'm probably more voluble and expressive in my feelings about it because I am quite concerned about issues of that nature. And, if I feel that it is not quite as it ought to be, I express myself. But I'm like that in all walks of my life. In, in business, tend to be expressive and forceful in what I do. I do the same in my sporting activities. I tend to be forceful... where Martin, for instance, I think is a more placid and gentle and caring sort of person than I am.

35 Billy Perhaps we can move onto Romans then. I'm interested to know what sort of understanding you've developed of Romans during our study?

Robert

5 I have to admit that, um, I've studied Romans in probably four or five different forms, formal studies by, obviously, a variety of people, and I've done a few two-evening and one-evening ones on particular parts of Romans over the last thirty years. Unfortunately I missed a couple of the group discussion during this course through being away and that does tend to break a little bit of continuity, but I have to say, and to a degree it's a little bit of an accolade for yourself, that I've actually got more out of this study of Romans than I've ever got out of any the others. Because I think we've looked at it more deeply and we have discussed probably a lot more seriously and logically the shift in Paul's, um, the emphasis in the first two chapters, for instance, is in one context. Then he changes and, by the time you get to the last 10 two chapters, his emphasis seems to be different and what he's saying seems to be different. And I've never actually picked that up consciously before, and I think my knowledge or understanding of what he was saying from beginning to end of that particular book is vastly better than it was before. And also I think, though, that some of that is the knowledge you had of the original Greek, giving slightly different interpretations to my conventional King James interpretation. And it has definitely put slightly different slants on the book, which I have 15 previously read into it. Also, quite often when you read casually by yourself, you tend to gloss over little things that don't immediately scan easily or come across easily.

Billy

Okay, I have questions here about anything really particular that you have liked about Romans as a book and then also about the way we've studied Romans ?

20 Robert

I put Romans ,in inverted commas, at an enjoyment level or satisfaction level similar to the Gospels, but for slightly different reasons. The Gospels are talking about what happened when Christ was with us and the realities of how He had to live and what He was preaching. And Paul is really applying that people's needs in life, the way they should behave, the way they should react to the Gospel, setting standards for life. Romans gives one, to a degree, a more concise set of behaviour patterns, rules, regulations and how you should live, than the Gospels did. The Gospel says to you what the Lord says and, to quite a large extent, it's up to you to then glean from that how you should behave to be able to conform with what the Lord was saying. Romans , in my interpretation, tends to be laying it out at a level that's easier to understand. He's already interpreted it and said "I've interpreted it like this, and this is the way you should behave". And, of course, the other thing that's very meaningful in Romans is the fact that he has gone to the different communities and he's been with them and expounded to each particular group how he believes we should live according to God's word. So he's actually taken some of the thinking out of it for us and it also encouraging, it's always encouraging to find a person so committed to Christ that he would devote the whole of that part of his life to taking the word and the Gospel to other people. And that's very meaningful to me: it shows me where I fall down a hell of a lot in my own um, let's say missionary, or ability, or desire to go and spread the word amongst the people. I'm probably 35 too lazy, not caring enough for other people, etc.

Billy

40 Okay, I'm interested to know any particular dislikes that you have about Romans or the way we studied?

Robert Not off hand, I just want to check on one... (fumbles for his book) it's a complication I have with outward, um, it's not a manifestation, but outward activities or external activities. For instance, here where I've marked it, he talks about a lot of the Jewish, um, habits and needs, like circumcision and etc. etc. Now, that sort of thing, I actually find irrelevant to Christianity in our context, because it goes back to the Old Testament which is an area where there is a lot of Old Testament instruction that I am uncomfortable with and I can't get to grips with. And it's this small area where he starts harping back on Old Testament laws that...it seems out of context to me. I'd always imagined Paul as being a guy that's taken Christ and he's gone, taking his rules and regulations, and he's gone to the community and he's shown them to a degree where we are no longer an Old Testament community, we are a New Testament community. But in the one area he does tend to harp back, a little bit, on Old Testament, which irritates me. It takes away some of the New Testament benefit. But the way it was studied, I actually think the way you interpreted it here takes away some of the emphasis of the New Testament issues that comes up in the King James. So, for me, it's actually made it easier to accept that middle part of the book.

Billy Okay. Just the last question then. Any, just general comments you have about the group, about the study, about Romans . Just sort of a general summing up of the interview.

Robert I would say the group as a whole, relative to this study, helped to show where a lot of people are in their understanding of the New Testament. Martin and Fay, I think, are solidly grounded in the Bible and I think they've got a good knowledge with understanding, and a good memory of where things are in the Bible, relative to me, for instance. Anna, my interpretation is slightly immature in some of her interpretations but she's young. And I think, not only physically young but relatively young in her real Christian life, studying the Bible. And Tim is a very shy and nervous person who finds it difficult to publicly react to what comes out of the Bible. Because I think he doesn't speak easily and freely and he finds it difficult at times to articulate words properly. So it makes it difficult for him to communicate how he feels about the book. It's difficult to comment on how Renee reacts because I think I've been involved with this type of discussion far too long with her to be able to understand even how she's responding any more. It's just a way of life, almost. Renee has got a better knowledge of the Bible than I have and she remembers where things are better than I do. What was the other half of the question? Just how the group was reacting?

Billy Ja, just about the group and just general comments about the study and about Romans .

5 Robert Commenting about the study, I enjoyed it because it was done in a slightly different way to most other studies that have been done. And one of the big advantages of it, for me, was if I read something in it, whether it was a reference to a Greek passage or a footnote comparing it with something else, I was actually able to ask how did this come about, or why is this like this in the Greek, or why have you interpreted that. It, most certainly for me, because I am basically call it, technically minded, so I actually want to know how things have come about as much as accepting spiritually etc. And it helps me to be able to talk to somebody who actually studied in different forms and in different manners the background of it, and to be able to ask the question. And I would actually be quite happy to do a couple of the other books in the Bible in a similar manner, one day when you've got time.

10

Billy Okay, thanks.

Renee

Billy The first question is about how long you've been involved in this group and how did you come to be involved?

5

Renee Good heavens, Billy, I've been involved since, I don't know,... I've been involved about fifteen - sixteen years. You mean this little group or...

Billy The one that's sort of as it is now.

Renee About three or four years. When did you come?

Billy About five years.

Renee Well, okay, five years.

10

Billy Okay, the second one, then, is why do you study the Bible?

Renee Well, basically, I think if I didn't, I wouldn't know where I was going. I mean, I just need it every day. Because, I feel, if you're a very confident person, maybe you can go into the world and you're fine, but I think, just to face work and the problems, I just need it to start my day off. Or, if I've had a rotten day, I need it to end it off before I ..

15

Billy Right, okay. A little bit of elaboration, how do you see the Bible as important in your life?

Renee I think it's very important. I mean, you can believe, have the Spirit within you, you can believe in Jesus, but you still need that guideline, you need that sort of..., it's sort of like a link or a line to Him so that you basically know what He wants you to do. And, I don't know, when you're depressed and down, at least you can go, there's always somewhere in the Psalms or somewhere, where you have a little word that will fit in exactly with the way you are feeling.

20

Billy Okay, I'm interest then in a general, like a general impression of your view of the Bible.

Renee Mm, I never thought of it generally but, um, I don't know, I mean it's your guideline, something you hang onto.

Billy Okay, then, in the light of that, what is your view of the Bible in society?

25

Renee Well, I think it's essential. Unfortunately, I don't think society thinks it's...: you know, they think it is something that's rather staid and a bit old-fashioned. But, I think if they stuck to it, there'd be far less problems.

Billy Right, Ja. Um, All these views of the Bible that you've expressed, would you see that the rest of our group agrees with you? Would you think they generally agree with this?

- Renee Yes, I think so. I think a lot of them have been through a lot, maybe more than I have, and yet they've always had that Bible there, it's sort of carried them through.
- Billy Right, then to move onto Romans . I'm interested to know what understanding you've developed of Romans during the study.
- 5 Renee Well, I must admit it's improved. I just thought it was a little book that was squashed in between some of the others. But now I feel, and... ooh yes I remembered a little bit about the government, that was the only thing that really sort of tied me up with Romans . And I knew there were other things in it. But now I see it sort of more of a book and I think I got to know Paul a bit better. Also, there were so many things in it I'd known about or read about, or I'd even used in my life, only I didn't know they came from Romans .
- 10
- Billy Okay, then, a bit more detail. Anything you particularly liked about Romans .
- Renee Well there were bits that came out to me, you know about the suffering, where I wasn't so happy about being joyful in the... the suffering and the perseverance, and character and hope, and that will have helped, and then when it said about, we were conquerors, you know, sort of heirs of the Father, co-heirs of Christ, and then, towards the end, where it says nothing will separate us from the love of Christ. For me that was important. Although I can see for others, if you studying it I suppose, it would be between the Jews and the Gentiles, and things like that. Although I think the overall thing was, basically, that we all sin and fall short of the glory of God, and Jesus is the only thing that saved us.
- 15
- 20 Billy The way we studied the Bible, or specifically Romans , is there anything that you particularly liked about that?
- Renee I think it made me think. Alright, we went quite fast, but I think the way we discussed it, it was quite sort of informal and that, and yet we still got quite a lot done. I quite liked that the way you did it. It is just that I think I would like to go back another time and do it in more depth, you know, maybe on my own, or maybe as a group, because I think there were a lot of things that we missed. Going over it on my own now, I think there were other things I could have questioned and queried and asked about.
- 25
- Billy Right. Then the next question is, anything you particularly disliked about Romans , the text itself?
- 30 Renee Well, a bit waffly in places. He could have cut down an awful lot on his words and that. And also, the Jews and the Gentiles, he did go on a bit, and that I didn't feel really pertained to me. I suppose it did but it was very much a lot to the Jews. So that, it was interesting, but, um.. I could have done without it.
- Billy Okay, and was there anything you disliked about the way we studied the letter?

- Renee No. I think we went, maybe, a bit fast, because if we'd had more time to go over certain parts. Because only going over it now on my own, there are things I've picked up that we could have staid a bit longer on.
- 5 Billy Then the last question is about looking at some general comments on the group and then on studying Romans . Just general impressions.
- 10 Renee I think that as a group we are a bit different, but I think it helps because you have people with different views, different ideas, that if you did it on your own, you wouldn't bring up. I mean, Fay has a sort of slant on this and somebody else has a different slant, and it brings the ideas to you that, normally, doing it on your own, you wouldn't think about. No, I enjoyed doing it, and this group.
- Billy Okay, and any general comments about Romans ?
- 15 Renee No, I don't think so. I think that, now, doing it on my own, I've seen it more as a whole. You know, when you're doing it in little bits, you don't sort of see the whole thing as sort of a story with a beginning and an end a middle. And also, you told us to go through the headings, and I made a list of the headings and that's helped too, because then you sort of see the thing as a book and not.. you know, in church, they just take out little bits and pieces, and you don't sort of see the whole. No, actually, I think I've enjoyed it, getting to know what Romans was about, and getting to know what Paul was ... who he was.
- Billy Thank you very much, you've used up all the rest of the tape, that's perfect.

GROUP 2

Lynne:

5 Billy What I'm going to do is ask you a set of questions, partly about the group you belong to and about the study that we've been doing. So, first, I just wondered if you could tell me how long you've been involved in the group and how you came to be involved in the group?

10 Lynne Only two months, I am a new member, and it's been just over two months. And, we, my husband, of course Daniel, has just recently retired, so we came down here having pulled out from a very flourishing parish and I had my own Bible study at the rectory for years and years, and so this was a real bereavement for me. And suddenly, you know, being without a Bible study. And I didn't want to actually go into the parochial one, I just felt I'd been in parish life for forty one years and I thought I'd rather not be in anything parochial. And Gladys Barlowe is a very dear friend of mine and I said to Gladys, plucked up courage, and I said what chance of my, I knew she went to a very special Bible study, and she said yes, that sounds good, and she went to the group and asked if I could join. And, of course, Gladys and I are the only two
15 Anglicans, the rest are all Romans, and Pam Doone, yes, of course, you met her, she's now overseas, she's a Roman Catholic. And when I first joined, they were just finishing Mark's Gospel, done by Nick King, and Daniel and I have been to many seminars of Nick's, and so I felt absolutely at home listening to a voice that I knew and could picture him through the tapes, and I've been involved in group work all my life, so I managed to just get in and I
20 actually do feel very much part of the group.

Billy I could see that right away. I'm actually surprised that you've only been involved for two months.

25 Lynne I think, if two months, if I really worked it out. I wasn't really expecting that question, but you see I have been, over the years, very involved in group work, so I think that gives you the experience of not being an outsider for very long. I did know Hilda very well personally, ummm socially. I've never known her in a group situation before, but socially we know each other very well and, of course, both church wise, group wise, Gladys and I have been very involved. The others I didn't know at all, I'd never even met them.

30 Billy Okay, thanks. Then can I just, about studying the Bible, just a personal reflection on why you study the Bible?

35 Lynne Just because it's absolutely part of my upbringing and my life. As I've grown older I've got more and more involved in reading and studying the Bible. I'm not an intellectual at all, I don't even call myself intelligent, but I love reading the Bible, I'm no au fait at all with the Old Testament, very interested in Psalms, and that's really through my husband's love of the Psalms, I've become very interested in them, but I'm very, very remiss as far as the Old Testament is concerned. But the Gospels are just part of my life.

- Billy Okay, well, you've really, you've started to answer the next question. It's talking about in what ways you see the Bible as important in your life, and then also what is your view of the Bible, I mean how do you view the Bible, say, in the culture, in the society?
- 5 Lynne I find it all fascinating and I wish I knew more about the Old Testament as, just that that's where we came from. I would love to know more. I went to a Roman Catholic school and, in Johannesburg, all the wealthy Jewesses all went to a Roman Catholic convent. And so I had many, many Jewish friends and many Jewish friends who were orthodox. And I was always fascinated by their deep commitment, and their parents', to the Jewish faith, and I would love to have known more of the Old Testament, but I don't.
- 10 Billy Ja. And your view of the Bible in our contemporary society now?
- Lynne I'm not like the new people, I don't feel it's totally, totally the word of God in that everything in it was said by God. I think that some parts of it are stories but I find the Bible very interesting and it's a very important part of my life.
- 15 Billy Okay, then to look out the group a bit more now. You don't know them that well but how would you see your views in response to two and three comparing with those in the rest of the group?
- Lynne I think they're all very, very well-read, very well... um, read and deep thinking and deep praying and deep reading. I find it a tremendous privilege belonging to their group. I think that there's a lot of wisdom amongst them all.
- 20 Billy Okay. Then to move onto Romans specifically. So I was interested to know what understanding you have developed of Romans so far in our study.
- Lynne It's always a book that has fascinated me. Um, I find it really very fascinating, terribly difficult, but it's the human side of Paul that just comes out loud and clear to me and in some of his writings I've just known exactly how he feels because that's how I feel. I think it's a tremendously human experience to read it, I'm thrilled to be studying it. I didn't like the first session at all, in fact, I came home and said I wasn't going to go again. No, I didn't enjoy it at all. And the second time I melted and then I really couldn't go the third time. Last Tuesday I just came home on a high. Daniel knew I wasn't that happy and funnily enough I'd spent a lot of time down at the river on my own, because we've got the most exquisite garden, on the Tuesday morning. Daniel was out and I did spend a lot of time very close to God. And I think that gave me the courage to talk as much as I did on Tuesday. Because basically I'm a very shy person, people don't realise it but I am. And, you see, I mean I know I'm not an intelligent or clever person so I'm, you know when you're in that sort of group, which I do find, particularly Nell, is very, very switched on. A very wise person and very well read, and so I was a little bit, and then I just felt completely different this last Tuesday and I know I will be quite different on Tuesday.
- 35

- Billy Okay. So the next two questions I would like a bit more detail now about what have you liked about Romans and the way we've been studying it?
- 5 Lynne I'm going to be honest, I prefer reading from my Bible because I know it so well, particularly Romans, I really do know the words well. I find the typewritten thing just a little stiff in comparison to reading my comfortable Bible.
- Billy How do you mean 'stiff'?
- Lynne I don't know, perhaps because it's on a piece of paper and typed. I don't know what it is, but I love having my Bible there and I think I like reading the pages that I know.
- Billy Right, it's almost a physical, tactile thing.
- 10 Lynne Yes, its physical ... absolutely.
- Billy Can you go, try and be a bit more specific about what you disliked...(Lynne: No, it's not dislike. Oh, the first meeting?) The first meeting, yes.
- Lynne A) I wasn't expecting it and, having been so used to group work, I like to know what is going to happen. Even if I don't know what way the session is going to go, but I like to know what - I like to be prepared for what is going to happen. And, you arrived almost as I arrived and I didn't know we weren't going to finish Mark.
- 15 Billy Ja, it was a bit of a problem because I arrived and was expecting to introduce my thing and Nell said 'Well, let's start'.
- Lynne Yes, I think we were all thrown, I do think we were all thrown. I'm the sort of person that likes preparation and I was looking forward to ending, the summary done by Nick, and we went straight into that and, because I'm not that sort of clever person, I was thrown. I was thrown and I didn't enjoy it, and it's nothing personal, I just, I myself, Lynne, was thrown. And I didn't feel secure.
- 20 Billy Can you maybe be a bit more specific about what particularly you liked about the last, uh...
- 25 Lynne I think I had more confidence and, in spite of missing the previous one, because, having been so involved in group work, I know it's a terrible thing to miss a group because the growth that takes place in one session, you are out on a limb when you come back. Because I'm a very committed person. If I belong to something, I belong to it fully, and I was amazed that I wasn't, I didn't feel thrown out by not being there, and I even surprised myself that I was able to get into it after a fortnight's break. So, that pleased me, and the conversation was just such that, even if I said things that shattered you and everybody else, I knew that I was confident in what I said.
- 30

Billy So, the last question then is anything else you would like to say about the group, about the study, any further comments you have?

5 Lynne No, because I think it's now, it's jelled, and we're going on. I would say it's such a tremendous task to do Romans that it's too short a time. I would actually like to spend one session on one portion. You know, I wouldn't mind if I did Romans for six or seven months, because I feel it is... you see, I have, through Daniel who has made a real study of Paul, and he did Romans at theological college, so it's a very special part of the Bible for him. I've learnt so much and I just think Paul is just superb, I really do. As a personality, I loathed him, I mean I really did, until I understood and learnt more and more about him. And I just think he's the most wonderful person because he's so human and, as I say, when you read some of the things he says, either clever or intelligent or whatever, I feel he's saying what I'm feeling. I think he comes through as such an incredibly human person: lots of hang-ups, and mastered them all. But it's, to me, like reading the Gospel because it's a deep-thinking person exposing himself completely, his brain and his feelings and, ja, I feel very, very drawn to Paul. I've been to a lot of studies, Nick King did "Paul, the Man". I don't know if you heard him do that? Absolutely magnificent, and then Daniel's done thoroughly the journeys, old journeys of St Paul's and also St Paul, the Man, so over the years I've absorbed the person, Paul, and I just love him. But I don't find, like anybody, you can't say that you find Romans easy to understand.

Billy No, I agree completely.

20 Lynne And, uh, but I do think I'm terribly privileged to belong to a group like that, I really do give thanks for the fact that it fell into my lap just at the right time.

Billy Ja. I think I'll put it off now.

Hilda

Billy Okay, then, can I ask you the first question, which is how long have you been involved with the group and how did you come to be involved?

5 Hilda I was invited to the group last year, June, so it's about a year ago, by a friend who said why don't I come and see how I like being with them because I've always been working, had a morning job but, because I got glandular fever last year, I was totally stuck, couldn't do anything. And I was definitely reading a lot of spiritual books and I mentioned to her that, really, I would like to find some people who spent time on studying the Bible. So, I joined the group and I really enjoy it, although, most of the time, until this year, we've actually been discussing issues rather than, you know, the Bible. And then we started about a month ago.

Billy Okay. Then can I ask the second question which is why you study the Bible?

15 Hilda I'm very, very interested to know what God's plan is for me and I just feel the only way is for me to study the Bible. You know, I belong to the Catholic Church because I've always been there but I really have many, many reservations, and I also feel that I don't want to blame the church for me not being happy. It's up to me to get my quality of life so that I am happy rather than worship, perhaps in different churches. I want to be a Christian, a better Christian, and I really feel that the Bible is direct from God, and no interference about church, because I'm really not so interested in theological arguments, I really want practical information, you know. Basic things, not think about yourself so much, put the other person first. How do you spend your time?... and I think the Bible will teach me eventually exactly what's required of me.

Billy You've answered my third question which is how you see the Bible as important in your life. So, can I get your view then of the Bible in society, the importance of the Bible in society?

25 Hilda Oh, I think it's the only law and rules to live by. It's totally opposite of the world, success, stress, you know, getting some place, status, money, which is extremely attractive. I know I must work very hard to come down to the real things. Usually, when things go wrong in life, you come to the realisation 'hey, what's the point of having this, that and the other thing, you know. And to have inner peace, I think that's most important thing, to accept what God gives you in life, you know, having used your common sense, and all your abilities and your talents, but if you can't do something about a situation, accept it and just say, okay Lord, in Your hands, I want to follow what you want me to do. I think it's absolutely essential. I feel very strongly about this, because I often see my children who are extremely ambitious and they really get quite disappointed by the time they get what they almost want, and then say hey, what am I doing, what is there, they're killing themselves. So I work very hard, what I have learned, to pass on because, they do nothing wrong - but this isn't to be passed on to other people, I hope? - but it's just, you know, I'm a mother and a wife, so I feel it's very important that I have to add values that I can say this is important, not getting to the top in your job, it's just not important. You know, not that you must sit back.

- Billy Okay, then, to talk about the group a bit more, your answers to two and three, how do you think your views, your answers to two and three, compare with those, would compare with the views of the rest of the group?
- 5 Hilda I don't know, they've been together a very long time, they've been through a lot, they have studied a lot of Bibles and they've been to Hospice, and often I'm not right where they are, but they've certainly given me lots of books that I want to read, you know, and they're very much involved, so I'm learning a tremendous amount, and I'm not hearing it, and I don't always agree, you know, the thing about miracles, I'm one of the groups that doesn't believe in miracles, or whatever, and I don't even want to get excited about it, I just think it's not important. I'm quite happy, I want to hear what other people say, if I can use it I will use it, if not, it's your view. I think we all have an idea of where we come from, how we live and how we see things and so, you know, I don't necessarily take on other people's ideas unless I think it's right. Maybe I sound sort of over confident, I'm not, but I also want to be, you know, the ideas that I think are right, not from other people.
- 10
- 15 Billy Right. Okay, then, to come onto the ideas you have developed about Romans , what understanding do you think you have developed of Romans , so far?
- Hilda Well, reinforced again how important it is to have faith and not to expect, to get, to do what you have to do, by hard work and by doing good things, but have faith, and by actually learning what God wants from you. I just love reading that. I always felt that but now to actually see it, terrific. I love it, I love the explanations and the different things pointed out, which I'd never have thought about. But I really love it, I really would like to go through the whole Bible like that. It was very, very useful and very, very interesting.
- 20
- Billy Right. Then a bit more detail. What have you liked about Romans and the way we've studied the book?
- 25 Hilda I found it very difficult, particularly the Greek translation to it, you know to read it the first time, I it took me a few times to really understand it. But I'm looking forward to going to the next lot we're doing, Life in the Spirit. That's what will be coming to in eight, isn't it, Life in the Spirit? (Billy: Yes I think so know, I was a bit behind... uh, I've forgotten)... Its debating, as I said 'Have faith' and I think you can only have faith, if you, you know, pray for it and ask for it. And I found it very interesting these comments which you made... sometimes Paul from the one extreme to the other being very, you know, almost on top of the world and then again about how miserable I am. I found that quite interesting I never noticed that before.
- 30
- Billy Right. Okay, then, to pick up what you've disliked about Romans that we've studied so far?
- Hilda No, I didn't dislike anything, quite difficult, I'm very pleased to do this. No, I didn't dislike anything. I found it very exciting, very interesting.
- 35
- Billy Ja, there's nothing you've decided you absolutely disagree with or ...

Hilda No. I don't think I know it well enough because I don't want to go into details like that. You know, I just want things that are going to help me and my family, just tell me about that, just (speaking to fast and softly to be audible) here and there and I'll get the message.

5 Billy Right. So, just to end then, any other comments you want to make about the group, about the study, about

Hilda No, I really enjoy it. I hope we can go through everything like this, I really do. It really is a nice change for me, discussing issues, because it's all useful, you know, I sort of learn from all these things. This is just basic for me now at the moment, I think, makes me realise that er, I must go through them, the Bible, and see what I can learn from it.

10 Billy Okay. Thank you.

Nell

Billy So the first question then is, how long have you been involved in the group and how did you come to be involved?

5

Nell This particular group, Billy, I can't remember. It's probably been going about ten years but I've been involved in a group for about twenty years.

Billy Right, I'm thinking particularly about this group.

Nell Well this one evolved out of the other one, that's why its... Jane, for instance, has been in, I can't even remember, but from the original one she came into this one.

Billy Right. Okay. So it's an ongoing process for about twenty years?

10

Nell Which I think must be quite a record.

Billy I'm sure, yes. Then the second question is, why do you study the Bible.

Nell Um, well, I had a conversion experience about twenty-two years ago. Before that I'd never read the Bible at all, apart from a Catholic, going and reading the liturgy at the Mass. But, I mean, that just, for the first time I discovered the Bible and it just became a part of my life... A part of my prayer life, I would say.

15

Billy Okay. And then, continuing from then, what ways do you see the Bible as important for your life and then, what is your view of the Bible in society, or, as it takes...

Nell Um, gosh, important for my life in that it is the word of God, so, therefore, it tells me how well God's plan for mankind, historically, if you can put it that way, but also God's intervention in mankind's, you know, from a Christian point of view. Um, important for my life because I do get my direction from the teachings of the Bible, obviously as a Christian. Um, what was the other part of the question?

20

Billy And then about your views of the Bible, its importance in society, your view of, ja, that's it?

Nell Ja, well, to be quite honest Billy, I've always found the Bible very confusing. Uh, I started with a fairly fundamental group, a Methodist group, actually, when I first started reading it, so I sort of accepted it quite literally, and I suppose from my Catholic upbringing a fairly fundamentalist approach and then was fortunate to belong to a Bible study group with a very ah .. brilliant theologian and it was like being thrown in the deep end, because having everything challenged and seen in a completely different perspective. It was very, very challenging and a very exciting time ah... a very growthful time, a very confusing time, ah .. having it all shaken up and redistributed as such.

30

Its relevance for society, um.. Ja I suppose basically I even find the fact now of a secular state, you know not seeing South Africa even as a Christian State with the Bible,... I struggle with, not because I think it's right or wrong, but just because I rather like having a, not even a Christian, but I suppose basically it is a Christian, but a state with a sort of spiritual basis to it. And, ja.

5

Billy Okay. Then the fourth question is about the group again, and it's how do you see the responses you gave to two and three, how do think those compare with the rest of the people in the group? Would they agree, disagree with you?

Nell Two and three?

10

Billy Ja, about studying the Bible. Do you think they would share your views about studying the Bible and about the importance of the Bible etc.

Nell Yes, I would, mostly, because I think that we've more or less come from a committed Christian background. Just even listening to Hilda, though, I think she's somebody who has come into much later, away from the old traditional Catholic way and, so, she might be slightly different, and I think she has found some of it a little bit disturbing, the, um, interpretation of the things and ... but, on the whole, I would say we see it fairly similarly.

15

Billy Right. Okay, then to turn to Romans , what understandings have you developed of Romans so far.

Nell Um, I think, perhaps, one of the things that I found very interesting was much as though I believed it was very much,...(The tape comes to an end)

20

Billy Carry on what you were saying about Romans

Nell Yes, you know, in terms of Paul and the others, and particularly seeing Paul as somebody who was struggling, not only to express himself, but also to, even to understand really, or put his theology over. You know, I always somehow imagined them all having these very clear thoughts in their minds and then sitting down and writing them out. And suddenly one gets the picture of, he does have, obviously, that understanding and those insights, but they're not always clear, and he sometimes has to, you know, just quickly carry on because he's got himself into a bit of trouble or ... far more human sort of understanding, or understanding the human side Romans .

25

30

Billy Okay, then, what have you liked about Romans and about the way we've studied it?

Nell Um, I've liked just the general input, the bit of the background information that you given to us which sort of really clarified things in terms, right at the beginning, sort of saying that this was the way that the Gentile society was perceived and not as Paul... that always disturbed me the way Paul wrote so sort of judgementally um. I've liked the discussions among us, I have

5 been intrigued as to how much, for me, people read their own agendas into ah .. into Romans or read back into Romans various things that we, that sort of appeal to us and somehow it seems with some more than others always coming back into it, I found that quite intriguing, recognising that we all do it, I suppose, to some degree. It's really been my first opportunity to study Romans , although I have done it before through William Barclay, that commentary it's, you know, same as all the William Barclay ones. Useful, but more like deciphering a good story than anything else.

Billy Okay, and then things that you've disliked about Romans itself and about the way we've studied it so far?

10 Nell Billy I suppose we haven't had time to go into it which is, you know, quite a reality, you know, to sort of go through a biggish area. We,... sometimes it might have been nice to have thrashed out a bit more on a point. But I can't say that was a serious issue. Um, I do find Romans quite confusing because I think that, really, I for years, sort of thought that one could pick up the Bible and read through the Gospels or the epistles and that a lot of it would be relevant to me, now I sort of realise that there are vast areas that will never mean a thing to me personally, but in the broader concept of things they do have meaning for me, but I don't think I would ever sit down again and read through Romans and think I could get something out of each passage of Romans .

15
20 Billy Right, Okay then anything you would like to say about the group, about Romans just general comments.

25 Nell Yes. I've really enjoyed it, Billy, because I felt that so often Bible study groups, well in the twenty, well, actually, I've realised it's more, twenty years virtually, of Bible studies, I'd say the vast majority have been a la William Barclay. Because I have found that there's very little else that groups have been able to, or that we have found, where one can study the Bible, if I can say at a more intellectual level perhaps you will understand what I mean. You know, not just a superficial sort of understanding, but coming from an understanding of the times, what it was written for, all of those sort of things. You certainly had that with Theo Kneifel, to get away more from the straight historical approach almost and how it applied literally to our lives, for a real deeper understanding of the Gospels and the epistles. So, I mean, that's why I was delighted when you offered to do it with us because, in fact, we'd even been doing tapes from the Scholasticate, because we felt that it's all very well for us as a group to sit with the book and just sort of share. But to me its important to have more of a deeper understanding of the theology of it all. Because I think you can get to a level in a Bible study group where you actually get less study and more talk and more sharing, and I know somebody said the other day that they's rather missed the sort of sharing that we had, because one can really get caught up over tea, with chat.. which is really very nice, and very relevant I think as a Christian group. But it's been that we've been more disciplined, let me put it that way. And I'm sorry Pam Doone isn't with us, because she's a valuable contributor, but um it's been nice as a group and I think we've all had our say in our group. I don't think people are too nervous

to say anything, and certainly you don't overawe us, with your dominating presence, or .. so it's been very positive.

Billy

Right. Okay.

Gladys:

Billy Okay, so the first question is, how long have you been involved in the group that you're in now, and how did you come to be involved in it

5 Gladys I find it difficult to remember how long I've been it, about three years I think, involved in it because Nell invited me, because I got to know her through my work in Hospice. I've been involved there for about four years, so it's since then.

Billy Okay. Then the second question is, why do you study the Bible?

10 Gladys I study the Bible because I find that it speaks directly to me, I read, I use the lectionary and find that um, i read it for different reasons, I read the Psalms sometimes for comforting, for strengthening, for bonding me with the human condition, with other humans somehow, the Gospels because I feel that they speak to me directly of the love of God, that they seem to resonate, not always, sometimes I can read a passage and just be puzzled by it and think..., um but perhaps that's not why... that's perhaps different from studying it.

Billy Read or study whatever

15 Gladys Read?.. Study?...Why I go to a Bible study is because I want to understand more, I want to share my, bounce of ideas with other people in the group, to firm up what I really believe myself through talking with other people. Does that make sense?

20 Billy Yes that makes sense. Right. So the next question really follows that on, I want to ask you about the ways you see the Bible as important for your life, and then your view of the Bible, its importance in society, and things like that?

25 Gladys The first is why it's important in my life? (Billy: yes) It's important in my life because I see it as - so much of I read from the Gospels seems to me to have a kind of, to directly relate to me and my situation at times, and it seems to be more than reading some other books, like the sayings of Philosophers, or whatever. It seems to have a kind of power and it seems to ring very true for me, it seems to resonate somehow or other... Ja, it has a power,... it has a power, the power of God within it, I think. Not that I take it all, I mean, some passages I think , well, that's a puzzlement and I'll just have to leave that for now and sometimes it always remains a puzzlement. But it's demanding to read, you know, like a parable is. But I think the truth has to come from grasping the central kernel of it rather than dissecting it out into bits. Although sometimes my reading has that, you know, I sort of puzzle over a word and go to the dictionary and things, or read another translation to try and tease it all out.

30

- Billy And then it was about your view of the Bible in society?
- 5 Gladys Because I think the Bible gives the Christian view of life, which is based on precepts like love and justice and all that implies in terms of unselfishness and of sharing and being involved with other people and caring for other people, which all values I hold. And I think it goes against the, and it's directly in contrast with the ways of the world and success and every man for himself and climbing on the backs of people and up the ladder of success, and I see it as being... providing some kind of,... a different way of living. Ja, so I see it as important.
- Billy So, the next question is, your views on the Bible which you've given now in two and three, would you say that the rest of the group agrees with them, or disagrees with them?
- 10 Gladys Two and three were, just remind me what they were?
- Billy Why you study the Bible and why it's important in society. Would you think, or, just generally, do you think the others in the group, would they generally agree with your views on the Bible or not?
- 15 Gladys I think mostly they'd agree but,you know I was just thinking that for Hilda, for one, I don't mean to be personal ja, that she wants something that's very practical, she wants help for the practical issues, you know. Whereas I think that, sometimes, I want that but I also want, at times,... I want food for the soul. Maybe... she's probably say the same thing, I think, but I think perhaps... I want to be challenged as well. I don't know, I think although we argue, I think, I was going to use the word fundamentally, but basically I think we see things from different perspectives, but I think we are bonded by a common theme of what we believe to be the basics of Christianity. i think... i don't know if that answers....?
- 20 Gladys That's fine. Okay, then, the next question is what understanding have you developed of Romans so far?
- 25 Gladys I think it's been very useful to grapple with it because I think, before, none of this is really answering your question, before I'd read selected passages that probably came up in the readings, or whatever, but wasn't the whole of Romans . And I've read a lot of the other letters again and again, but I haven't read Romans in this kind of depth. And I think just the struggle with it has been -I didn't think so in the beginning, I got cross with the arguments at times, I still do at times, at least with what seems like making ah what I see as simple truth very complex and very complicated - and yet I realise these were burning issues for him in his day and what appeals to me about Paul is his enthusiasm, and his single - mindedness and his zeal, um, and some of the... sorry I'm diverting from the question... (Billy: Carry on) some of the passages I find absolutely magnificent I suddenly think wow that's absolutely great and I can really... when he really is affirming his faith strongly and not getting caught up in long tangled, torturous sort of arguments. Then I find that very exciting to read and
- 30
- 35

- 5 Billy Maybe we can just be a bit more specific? Specifically the things you liked in Romans , and also maybe things that you've liked about the way we've been studying Romans ?
- 5 Gladys Things I've liked about the way we've been studying is the fact that we've been doing it at all. I think doing it, reading it from your translation, has given me a different slant on some aspects of it. It's made me actually stop and puzzle and, you know, I found it much easier to read in the other versions, and yet it's actually added to it because I've had to think and wrestle with some of the concepts and ideas. Ja, I think that's been useful... for me. It's been challenging, I think, it's been harder work than it might have been if I'd just sat down and read the ordinary Bible.
- 10 Billy Okay. If there's anything you've particularly disliked about Romans and then also about the way we've studied?
- 15 Gladys What I disliked about the book of Romans , are I think are the long, tortured arguments. There are some particular bits that I've put question marks next to, wherever I've gone through. It seems so tortured that it doesn't even make sense. Then I get impatient with it. The way we've studied it - I think what has made me impatient at times is when we digress and go too far off the point and I just want to rein people back in, and say let's get back to the question or whatever is.... And I guess I could do that, but I don't want to seem like a spoil sport. And I think, perhaps, if we used some tighter structure where we looked at - I don't quite know how we'd do it. I mean, I think this is an ongoing problem with any .. with most groups of women....
- 20 Billy Okay, then can we talk about, anything you'd like to talk about, particularly about the group and about the study we've been doing on Romans , any general comments.
- 25 Gladys I like the group enormously, I like the people in it, and I like its variety and the fact that we do feel free to argue, disagree. And I think the fact that we are all women together is quite a plus for me. And I think that there's a kind of freedom that there isn't always if there's a mixed sex group, though I enjoy both....I'm loosing my track, my thread, (Billy: You were saying something about Romans ?...) ...Sorry Billy I've lost the question? (It was just general comment)... General comment about the group? I suppose what bothers me is that we normally start with a meditation and we end with a prayer, but I think, the leadership, we don't really make it clear who's going to do it, so that's something we grapple with now and again, and I miss it when we don't because I think it quietens us down, it brings us into the present and it helps me to concentrate, and it also adds a full stop at the end, you know, rounds it off. I could have done it today but I was concerned about Nell getting off for her walk... I think the timing thing, I think it would help if we actually gave one person the job of actually timing it and, perhaps, asked ahead who would open the meeting and who would close it etc.
- 30
- 35 Billy Ja. Any general comments about Romans ?

Gladys

That I think it is, has been pretty central to my own growth and faith, and my own struggle with what I mentioned in the beginning, my own struggle with, of being, of letting go the struggle to be good, to do the right thing, to earn my way. For me it's kind of an ongoing struggle, I still fall back into that trap of thinking that I've got to be good. Here I am, sixty five, and still trying!

5

Billy

Okay. Thank you.

Jane

Billy The first question is how long have you been involved in the group and how did you come to be involved?

5 **Jane** Well the group has gone through various stages but - I'll have to work out the years now - um, ... jeerers, it must be about ten or eleven years.

Billy Mm, that's what Nell thought.

Jane Nell has been going longer than me, though.

Billy She said she thought you'd come from another group together, or you's been in another group at one time.

10 **Jane** Yes, that's right, but I'm counting...

Billy How did you come to be involved in that, say, with Nell's group?

15 **Jane** When we came down from Zim I was in Hilton and had joined a Bible study group there and when the leader of that group knew I was moving down to Maritzburg, she got in touch with Nell. And Nell at that time was well into a group run by Flo Baker. So I joined that group, and then it went from various places, and Nell had it, then I had, then Joyce had it, and then I had it, then Nell had it, is just goes around but....

Billy So it's about ten years, at least.

Jane Yes. In fact, Nell is the only person who is the same in it.

20 **Billy** Right. So, it's had a nice long history. Okay, then the second question is then why do you study the Bible?

Jane I don't know that I can say 'study the Bible'.

Billy Then, why do you go to a Bible study?

Jane Okay. Because I need, I need to learn more about it, I find it a stimulating and growthful place. Ja, it's a very special place. I would hate to be without it.

25 **Billy** Um, to continue with that then, I want to know in which ways, in what way do you see the Bible as important in your life?

Jane I don't know whether to call it religion, or spirituality, or relationship, or what, but that is of vital importance to me. So, the more I can learn of the Bible, the more familiar I can become with the Bible, the better.

5 Billy Right. Okay. And then I am interested in what your view of the Bible is, say, its importance for the society or, just generally, talk to me about how you feel about the Bible more generally than personally.

10 Jane Well I look upon the whole Bible as a process of evolution. Um, and I enjoy the connections between the New Testament and the Old. But it is certainly,... I don't know whether you would call it a basis for my life, but it is necessary,.. to me. Yes, it's part of that religion, spirituality, relationship.

Billy Okay, then just about the Bible in society. Do you think its important in society?

Jane Yes, oh yes, very much so.

Billy In what ways can you think of?

Jane Well, in social justice, and in a way to live one's life, how to relate to others.

15 Billy Okay. Ja. Um, when you are talking about your attitude to the Bible, you know, why you study it, why you go to Bible study, how you feel about the Bible, do you think you share those things, those feelings, would be shared by other people in the group?

Jane Mmm.

Billy You don't see any differences?

20 Jane No well they are open to let the other person go where, you know, they believe what they want to believe. One makes up one's own mind about things, in a way. I'm just thinking particularly of Nell's quite strong feeling about um Christ not really coming to die for us. You remember she mentioned that? (Billy: I think I do ja) Well, she was very strong on that at one time and all of us felt we don't really go for that, but that was because she had been more or less taught that.

25 Billy Right. Okay, then to move onto Romans , I'm interested to know generally the kind of understanding you've got, you've developed about Romans so far?

30 Jane Well, I suppose I have a clearer idea of Paul's arguments and that he is emphasising that Christ died for everybody. And, I'm actually quite amazed at his, you know, thinking of his background, of him being - was he a Pharisee? - very involved in the law part of the Jewish religion. And then he seems to have done a wonderful about-turn, through his Damascus conversion, because now he's, you know, in that last part which we've just read, he's so open

to people eating what they want to eat and other people must respect them for that. You know, just this wonderful sort of openness which is a complete about-face. I felt very excited at some of Paul's sentiments, but, for me, I suppose I realise that Paul was saying that Christ died for everyone, and that was his main point, but for me, I draw different things from that, in that, I don't know, I just get amazed every time... (Tape erased at this point) become so much so to show his love for us. All these things, I get really excited about, but perhaps it's not quite in line with Paul's arguments, that's what I mean, I draw it for me...

5

Billy Right, then maybe just a bit more detail, I'm interested to know what you've liked about Romans and then also what you have liked about the way we have been studying Romans

10

Jane I really enjoyed studying Romans because I would really like to study Paul, Just because his, I don't know what you would call it, theology or spirituality or what, really excites me. And to have the opportunity of really looking at it, which I've never had before, I mean in church we just get little bitties, and actually I really don't remember Romans being preached on because we have a choice of three, and more often than not, it's not. You know, I really can't remember Romans being spoken about at all. And just doing Romans by oneself... really isn't, you know, one flounders a bit. But to have a bit of guidance, I think, was just wonderful, really great, and I really enjoyed it. But I'd like to do Paul.

15

Billy So, to carry on then, anything you disliked about Romans in particular and then about the way we've studied.

20

Jane Well, I do think that Paul trips up in some examples where he gets so involved and so... I'm afraid I just tend to push that aside and we should get to what I think he's getting at, without paying too much attention to these long involved things which are just so complicated. So I think I tend to try and get the real meaning of it without bothering to try and work out the thought processes too much.

25

Billy Anything you've disliked in the way we've studied?

Jane No: maybe I'd like a bit more input from you.

Billy Okay, then the last thing was just any general things you have to say about the group, about the study and about Romans. Just general comments on what we have been talking about?

30

Jane Ja, I enjoy the group. Because we have, I don't know, the same background perhaps, but we do have different ideas and that brings for stimulation when you think of things you hadn't thought of before because of the input. And yet, we're all open to each other, and very accepting of each other.

Billy Anything more about Romans you don't have to just anything...?

Jane

Ja, I think I'll go back and read the whole of it. You know, it does make me want to do more of Paul. Because he's, you know, I hadn't quite thought of it, but he does preach Christ crucified. He preaches a sort of more, I suppose, of a theology than the actual Gospels. Ja, I'm just amazed, amazed at what he dares to say, and yet he says it knowing that it's right.

5

Billy

Okay, thank you.

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