Cultivated olive — wild olive: 
the olive tree metaphor in Romans 11:16-24

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ABSTRACT
The Olive tree metaphor surfaces within the content of the relationship between the Jews and Gentiles in Romans 9-11. The grafting in of a wild olive branch into a tame olive is against all sound botanical practice. By using a specific theory on metaphor it becomes possible to come to grips with the exegesis and hermeneutics of this challenging rhetorical device. It also opens up text gappings which the ordinary reader can actualise as God’s promises are open to all people.

Rengstorf (1978:125) gives a résumé of the level of research regarding the metaphor of Romans 11: 16-24 when he states categorically: ‘Niemand, der sich näher mit dem von Paulus Rom 11,16ff Ölbaum-Gleichnis befasst, wird leugnen können, dass die Aufgabe, es befriedigend zu erklären, noch keineswegs als gelöst gelten darf.’

The present article does not claim to be the last word on this issue. On the contrary, the modest aim is twofold: first with the support of a theory to legitimate some conclusions of researchers that were reached intuitively; and second, to expose potentially new avenues of interpretation.

A prerequisite for the discussion of any metaphor is a sound theory. There are different approaches. The metaphor can be handled as a non-linguistic phenomenon, as philosophical, psychological or pedagogical. However, for the purpose of this research, the linguistic approach has been adopted. Within the framework of linguistics there are three paradigms. To delimit each of these theories, Black’s example (1954-5:286) of a metaphor ‘man is a wolf’ was chosen as a touchstone. In the replacement theory the concept wolf has the meaning of savage and predatory; in the comparison theory the connotation is that of wolf-like character; in the interaction theory the meaning assigned to wolf is the outcome of the interaction between the popular perception of what a wolf is and the popular perception of homo sapiens. The result of this process is that the word wolf receives new meaning, which is not quite its literal meaning.

The first question to be answered in the quest for an understanding of the metaphor of the cultivated and wild olive is: What are the markers of a meta-
A metaphor can be identified if it complies with three prerequisites: the complete phrase must be deemed as impossible, unenforceable and logically improbable.

The problem with the concept of 'metaphor' is that the subject matter is not only elusive, but also that a definition feasible in one discipline is often declared inappropriate in another. Perhaps it is not necessary or even possible to devise a substantial definition of a metaphor which is acceptable to all. Nevertheless, it is useful to have minimum guidelines for an approach to this most tantalising phenomenon. In view of this, the definition and concepts of the interaction theory are adhered to.

The most notable exponents of the interaction theory are Richards, Black and Brook-Rose and Miller. Richards broadly (1936:93) outlines the structure of a metaphor as: 'two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction.'

He also (1936:107-108) introduces the terms tenor and vehicle where he notes that:

once we begin to "examine attentively" interactions which do not work through resemblances between tenor and vehicle, but depend upon other relations between them including disparities, some of our most prevalent, oversimple, ruling assumptions about metaphor as comparison are soon exposed.

Black refined Richards' pioneering work on metaphor, which was published in *The philosophy of rhetoric*, and distinguishes between the conceptual pair 'focus and frame'. Despite the fact that a phrase in its totality could be experienced as metaphoric, some word or words can be noted as the 'focus.' The syntactic context within which the focus operates is known as the 'frame' (Black 1962:27). These technical concepts together are the functional words in a metaphorical statement which generate tension within a metaphor, so that new meanings and new insights are created. Black (1962:26) writes: 'to call a sentence an instance of metaphor is to say something about its meaning, not about its orthography, its phonetic pattern, or its grammatical form.'

The semantics of a metaphor are primarily the outcome of the interplay between the two halves of a metaphorical expression in a given context and the interplay of the intention of the user of the specific metaphor and other possible contexts which may be applicable.

Black explains (1962:29):

there are indefinitely many contexts where the meaning of a metaphorical expression has to be reconstructed from the speaker's intentions, (and other clues) because the rules of standard usage are too general to supply the information needed.
In addition to the terms ‘focus’ and ‘frame’ Black introduces a second pair of concepts, ‘principal’ and ‘subsidiary subject.’ Black’s principal ‘focus’ tag coincides with Richard’s ‘tenor’ and his ‘subsidiary/frame’ tag with Richards’ ‘vehicle’ (Grabe 1979:8).

Both Richards and Black stress the fact that the metaphorical word in a sentence or the vehicle/focus/subsidiary subject, interacts with the non-metaphorical words or the tenor/frame/principal subject. This assertion is crucial for the understanding and interpretation of a living metaphor. During this process of interaction the reader applies to the frame/tenor/principle subject a ‘system of associated commonplaces’ or potential range of connotations’ (Black 1962:40). Not all the features of the vehicle/focus/subsidiary subject are filtered onto the tenor/frame/principal subject. Interaction is limited to those which are compatible. A reader selects, emphasises, suppresses and organises features of the principal subject or context by implying meanings about it that are normally applicable to the subsidiary subject (Black 1962:44f). In this sense, the metaphor shows close links with the simile as both concentrate on a third aspect commonly known as the tertium comparationis. Miller identifies different classes of metaphor. He defines (1971:230-234): ‘nominal metaphors when a nominal concept is expressed by a noun phrase that is used metaphorically, predicative metaphors—when a predicate phrase is preserved in the metaphor, the entire sentential concept... must be inferred from the text or context.’

Concurring with Miller’s definition of a predicate metaphor, Brooke-Rose distinguishes the genitive construction as an example of a predicative metaphor. She writes (1958:146): ‘the metaphorical term belongs to, or comes from or out of, or is to be found in, or is attributed to some person or thing or abstraction.’

A genitive metaphor can be subdivided into two classes. The first division uses three nouns. Grabe (1979:24) indicates these three nouns as follows:

c the metaphorical term (B/vehicle) need not necessarily be linked to the real term (A/tenor), but to a third (C). The tenor could be given or could be suppressed and should be inferred from the tenor relation in the formula “B of C” (my translation).

In the second subdivision there are only two nouns, making the tenor-vehicle relation less complicated. The sequence of the relation is however, inverted. The metaphorical term (B) is given first and then the literal term (C).

Brook-Rose also continues to distinguish the demonstrative pronoun as a subcategory of what Miller calls the nominal metaphor. Grabe (1979:75) formalises this construction noting that the demonstrative pronoun: ‘shifts the emphasis from the representation of an absent tenor by means of a present
vehicle, to an identification of the two parts in a metaphorical expression' (my translation).

The demonstrative pronoun is relevant when a thing is initially called by name but in due course is referred to by a substituted word. This creates the impression that the thing under discussion has changed to something quite different. Brooke-Rose (1958:69) paraphrases this process as being: 'rather like a syllogism with the middle term left out.'

From this it is clear that the macroscopic context will explicate the tenor/vehicle relation.

Two other classes of metaphor should be noted. The dominant dissimilarity between the noun metaphor and its two sub-categories on the one side and the verb metaphor on the other side, is to be found in the degree of explicitness. In the case of the noun metaphor A is called B according to the link. In the case of the verb metaphor however, one noun is replaced by implication, yet does not explicitly 'replace' another 'action'.

The third class metaphor is the adjective metaphor. The distinctive feature of this metaphor is that according to Brooke-Rose (1958:238): '[it] hovers between noun and verb. The simplicity of its concepts brings it close to the verb'.

Besides the interaction between the adjective as focus and its syntactic frame, the adjective can also figure as a vehicle. The adjective metaphor shows a similarity to the verb metaphor as it too can result in being replaced.

Miller (1971:128-134) differentiates between three different classes of metaphor. The first class is the surface metaphor: 'in which both tenor and vehicle are named at approximately the same time.' The second class is the submerged metaphor: 'there are metaphors which name only their vehicle.'

To determine the tenor the researcher should focus on the microscopic context. The text offers specific clues which should be harnessed in search of the tenor. Miller names the third class the suspended metaphor, prevalent in dead metaphors where the tenor is forgotten. In this metaphor the interplay between the tenor and vehicle is suspended. Metaphors do not operate individually but rather as metaphor clusters or as constellations (Minear 1960:66-67). This fact empowers the metaphor to create a greater impression. Romans 11.16-24 proves to be an excellent example of a metaphor constellation.

Interaction between different figures of style fosters the interpretation of a text. In the pericope Romans 11:16-24, Paul, in conjunction with the metaphor also uses the parallelism and its inverted form, the chiasmus. The function of these subsidiary figures of style is to foreground what is posited by the metaphor. For this reason a short stock-taking of theory on some of these figures of style should prove fruitful.

Syntactic variation in a text can be exploited by using one of two methods. An author can generate syntactically deviating sentences or can reiterate...
stock patterns. The reiteration of stock patterns surfaces on two levels in parallelism, firstly on the syntagmatic (syntax) level. Scholes (1974:19) defines this as: 'the word’s linear, diachronic aspect; often conceptualized as a horizontal axis along which the sentence is spread out in its necessary order.' Secondly, it surfaces on the paradigmatic (semantic) level where words function as a paradigm. This level is described as being the level where: ‘displaced words may be conceived as belonging to several paradigmatic sets. For example words with related meanings (synonyms and antonyms), others with similar sound patterns.’

These two aspects are not different, disconnected units but enter into a definite relation with one another.

Jakobson notes (1960:358): ‘the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination.’ Culler (1975:56) recaps the function of syntactic deviance and syntactic patterning, writing that: ‘foregrounding may be accomplished in various ways, including the use of deviant or ungrammatical construction.’ He continues, noting that: ‘for Jakobson the principal technique is the use of highly patterned language.’

Before commencing a detailed analysis of the olive metaphor, a contextualization of this metaphor is necessary. In his prescript to the Romans, Paul had three goals in mind. Firstly, he wanted to establish himself as the author of this letter. Secondly, he intended to identify the implied readers. Thirdly, he wanted to create common ground between himself, the author, and the implied readers.

The reason for the amount of attention he pays linking the author and implied readers, acts as an affirmation of his right to write to them (Vorster 1991). The most important identity marker is the noun ἔθνος (1:5, 13; 15:9-12, 16, 18, 27; 16:14) as it excludes the Jews and functions to highlight the Gentile Christians as the counterpart (Lietzmann 1971:26; Käsemann 1974:13; Wilckens 1978:67; Zeller 1985:37; Ziesler 1989:14).

This classification-concept is strengthened by a series of concepts, which Vorster claims (1991:105) to be ‘in group membership’ κλήτοι (1:6-7), ἀγαπητοὶ (1:7), ἄγιοι (1:7;16:2) and ἀδελφοὶ (1:13, 15; 14:30; 16:7).

After Paul has achieved this identification, he switches to the gospel because it functions as the means through which God’s righteousness is manifested. Notwithstanding the fact that both Jews and Greeks (Ἰουδαῖος τε πρῶτον και Ἑλλῆνι) can profit from the gospel, the Jews occupy priority position in status and chronology (Ziesler 1989:9). This twofold preferential treatment is underlined by the adverb πρῶτον (Dunn 1988:40; Wedderburn 1988:89). It is natural that this fact should catch the eye of the researcher, but the inclusion of the non-Jews as the co-recipients of the gospel is foregrounded (Vorster 1991:130).
In chapters 1–8 of Romans, Paul elaborates on the concept δικαιοσύνη. This term has definite Jewish overtones, namely the law and circumcision. These overtones must be removed from the reader’s mind. This catharsis can only be accomplished by a redefinition of the term. The device which can facilitate this, is πίστις the catalyst.

Vorster (1993:164) sums it up:

The definition of Jew and Gentile is in the same vein. A ‘real’ Jew is a Jew who believes and not necessarily one who is supported by the law and who has been circumcised (2:17–18, 23, 28; 10:6–12) just as the ‘real’ Gentile is someone who does not believe. As such an uncircumcised Gentile can be a ‘circumcised Jew.’ He concludes these chapters with an ecstatic outburst: τίς ἡμᾶς χωρίσει ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Χριστοῦ; (Rm 8:35).

Chapters 9–11 of Romans focus on faith as the basis for being put in a right relationship with God, and the application of this fundamental principle to the nation of Israel.

It can be argued that Paul had two reasons for employing the metaphor of the olive tree. Minear (1960:45) says:

Paul wants to entangle the mystery of Israel’s apparent rejection of the promised Messiah and at the same time to counteract the tendency of Gentile Christians to assert, by the flippant and arrogant scorn of the Jews, their independence of Israel.

Paul did not so much emphasise the nature of the church as to disclose the mystery of God’s plan for both Gentiles and Jews through the church.

Due to the fact that Rm 11:16–24 is a metaphor-cluster it would benefit the interpretation if the different metaphors were separated. To this end, a textual analysis of these verses follows. Verse 16 contains different metaphors which serve as an introduction to the elaborate metaphor of verses 17–24. The metaphors of verse 16 can for convenience sake, be labelled as key metaphors:

- ἀπαρχή noun metaphor
- ἀγία adjective metaphor
- φύραμα noun metaphor
- θάνατος noun metaphor
- κλάδοι noun metaphor

The metaphors of verses 17–24 are more extensive and can be labelled cluster metaphors. Although Paul’s treatment of the olive tree metaphor is fully developed and enriched by many pertinent references, it is not easy to grasp the meaning of the metaphor. This problem is complicated by a mixing of metaphors. To solve this problem, two sub-species of olive trees are distinguished.
In Romans 11:16 Paul announces a new theme. The metaphor \( ει \ δε \ η \ \alphaταρξη \ αγια, \ και \ το \ φυραμα \ \kappaαι \ ει \ η \ βιζα \ αγια, \ και \ οι \ κλαδοι \) introduces this new theme. To foreground this new theme Paul uses a conditional sentence to state a fact. The conditional sentence contains a parallelism and two noun metaphors. To highlight the theme, Paul has omitted all verbs in the parallelism and thus focused only on the nouns:

\[ ει \ δε \ η \ \alphaταρξη \ \alphaγια, \ και \ το \ \phiυραμα \ (16a) \]
\[ ει \ (δε) \ \eta \ \betaιζα \ \alphaγια, \ και \ οι \ \kappaλαδοι \ (16b) \]

The result of this modified parallelism is an equivalence on the syntactic level. This is due to the order of words in the first part (a) of the parallelism being superimposed on the second part (b). The omission of the verbs in this parallelism leads to a synonymity between the nouns on the paradigmatic level: \( \alphaταρξη \ (a) \rightarrow \betaιζα \ (b) \) and \( \phiυραμα \ (a) \rightarrow \kappaλαδοι \ (b) \).

It is important to note that the noun \( \alphaταρξη \) has three different connotations in the Old Testament:
(a) the first-born son (Ex 13: 2,13; 22:29)
(b) the first-fruits of the harvest (Lev 23:10ff), and
(c) the feast of the harvest (Ex 23:16)

The supplementing of \( \phiυραμα \) with \( \alphaταρξη \) does not allow for meanings (a) and (c). According to Num 15:19-20 it was a cultic ordinance of the Israelites to give a heave-offering of dough as first-fruit.
The Septuagint translates it as:
19 καὶ ἐσται ὅταν ἔσβητε ὑμεῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρτῶν τῆς γῆς ἀφελεῖτε ἀφαίρεμα ἀφόρισμα κυρίως.  
20 ἀπαρχὴν φυράματος ὑμῶν ἀρτον ἀφαίρεμα ἀφορεῖτε αὐτῷ ὡς ἀφαίρεμα ἀπὸ ἄλω, οὕτως ἀφελεῖτε αὐτὸν.

Bread can be baked once a portion of the dough is taken from the secular sphere and is given to the priest, who then dedicates it to God. The small piece of dough (ἅρπαξ) desecularises the whole lump of dough (φύραμα). The analogy of first-fruit and the lump of dough in Num 15:19-20 runs parallel to the analogy of the root (ῥίς) and branches (κλάδοι) of Rm 11:16. The underlying principle of both these pairs of analogies is that a small portion (ἅρπαξ and ῥίς) has a determining influence on a considerable whole (φύραμα and κλάδοι). The noun (ἅρπαξ) functions as the vehicle of an unmentioned tenor. This tenor is not given in the microscopic context.

The next step is to search the macroscopic context. This reveals three possibilities.

(a) The faithful Jews. The proponents of this view include well known scholars: Lagrange, Michel, Sanday and Headlam, Dodd, Gauler, Leenhardt, Bruce, Barrett and Cranfield. To support this viewpoint texts like Rm 16:5 and 1 Cor 16:15 are quoted. Although the concept ἅρπαξ in these texts could refer to the faithful Jews, it does not suit the context of Romans 11.

(b) Jesus Christ. Promoters of this possibility include the Church Fathers of the first centuries AD: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Theodore of Mopsuestia and more recent scholars, amongst them Hanson, Barrett and Barth. The context of Romans 11 however, does not favour this possibility either.

(c) The patriarchs, specifically Abraham. John Chrysostom, Calvin, Sanday and Headlam, Lagrange, Michel, Murray, Käsemann, Schlier, Dodd, Nygren, Starck Billerbeck and Ridderbos opt for this. Support for this point of view is seconded by Rm 11:28 διὰ τοῦ πατέρας. From chapter 9 onwards Paul describes the miserable fact that the Jews have rejected God. God, however, honours his promise ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλῆσις τοῦ θεοῦ (Rm 11:29).

The concept κλῆσις is a technical Pauline term which is of fundamental importance. Reiche (1958:111) writes:

ist folglich der Begriff "Verheißung" hier grundlegend, so müssen aber die Väter oder die Patriarchen im Zusammenhang eine besondere Rolle spielen, weil sie die ersten Empfänger der göttlichen Verheißung waren. So erklärt sie, weshalb Paulus sich im folgenden mit der Frage über die Verheißung vor allem im Hinblick auf die Patriarchen beschäftigt und so erklärt sie, weshalb er nach der eingehenden Behandlung der Judenfrage, die in den Kapiteln 9-11 des Römerbriefs zu finden ist, endlich in 11, 28 zu dem Ergebnis kommt: die Juden bleiben trotz allem noch und für immer der besondere Gegenstand der Liebe Gottes "um des Vater Willen."
According to the terminology of Miller this metaphor \(\alpha\tau\alpha\rho\chi\eta\) qualifies as a submerged metaphor.

The second metaphorical pair (\(\rho\iota\iota\alpha\) and (\(\kappa\lambda\dot{\alpha}\dot{d}o\)) is more transparent than the first, as there is an explicit relationship between this metaphor and the extensive tree-metaphor in the rest of the chapter. The *Sitz im Leben* of this metaphorical pair is, as in the first, the cultic life. Rengstoff (1978:128) notes: 'was dies Letzte betrifft, so ist natürlich die Tatsache nicht ausser Acht zu lassen, dass die Vorstellung von der Heiligkeit gewisser Bäume dem Altermum geläufig, und dass die auch im Judentum Palästinas um die Zeitwende zu Hause gewesen ist und eine Rolle gespielt hat.'

The tenor of the vehicle (\(\rho\iota\iota\alpha\)) cannot be defined either within the microscopic context or the macroscopic context in spite of Cranfield's (1979:265) poised statement that 'there is a very widespread agreement among commentators that it must refer to the patriarchs and that Paul's meaning is that the unbelieving majority of the Jews are hallowed by their relation to the patriarchs.'

On the basis of the paradigmatic relation between (\(\alpha\tau\alpha\rho\chi\eta\)) and (\(\rho\iota\iota\alpha\)), the first noun filters out the meaning of patriarchs. Rengstoff (1978:129) argues: 'So fixiert das erste Bildwort den an sich alles andere als selbstverständlichen Sachverhalt, dass unter bestimmten Umständen die religiöse Qualität eines Teiles auf die religiöse Qualität den Ganzen, zu dem er gehört, nicht nur gewissermassen hinweist, sondern sie sogar garantiert.'

The adjectival (\(\alpha\gamma\iota\alpha\)) focuses on both the nouns (\(\alpha\tau\alpha\rho\chi\eta\)) and (\(\rho\iota\iota\alpha\)). In these two cases the adjective does not function as an attributive. Rather it defines the nouns, and it becomes a vehicle. The adjective (\(\alpha\gamma\iota\alpha\)) is usually applied to a living person. However, in this case it relates to nouns having the semantic feature '-animate'. Regarding the nouns under discussion, it is clear that these have the semantic feature '-alive'. On the surface, it would seem that the adjective (\(\alpha\gamma\iota\alpha\)) and the nouns (\(\alpha\tau\alpha\rho\chi\eta\)) and (\(\rho\iota\iota\alpha\)) are incompatible. The adjective (\(\alpha\gamma\iota\alpha\)) however, has the ability to instill life into these lifeless nouns, thereby converting them to living persons. This process personifies the nouns, and what results are the patriarchs of the third possibility. The fourth noun (\(\kappa\lambda\dot{\alpha}\dot{d}o\)), a vehicle, acts with its paradigmatic equivalent (\(\phi\gamma\rho\sigma\mu\alpha\)). This relation emphasizes an entity which has the specification of being a multitude. Although the tenor of (\(\kappa\lambda\dot{\alpha}\dot{d}o\)) is not specifically indicated, it serves as the starting point for the cluster metaphor in verses 17-24, where it is specified as (\(\delta\lambda\alpha\iota\alpha\varsigma\)) (v 17), and later more evidently as (\(\kappa\alpha\lambda\lambda\iota\epsilon\lambda\alpha\iota\varsigma\)) (v 24).

Although the figurative use of the olive in the New Testament appears only here, a *hapax legomenon*, it is quite common in the Old Testament, for example Jer 11:16; Hos 14:6; Ps 80:8, and Isa 5:17.

Before beginning the analysis of the cluster metaphor, a brief summary of
the key-metaphors in verse 16 is needed. Rengstorff (1978:128) offers the following:

es wird sich indes zeigen, dass für das, was sich anschliesst, das eine so unentbehrlich ist wie das andere und dass das frühere Bildwort in gewisser Hinsicht sogar erst den Raum schafft, in dem das spätere zur Entfaltung gebracht werden.

Although the United Bible Society’s Greek text edition of Romans 11 begins a new paragraph at verse 17, Paul does not begin a new metaphor with this verse. All the evidence is against this arrangement of verses. The nouns (διακοινοι) and (κλάδοι) are perpetuated in the new metaphor. Paul provides a new and surprising use of the olive, a metaphorical one. An attempt to identify different botanical parts of the tree, roots, trunk, branches and fruit as Barth does, is a certain sign that the underlying metaphor is not spotted. Barth writes (1946:2,316): 'es gibt nämlich einerseits unter den heiligen weigen aus jener heiligen Wurzel solche, die abgehauen wurden...die gehörten zweifellos und gehören noch zu dem Stamm, der von dieser Wurzel getragen ist.' Barth’s elaborate christological exegesis may be homiletically justified, but the text does not endorse such an interpretation. Straub (1937:74) raises the same objection against Häring, noting: ‘ohne Grund ist die Vermutung von Häring, Der Römerbrief des Apostels Paulus z. St., der Ölbaum sei gewählt, weil das Öl im AT häufig Sinnbild des Geistes sei; gedacht ist nicht an die Frucht, sondern an den Baum insgesamt.’

According to Paul in Rm 11:17 branches from the wild olive tree are grafted (ἐνεκεντριῶθης) onto the cultivated olive. This statement by Paul has triggered off criticism including the conclusion that Paul could at least only have been a novice horticulturist. Sound botanical principles involve the grafting of a cultivated shoot onto a wild stem and not the other way round as suggested by Paul. Ramsay (1905:16–34, 152–160) was so impressed by this fault that he wrote an extensive article in reaction. It drew heavily from the work of Columella De Re Rustica 5.9.163 and Palladius’ De Instituione 53f. However, as Paul states categorically that this method of grafting is preternatural, Ramsay’s article is only of academic value.

Ramsay’s preoccupation with the rejuvenation of the olive tree results in his failure to provide an answer to the question why the cultivated branches were chopped off and later regrafted. Ramsay disregards Paul’s tertium comparisonis and overlooks the fact that the branches which were chopped are later grafted back onto the old tree.

A second group of scholars defend Paul in this regard. Leitzmann (1933:105), posing as Paul’s self-appointed champion, tries to resolve the impasse by ascribing the fault to Paul’s lack of the correct knowledge: ‘Pls ist eben ein Stadtkind.’ A third group is of the opinion that Paul purposely
included this faulty modification of horicultural practice in order to foreground the grace of God. Zahn (1910:516) argues:

 \[ \text{der Ap. wird sich vielmehr bewusst gewesen sein, ein in Wirklichkeit nicht vorkommendes Verfahren zu beschreiben, um dadurch...den Gedanken auszudrücken, dass die Aufnahme von Heiden in das Abrahamsgeschlecht ein Wunder der göttlichen Barmherzigkeit sei.} \]

These different objections could all be accommodated if this pericope were treated as a metaphor. Michel writes (1966:273):

 \[ \text{Pis hat in seiner allegorischen Bildrede nicht daran gedacht, das einem absterbenden oder unfruchtbaren Baum die kräfte der eingepfroffenen Zweige zugute kommen sollen, sondern ihm liegt umgekehrt daran, zu zeigen, dass die Kraft, die aus der Wurzel kommt, auch den eingepfroffenen zuteil wird.} \]

It is clear that many of these researchers did not realise that this metaphor is impossible, unenforceable and logically improbable.

Paul introduces his extensive metaphor on the wild and cultivated olive by means of a conditional sentence. This sentence has three protases, each designating three privileges enjoyed by the Gentiles.

(a) \[ \varepsilon i \delta e \varphi u e \varsigma t o w k l \acute{a}d o w \delta \varepsilon k l \acute{a}w h s a w , \]

(b) \[ \varepsilon i \delta e \alpha \gamma r i \varepsilon l a w o s \omicron \nu \varepsilon n e k e n t r i s h h s e n a u t o i c . \]

(c) \[ k a i \sigma u g k a u k o n d h s t h s \beta i z h s t h s p i o t h p o s t h s \delta l o i a c s \epsilon g e n o u , \]

The third privilege (c), is the result of (b), and the second privilege (b), is the result of (a). The single apodosis given in ver 18, \[ \mu h k a t a k a k o u k h o , \] is an imperative. The first protasis sets the whole metaphor in motion. Using meiosis (\( \pi u e \varsigma \)), Paul confirms that the whole olive tree is not chopped down, but that only some of the branches are cut off. This meiosis, a demonstrative, serves as a metaphor. The tenor of this vehicle is not given in the immediate context. In the macroscopic text the tenor is detected as the unbelieving Jews. Using Miller's metaphor classification, this is an example of a suspended metaphor. The identification of the branches creates a problem for some readers.

Minear (1960:46) not having a sound metaphor theory, argued in circles as follows:

\[ \text{difficulties appear when we equate the church or Israel as the people of God too precisely with any item in the allegory. To equate it with the branches alone would make the church too narrow...to equate it with the root alone would blur the distinction between root and branches...To draw a line between the church and the individual members, which would follow exactly the line between root and branches, would also violate the structure of Paul's thought. It would perhaps be sounder to suggest that the whole story of God's dealings with men is com-} \]
parable to the story of the olive tree as a whole.

The two verbs, (ἐξεκλάσθησαν) and (ἐνεκτρισθής) are metaphors given in the passive form, the passiva divina. God is the agent of the action of 'breaking of' the cultivated branches and the 'grafting in' of the wild branches. The use of the aorist, a tense denoting simply occurrence, without reference to continuance or completion, indicates a divine action with regard to the Jews and the Gentile Christians. The Jews rejected the salvation offered by Christ. The result of this rejection was that they were ostracised by God. At the same time the Gentile Christians were drawn closer. This ostracism of the Jews is indicated in the verbal metaphor (ἐξεκλάσθησαν) and the drawing closer of the Gentile Christians in the verbal metaphor (ἐνεκτρισθής). The fact that the subject, God, is implied in both actions creates different expectations in the minds of readers. The reader could expect a verb with the connotation of 'removing with great care.'

The verb (ἐξεκλάσθησαν) however, rather refers to a violent action, 'breaking off.' This unexpected phraseology is inappropriate if viewed from a horticultural perspective, because branches were removed with great care. The contradetermining frame is extended to show that the gaps, caused by the brutal action of the farmer, are filled with the grafting in of the wild olive shoots. The metaphorical (ἐνεκτρισθής) is unexpected, as the sound horticultural practice involves the grafting of shoots from a cultivated tree onto a wild stem. To graft wild shoots onto a cultivated tree is counterproductive as the wild olive produces an inferior yield. Paul however uses this seemingly unnatural productive process to draw focus and attention to the fact that God wants to save and not to destroy.

The contradetermining frame for the verbal metaphor (ἐνεκτρισθής) generates a further metaphor (σὺ δὲ ἀγριελαιοὺς ὑμῖν). Paul personifies the (ἀγριελαιοῦ) and adresses by way of a diatribe an imaginary interlocutor. In the diatribe there is characteristically little distance between the ideal reader and the fictitious interlocutor (Stowers 1979:153). In Romans 11:17 Paul however makes it clear that in addressing the wild olive shoot he is actually admonishing the Gentiles.

The employment of a diatribe in the passage allows Paul to highlight certain aspects:
(1) an imaginary 'person' is addressed with σὺ (v 17).
(2) this addressed 'wild olive' is personified in a dialogical way σὺ (v 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24).
(3) in verses 18 and 21 the wild olive shoot is admonished by way of imperatives (μὴ κατακαυχῶ) (v 18) and [μὴ πως] οὐδὲ σου φείσεται (vv.21).
(4) the interlocutor responds to the address by way of an objection (ἐρεῖς οὐς) (v 19).

*der Gedankengang des Römerbriefes dürfte sich erst voll erschliessen, wenn man beachtet, in wie starkem Masse der Gesprächscharakter trägt. Dieser Brief ist in seinen ersten elf Kapiteln nicht eine dogmatische Abhandlung, sondern eine Sendeschreiben, das erwachsen ist aus einem vielfach geführten. Dialogus cum Indaeis.*

In the surface metaphor (οὐ δὲ ἀγριελαυνος) the (οὐ) becomes the tenor and (ἀγριελαυνος) the vehicle. Due to the fact that the wild olive is personified, all horticultural specifications not characteristic of the wild olive and which are not applicable to the personified (οὐ), are suppressed, and those that are applicable namely unproductiveness and uselessness, are transferred to the pronoun (οὐ). God circumvents this futile way of existence by grafting the wild olive shoot onto the cultivated olive.

Paul does not mention the olive stem. He refers to the demonstrative (ἐν αὐτοῖς) which services as a metaphor. The phrase (ἐν αὐτοῖς) can be interpreted in two ways. It can mean 'in their place' or 'between them', that is the wild olive shoots in place of the removed cultivated branches. The second possibility of 'between them' suits the context best because the Gentile Christians do not fill the place of the unfaithful Jews, but rather occupy the space between the remaining faithful Jews. The function of the demonstrative metaphor (ἐν αὐτοῖς) is that the given concept of tenor A (the unfaithful Jews) is replaced by a metaphoric term vehicle B (ἐν αὐτοῖς). The tenor can be identified in the microscopic text as the noun (κλάδοι).

Paul now switches over to the cardinal (dpiω) and especially one aspect of the root (τῆς δίης τῆς πιώτητος) a genitive-link metaphor. The text critical apparatus generates two variant readings, a long one (τῆς δίης τῆς πιώτητος) and a short one (τῆς πιώτητος). The omissions (τῆς δίης) and the insertion of καὶ motivates Metzger (1971:526) to say: 'the widespread introduction of καὶ and the omission of τῆς δίης (p46 D* G itdsg al) are suspicious as ameliorating emendations.' Besides the problem arising from text critical apparatus the researcher is also confronted by another obstacle. This is to determine the meaning of the genitive (τῆς πιώτητος). This phrase has two connotations. It may be explained as an adjective, qualifying δίης (in the fat root), or as a genitive of apposition, defining more precisely what is meant by τῆς δίης.

Cranfield assesses (1979:567): 'what is actually shared by those that are co-sharers in the root is the fatness which derives from it — in the root, that is to say, in the fatness (of the root).’ This second explanation is preferable as it fits the context and offers insight into Paul’s theme and makes more sense.
Ramsay's interpretation leads to the illustration being marred. Here he identifies the *tertium comparationis* as being the fruit, although Paul does not use the word fruit. The *tertium* is the fatness of the sap of the olive tree of which grafts, both the cultivated and wild, partake. In this genitive construction there is an interaction between three nouns: *(ἡς ρίζης ἡς πιότητος)* and *(ἡς ἐλαιᾶς)*. The first concept A, *(ἡς ρίζης)* and the third, C *(ἡς ἐλαιᾶς)* are metaphorical, whilst the second B, *(ἡς πιότητος)* is the literal term. Analysis of the interplay between A and C is conducted first. The connotation of *(ἐλαιᾶς)* changes due to the influence of *(ρίζω)*. It has already been established that, in verse 16 *(ρίζω)* signifies the patriarchs. In view of the fact that *(ρίζω)* determines *(ἐλαιᾶς)* it is logical that its ‘fatness’ refers to the divine election, in which their unique worth is rooted. Michel (1966:276) writes: ‘die Fettigkeit der “Wurzel” in der Erwärmung, die den Erzvättern zuteil wurde, und die die gleiche ist wie die unsrige.’ This sharing of the Gentile Christians in the ‘fatness’ of the root, could have tempted them to despise the unfaithful Jews.

On the surface, it appears impossible to ascertain if the *(τῶς κλάδων)* refers to the broken off branches or to those that are still remaining on the tree. Due to the fact that Paul contrasts the branches of the wild olive with those of the cultivated variety it is more reasonable to opt for the first interpretation.

In verse 24 of Romans 11 Paul states in detail that the olive tree *(ἐλαιᾶς)* is a cultivated olive tree *(καλλιέλαιαν)*. By doing so he foregrounds God’s mercy to the underserved Jews and Gentiles. To counteract the Gentile Christians’ predisposition to boast of God’s mercy to them, Paul uses a thematic chiasmus. This can be schematized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verse 17</th>
<th>situation</th>
<th>a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verse 18a</td>
<td>μὴ κατακαυχῶ (boasting)</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verse 18b</td>
<td>εἰ δὲ κατακαυχᾶσαι (boasting)</td>
<td>b¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verse 18c</td>
<td>situation</td>
<td>a¹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the a-a¹ component, Paul outlines the situation which the Gentile Christians were in. A substantial segment of the Jews had turned from God to unfaithfulness. This had ‘opened the door’ for the Gentile Christians to share in the promises given by God to the patriarchs. In the second component of the chiasmus b-b¹ Paul warns the Gentile Christians of complacency. The function of this chiasmus is to impress these boastful Gentile Christians the need for humility. In verse 19 Paul again underlines the possibility that the Gentile Christians would see themselves as being superior to the rejected Jews. He highlights this by employing an antithetic chiasmus:

| ἐξεκλάσθησαν | a | verb |
| κλάδοι | b | noun |
God ostracises the unbelieving Jews (ἐξεκλάσθησαν), and welcomes (ἐγκεντρισθω) the believing Gentile Christians. This contrast is highlighted by the a-a¹ component of the chiasmus. In the b-b¹ component Paul specifies those who are affected by God’s acceptance and rejection. The (κλάδου) signifies the Jews and the (ἔγω) identifies the Gentile Christians.

This contrasting chiasmus spills over into antithetical parallelism:

τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ἐξεκλάσθησαν,  
τῇ πίστει ἔστηκας

There is an equivalence on the syntagmatic level of this parallelism, as the parts of speech are the same. There is an antithesis on the paradigmatic level where belief and unbelief are contrasted. The function of this parallelism is to give the reasons why the unbelieving Jews were rejected and to indicate why the believing Gentile Christians were accepted, or in the language of the metaphor were ‘grafted onto the tree.’ The unbelieving Jews compelled God to take drastic action and break them off. This opened the way for the Gentile Christians to replace them. Paul reinforces this event using another chiasmus to emphasize God’s contrasting dealings with the unfaithful Jews and the Gentile Christians:

χρηστότητα  
ἀποτομίαν  
ἀποτομία  
χρηστότης

The contrast in God’s action is concentrated in the antithesis between (χρηστότης) and (ἀποτομία). The former (χρηστότης), describes the kindness of God towards the Gentile Christians, whilst the latter (ἀποτομίαν) describes his severity towards the unfaithful Jews. Both these actions epitomize God’s just and merciful love.

These two attributes of God are contrasted in a new parallelism (v 22):

ἐπὶ μὲν τοὺς πεσόντας ἀποτομία  
ἐπὶ δὲ χρηστότης θεοῦ

Apart from the antithesis of the nouns, Paul describes the result of God’s (ἀποτομία) towards the unbelieving Jews by means of the verbal metaphor (πεσόντας). The result of God’s (χρηστότης) towards the Gentile Christians was given in verse 20 by way of the verbal metaphor (ἔστηκας). These two verbal metaphors are used in opposition to each other. The verbal metaphor (ἔστηκας) has a double meaning here. It can refer to a literal ‘standing in’ the olive tree (Murray 1965:2:87n 37) or it can be metaphorical. The metaphorical function may be the strongest due to the contrast with the metaphor (πεσόντας) and the prominence of the metaphor as a figure of style in this
whole pericope. The two metaphorical verbs (εστηκας) and (πεσόντας) are less explicit than the nouns used previously. These two verbs are both foci despite the fact that they are not vehicles and have the ability to change the nouns. The verb (εστηκας) can change the nominal metaphor (ἀγριελαιον) to mean Gentile Christians, while the antithetical verb (πεσόντας) can change the nominal metaphor (καλλιελαιον) to refer to a cultivated olive. Paul uses (εστηκας) to describe an action which is the result of a gracious interception. He uses (πεσόντας) to describe an action resulting from stumbling over an obstacle. These two verbs operate on the ethical-soteriological level. To express his concern about the egoism of the Gentile Christians, Paul employs another verbal metaphor (ἐκκοπήθη) in verse 22. This verb is the semantic equivalent of the verb which is used by Paul to describe God's action toward the unfaithful Jews (ἐξεκλάοθησαν). The unnamed tenor of (ἐκκοπήθη) is God, as the future passive verb is a passivum divinum. This verb expresses the prospect of a radical and tough removal of the Gentile Christians if they continue to boast over their new-found position. It is also true that God can restore the unfaithful Jews, the broken off branches, if they repent. Paul uses the same verb to describe this merciful action of God towards Jews and Gentile Christians (ἐνεκεντρίσθης/ἐγκεντροθήσονται in verse 17, 23).

Paul frames this pericope by using semantically equivalent verbs at the beginning (ἐξεκλάοθησαν, ἐνεκεντρίσθης verse 17) and at the end (ἐκκόπης, ἐνεκεντρίσθης verse 24) of the passage. Verse 24 consists of a statement summarizing what has preceded. These verbs are embedded in the parallelism:

κατὰ φύσιν ἐξεκόπης ἀγριελαιον
παρὰ φύσιν ἐνεκεντρίσθης

The keyword in this parallelism is (φύσιν). The prepositions (κατὰ) and (παρὰ) give different significance to the nouns they govern. The two prepositions are antithetical. The prepositional phrase (κατὰ φύσιν) is often understood as referring to the wild olive tree as being a wild olive tree (AV, RV Moffat, RSV, Barrett and Käsemann). Cranfield's (1979:570) objection to this kind of translation is quite legitimate, noting that 'there is no point in saying that a wild olive tree is by nature a wild olive tree; for it can hardly be a wild olive tree otherwise than by nature.' Köster (1974:271) rectifies this translation convincingly, writing that:

in this metaphor of the cultivated olive (Israel) and the wild olive (the Gentiles) φύσις is that which has grown "naturally" and with no artificial intervention. "Against the nature" of that which "by nature" is a wild olive, the branches...have been grafted into a tree of another kind the good olive. They thus have no advantage over the branches which correspond by nature to this good olive, having grown upon it.
The objections of Cranfield and Köster are endorsed by the parallelism, as \((\piαρά \, φύσιν)\) is used in formal contrast to \((κατά \, φύσιν)\). It is contrary to nature for a branch of one kind of olive type to grow from the stem of another kind of olive tree. This contrast is emphasized by the contrasting nouns \(\acute{αγριελαιον}\) (wild olive) and \(καλλιελαιον\) (cultivated olive). The two verbs \(\epsilon\varepsilonκότης\) and \(\epsilon\nu\varepsilonκτεντρίσθης\) are both in the passive. Once again God is the understood agent of these verbs.

Paul wants the Gentile Christians to understand that if God has the ability to graft a branch from a wild olive onto a cultivated tree, which is an unnatural process, then He is equally able to graft branches which have been cut off the cultivated olive onto the cultivated olive, a natural process. Sanday and Headlam (1962:30) write that the message is: ‘the restoration of Israel is an easier process than the call of the Gentiles’.

In conclusion, it is important to ask why Paul has used the olive tree and not the vine, which figures more often in the New Testament? A possible reason is that he was developing important ecclesiological notions. The employment of the metaphor of the olive tree results in his achievement of two goals. Firstly he is able to explain the mystery of Israel’s apparent rejection of the Messiah, and secondly, it provides an opportunity to the Gentile Christians not to boast about their new, undeserved status before God and to the Jews who had rejected the Messiah.

It is clear that Paul was well versed in the essence of the metaphor, albeit that many modern theoretical concepts would have been strange to him. By employing this figure of style Paul succeeds in involving the reader or audience in the reception of the text as they start searching for the meaning of the metaphor. Furthermore, a metaphor has more impact on the exegesis when it operates as part of a cluster instead of being used on its own. Paul begins this pericope with a metaphor of the \((\alphaπαρχή)\) and \(\phiοράμω\) as a stepping-stone for an extended metaphor on the \(\acute{αγριελαιος}\) and the \(καλλιελαιος\). He uses these to foreground the ontological status of both the unbelieving Jews and the believing Gentile Christians.

The message of the olive tree metaphor is foregrounded by parallelisms quoted in the discussion.

In addition to the attention which a metaphor focusses on certain dogmatic truths, in this case the mystery of God’s action regarding the Jews and the Gentile Christian, it has the subsidiary function of being a helpful mechanism in the subdivision of a letter into smaller semantic units. The fact that the olive tree metaphor was regarded as illogical illustrates that logic cannot be used as the yardstick. The success of the metaphor should rather be judged on its functionality. On the surface, the metaphor of the olive is horticulturally inaccurate, but with the aid of a sound theory it becomes a gem of pleasure and insight.
Soskice's (1985:24, 27) option for the substitution theory for metaphor has the innate ability to destroy metaphors during translation. According to her:

metaphor is a consequence of deviancy in word usage....it is a decorative way of saying what could be said literally [and therefore] a given metaphor could be suppressed with no detriment to the cognitive content of the text in which it was found.

To combat this danger of the substitution theory the translator should adhere to the interaction theory.¹

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