Introduction

From the early beginnings of the church Christians have been in debt to interpreters who have rendered the sacred Scriptures meaningful and translated its message of divine grace and redemption into their own language. Grant Osborne, the person to whom this essay is dedicated, stands in the train of commentators like Paul, who in Romans 10:13 declared, in the words of Joel 3:5, “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” This is a remarkable statement on many counts. Commentators on the book of Romans have rightly addressed four primary issues raised by Paul's use of this quotation: (1) the universalism of the Gospel: salvation offered in Jesus Christ is available to all (πᾶς) who call on him; (2) the way of access to the Gospel: salvation comes by calling (ἐπικαλέω); (3) the focus of the Gospel: the name of the Lord (τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου); (4) the promise of the Gospel: they shall be saved (σωθήσεται).

The concern of this paper is to explore how commentators have treated the third element: what does Paul mean by pointing his readers to the name of the Lord, and what are the implications of his declaration within its literary context and for the readers of the book? While my general interest in this subject arises out of longstanding curiosity about the history of Israel’s treatment of the divine name, this study was precipitated by a recent conversation a half dozen colleagues here at Wheaton had with a half dozen Jewish rabbis representing four different traditions.

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1 I am delighted to make this small contribution to a volume dedicated to my very good friend Grant Osborne. Our relationship goes back almost thirty years, to a time when life was less complicated and we were young colleagues on the faculty of Providence College in Otterburne, Manitoba. I am grateful to my current colleagues, Daniel Treier and Michael Graves, for reading an earlier version of this paper and offering helpful counsel on content and presentation, and for my assistant, Daniel Owens, for proof reading the paper. Of course, any infelicities of substance or style are my own responsibility.

2 Since Paul quotes the Septuagint, hereafter all references to Joel will cite only the LXX verse numbers.
within Judaism. By their choice, the subject for discussion was Romans 9–11, specifically Paul's view of the Gospel and his disposition toward Jews. From this conversation it struck me that Rom 10:13 declares in a nutshell the “scandalous rock” (πέτρα σκανδάλου, Rom 9:33). It is not Christian claims to Jesus’ Messiahship that Jews view so blasphemous, but claims of his divinity. As in 1 Cor 1:31; 2:16; 2 Cor 10:17; and Phil 2:10–11, in Rom 10:13 an Old Testament text is applied to “prove nothing other than that the Pauline κύριος Ιησούς Χριστός has been deified . . ., has become ισόθεος, and has his essential being in God.” If this is how Jewish interpreters understand τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου in this text, how have Christian commentators treated it? This paper seeks to answer this question. However, before we explore how interpreters understand the phrase we should inquire concerning the origins of Paul’s notion of “the name of the Lord.”

1. The Treatment of “the Name of the Lord” in Commentaries on Romans 10:13

Through the centuries Christian commentators have responded to Paul’s reference to the name of the Lord in different ways. In the first instance, many commentators do not find the expression noteworthy at all. The following represents all that the notable New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce—whose training was in the Old Testament—says about this citation:

Quoted from Joel ii. 32, where it relates to the period on the eve of ‘the great and terrible day of the Lord’ when God’s Spirit is to be poured out on all flesh; compare Peter’s use of the same scripture to explain the events of the day of Pentecost: ‘This is that which was spoken by the prophet’ (Acts ii. 16).

He says nothing of the significance of the quotation—let alone the phrase, “the name of the Lord”—in this context. Similar gaps are found in many

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3 While we meet regularly once each semester for the sheer joy of dialogue, our conversations revolve around specific texts.

4 Note also “the stone of stumbling” (τῷ λίθῳ τοῦ προσκόμματος and λίθον προσκόμματος) in Rom 9:32–33.


6 Ibid., 154.