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Pardon

In this chapter, I turn to what is in a certain sense the most difficult question in attempting to think Paul with the aid of Derrida. The question of forgiveness in Paul's thinking is difficult first because Paul does not use the term. It simply has no place in his vocabulary.[1] But what makes the discussion of the question all the more difficult is that long centuries of the reading of Paul's letter to the Romans have nevertheless contrived to find the theme of forgiveness everywhere, as if it were all that Paul had to say. Indeed, it is this by now well-established orthodoxy in the reading of Paul that makes divine absolution for all sins of the past the sole meaning of justification and thus eliminates from Paul any interest in the question of the call and claim of justice. This call and claim is eliminated in favor of an announced absolution whose only condition is the agreed price of faith understood as belief and/or adherence to the institution that is authorized to administer this absolution on behalf of the divine. The difficulty, then, that we incur in turning to this question is that of again installing forgiveness as a substitute for, rather than the instigation of, justice.[2]

Derrida on Forgiveness

It is precisely with respect to this conundrum that I believe Derrida's own reflections on forgiveness may offer us some help. However, the discussion of forgiveness in Derrida is itself not without daunting challenges for the reader. This is true above all now because the issues associated with

this term have been the theme of Derrida's ongoing seminar for the last several years, and he had even suggested that this might continue to be true so long as he continued to teach.[3] As a consequence, whatever one says based on already published texts of Derrida is certain to be superseded by subsequent publication of work already well underway.

Fortunately, it is not our task here to present an essay on "forgiveness according to Derrida," but rather to see how Derrida's thinking about forgiveness can give us some perspective on the way in which something like forgiveness may play a certain role in the thought of Paul in spite of the fact that it is not thematized as such. The challenge will be to see whether we may be helped to see in what way divine pardon serves rather than opposes divine justice and the claim of that justice on those who are addressed by the "good news" concerning messiah Jesus.

I will follow my normal procedure of first seeking to clarify the place of the thinking of forgiveness in Derrida's work, especially in relation to the other issues with which I have been dealing. I will then look at some of the specific features of forgiveness that also distinguish it from those prior themes, that is, in what way it leads us beyond what we have heretofore learned from our reading of Derrida. Thus armed, I will attempt to think the terminological absence as well as the prodigious effects of this question in the thought of Paul, especially in Romans. This will enable me to indicate how the traditional reading of Paul may need to be revised if the question of justice is not to be abrogated by talk of forgiveness and its cognates.

Forgiveness and the Aporia

We begin by noticing that Derrida's reflections on forgiveness tie it directly to the aporetic structure that we have come to see with respect to such issues as gift and hospitality. As recently as *Without Alibi*, the question of forgiveness and those of gift and hospitality have been linked—for example, in terms of a certain passivity that "marks the experience of all unconditional and pure events as such (gift, forgiveness, hospitality, death)" ("Provocation," xxxiii). As such an unconditional or pure event, forgiveness "(granted or asked for), the address of forgiveness, must forever remain . . . heterogeneous to any determination in the order of knowledge" ("To Forgive," in *Questioning God*, 36). As that which is heterogeneous to knowledge, it is in a certain sense "mad." But Derrida explains, "if I say, as I think, that forgiveness is mad, and that it must remain a madness of the impossible, this is certainly not to exclude or disqualify it. It is even, per-

haps, the only thing that arrives, that surprises, like a revolution, the ordinary course of history, politics, and law. Because that means that it remains heterogeneous to the order of politics or of the juridical as they are ordinarily understood" (*On Cosmopolitanism*, 39). As is regularly the case, Derrida can say of forgiveness, as he says of other aporetic structures (the gift, for example), "if there is such a thing." But because this phrase is regularly misunderstood to mean that Derrida denies the reality of that which is so qualified, he has had to explain, "When I say, 'if there is such a thing,' I do not mean that I doubt the possible occurrence of such a thing. I mean that, if forgiveness happens, then this experience should not become the object of a sentence of the kind 'S is p'" (*Questioning God*, 53). Forgiveness, then, like hospitality and duty without or beyond debt, and the gift share a similar character. In order to see how they are related to one another beyond such a similarity of aporetic structure, I turn to the way forgiveness has been implicated in his discussion of these questions.

We have seen that the theme of welcome or of hospitality is one that has been decisive for Derrida in developing his views on a sort of politics, or cosmopolitics. It may be helpful to see how forgiveness is related to this theme of hospitality. The main text where this has been discussed is in the seminar notes published as "Hostipitality" in *Acts of Religion*. In the session of February 12, 1997, the theme is forgiveness. The question of forgiveness is first broached as the request of the visitor whose arrival is an interruption of, or intrusion on, the "host." "Whoever asks for hospitality, asks, in a way, for forgiveness and whoever offers hospitality grants forgiveness" ("Hostipitality," 380). Perhaps this is the most obvious sense in which forgiveness is implicated in the scene of hospitality. The other approaches and says, "pardon me." And the host insofar as host—that is, as welcoming or receiving the visitant—grants forgiveness by precisely dismissing the request: it is nothing, don't worry about it, you are welcome. But perhaps things are not at all so simple as this first impression might lead us to expect. Derrida suggests, "one should not only say that forgiveness granted to the other is the supreme gift and therefore hospitality par excellence. It is also because, inversely and first of all, the welcoming one must ask for forgiveness from the welcomed one even prior to the former's having to forgive. For one is always failing, lacking hospitality" ("Hostipitality," 380). And he explains: "forgiveness for my lack of preparation, for an irreducible and constitutive unpreparedness" (380).

Is this an exaggeration? It depends on whether there is a real hospitality to be thought—that is, one that defines itself by its very welcome and thus by its readiness to welcome, to make way for, place for, home for, the other. But one can never be ready for this; one can never succeed in being, in the full and necessary sense, a host. One's welcome is always too little, too late. "Please come in," we might say; "the house is such a mess," we might say; "I have only soda in the fridge and two-day-old cookies; please pardon my lack of hospitality." Is this mere "formality"? Or is what is at stake here the very heart of what it means to be welcoming of another, any other? Is it not the case that whenever it is a question of giving and the giving of hospitality, I must ask for "forgiveness for not having known how to give" (381). Derrida continues: "Thus, I have to ask the hôte for forgiveness because, unable to ever receive and give him enough, I always abandon him too much, but inversely, in asking for forgiveness and in receiving from him the forgiveness of him, I abandon myself to him" ("Hostipitality," 389). It is precisely here that we again encounter the motif of the host as hostage to the other, as one who must abandon "himself" to the forgiveness of the other.

In this discussion of forgiveness and hospitality, we are returned to the question of duty and the duty beyond debt. If the host must forgive the guest for the intrusion, and if the guest must forgive the host for not knowing how or not being prepared to welcome—all this in order for the event of hospitality, if there is such a thing, to take place—then what is the character of this duty, the duty to forgive? Derrida returns us here to the by now familiar logic, if that is what it is, of duty beyond debt:

> Must one do the impossible for forgiveness to arrive as such? Perhaps, but this could never be established as a law, a norm, a rule, or a duty. There should not be any *il faut* for forgiveness. Forgiveness "must" always remain unmotivated and unpredictable. One never gives or forgives "in accordance with duty" (*pflichmässig*), or even "from duty" (*eigentlich aus Pflicht*), to use the Kantian distinction. One forgives, if one forgives, beyond any categorical imperative, beyond debt and obligation. And yet one *should* [*il faudrait*] forgive. (*Negotiations*, 351)

Forgiveness and Gift

Although the bulk of Derrida's reflections on forgiveness come later, it was already the case in *Given Time* that forgiveness had been linked to the question of hospitality and so to that of gift, for there he speaks of the unrest "of the gift as well as forgiveness . . . but beyond duty and debt" (69). And this linkage is all the more evident in the seminar notes for

"Hosripitality": "Here perhaps is a condition [the possibiliry of the impossible, the impossible of the possible] rhat forgiveness shares with the gift—and therefote with hospitality, which gives without return or else is nothing. Beyond the formal analogy, this perhaps also means thar one affixes irs condition of impossibility to the other: the gift to forgiveness ot forgiveness to the gift, hospitality to forgivcness and fotgiveness to hospitality" (386). Hete it is no longer, as he suggests, simply a matter of a formal analogy, a similatity or even identity of structure, but a rigorous concatenation or mutual coimplication of these ideas or (quasi) concepts.[4] It is, however, in a subsequent essay, "To Forgive: The Unfotgivable and the Imprescriptible," in *Questioning God*, that Derrida makes some of his boldest statements about the relation of gift and forgiveness. Here he begins with the play between *don* (gift) and par-don and will suggest again a basic structutal similarity: "Thus forgiveness, if it is possible, if there is such a thing, is not possible, it exists only by exempting itself from the law of the possible . . . and this is what it would have in common with the gift" (48).[5] But he suggests the importance of not confusing these notions, of not confusing, that is, gift and forgiveness. "One must neither yield to these analogies between the gift and forgiveness nor, of course, neglect their necessity" (22). Above all, this means making clear that they are not simply the same thing: "Thus no gift without forgiveness, and no forgiveness without gift, but the two are, above all, not the same thing" (22). Now already here we may begin to see the potential relevance of Derrida's reflections for the problem that we noted at the outset, namely that the gift or grace that is the center of Paul's attention in much of Romans has in turn been understood entirely in terms of forgiveness. Thus if it is possible to institute here a rigorous distinction as well as indissociahility, then we may bc on out way to a better understanding of Paul than has been afforded by the tradition that has swallowed up gift in forgiveness, a forgiveness that then becomes the whole meaning of justification, thereby abolishing the claim of justice. But in what would such a rigorous distinction consist? How, given the indissociability of gift and forgiveness, of *don* and par-don, and given their structural homology, will it be possible to clearly distingnish the one from the othet?

Derrida suggests that the, or one of the, basic differences between forgiveness and gift is that forgiveness concerns itself above all with rhe past: "The past is the past, the event took place, the wrong took place, and this past, the memory of this past, remains irreducible, uncompromising.

This is one way forgiveness is different from the gift, which in principle does not concern the pasr" (31). If the gift does nor primarily concern itself with rhe past, we should also recall that it cannot, as we saw in the earlier discussion of rhe gifr, be located simply in the present either without abolishing itself as "present"—that is, as gift. Thus the gift aims irself toward the future. But forgiveness necessarily deals with the past, with what has already come to pass, or with what has already failed to he done. Yet precisely here, in this distinction of times, this temporalization, we may also see the necessary relation between forgiveness and gift. Indeed, in order to open itself toward a future, the grip of the past, its fatality, must be interrupted. Accordingly, forgiveness may be the necessary antecedent of gift. This is how Derrida says it: "as if forgiveness, far from being a modification or a secondary complication or a complication that arises out of the gift, were in truth its first and final truth. Forgiveness as the impossible truth of the impossible gift. Before the gift, forgiveness" (48). It is as if in order to launch the giving of the gift, in order to break open the law of the past, its iron determination, there bad to be a suspension or interruption of the past, a suspension named here "forgiveness."[6]

This will mean, as we shall see, that gift or grace is by no means exhausted by a reference to the past (as forgiveness), but rather it has the structure of a promise. This, of course, was true for Paul as well, bccause the model of grace or gift had heen the promise given to Abraham concerning the future, a future of land and progeny, and this promise has heen expanded, according to Paul, to include the resurrection of the dead and libetation of creation. Thus, however much forgiveness may be necessary to gift (and so to promise), it cannot be taken to be the whole of the gift, but rather its necessary, if insufficient, condition.

Forgiveness and Law

If, despite their difference, forgiveness does have something of the character of gift, then we would expect it to stand in some basic tension with law.[7] And this is precisely what we do find in "On Forgiveness" in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001), where Derrida writes, in a now familiar gesture: "Forgiveness is often confounded, sometimes in a calculated fashion, with relared themes: excuse, regret, amnesty, prescription, etc.; so many significations of which certain come under law, a penal law from which forgiveness tnust in principle remain heterogeneous and irreducible" (27). This may also be expressed in relation to the way in which forgiveness

has in view a return to normalcy as is sometimes or even normally the case in political instances of amnesty or a "truth and reconciliation commission." He writes, "each time it aims to re-establish normality . . . then the work of forgiveness is not pure. . . . Forgiveness is not, it *should not be*, normal, normative, normalizing. It *should* remain exceptional and extraordinary, in the face of the impossible: as if it interrupted the ordinary course of historical temporality" (32). In this way, forgiveness, like the gift, may be understood as the interruption or exceeding of a certain economy. And it is this precisely as also interrupting "the ordinary course of historical temporality"—that is, as breaking the hold of the past, its over and doneness, in such a way as to make place for the coming of the new.

The regular way that this impossibility of forgiveness comes to expression in Derrida's thought is in the relation between a conditional and an unconditional forgiveness. He writes, "I remain 'torn' (between a 'hyperbolic' ethical vision of forgiveness, pure forgiveness, and the reality of a society at work in pragmatic processes of reconciliation). But without power, desire, or need to decide. The two poles are irreducible to one another certainly, but they remain indissociable" (51). This situation of irreducibility and indissociability will remind us of the relation between gift and economy or that between justice and law. And Derrida makes this explicit:

> if our idea of forgiveness falls into ruins as soon as it is deprived of its absolute reference, namely its unconditional purity, it remains nonetheless inseparable from what is heterogeneous to it, namely the order of conditions, repentance, transformation, as many things as allow it to inscribe itself in history, law, politics, existence itself. These two poles, *the unconditional and the conditional*, are absolutely heterogeneous, and must remain irreducible to one another. They are nonetheless indissociable. (44)

Just as the gift must enter into the structure of exchange from which it also remains hetetogeneous, and the claim of justice be inscribed in the structure of law from which it always remains fundamentally alien, so also with true forgiveness and the conditionality of forgiveness with which it is often confused.[8]

The heterogeneity of conditional and unconditional forgiveness comes to expression in a certain tension within the western tradition concerning forgiveness. Speaking of the equivocation of tradition (but here it is the Christian tradition, it seems), Derrida writes, "Sometimes, forgiveness (given by God, or inspired by divine prescription) must be a gracious gift, without exchange and without condition; sometimes it requires, as its

minimal condition, the repentance and transformation of the sinner" (44) This answers well to what we find in certain New Testament texts, perhaps most especially in Matthew, where there is an attempt to think the relation between divine forgiveness and the forgiveness that is extended to the neighbor, the brother or sister. This New Testament text is one to which Derrida has given considerable attention, most notably in *The Gift of Death*. In Matthew we find the insistence that the divine forgiveness is in a certain way dependent npon the forgiveness of the neighbor: just as you forgive, so also will you be forgiven (Matthew 6:14–15). In one way, both are unconditional in that they do not seem to depend on a prior worthiness, a prior repentance, or even a ptior confession. Nevertheless, the forgiveness granted by the divine is said to echo the forgiveness that we grant to one another.[9] What will have to become cleat, however, is in what way what we can discover in Paul answers either to the conditionality or the nnconditionality of forgiveness as Derrida has distinguished them.

However, the hererogeneity between unconditional and conditional forgiveness cannot be permitted to become simply one of opposition. It must also be clear that they are indissociable. Thus Derrida writes, "Yet the distinction between unconditionality and conditionality is shifty enough not to let itself be determined as a simple opposition. The unconditional and the conditional ate, certainly, absolutely heterogeneous, and this forever, on either side of a limit, but they are also indissociable. There is in the movement, in the motion of unconditional forgiveness, an inner exigency of becoming effective, manifest, determined, and, in determining itself, bending to conditionality" ("To Forgive," 45). We shall see bow this plays itself out on the public or political stage in a moment.

One of the most important ways in which Derrida has sought to clarify the aporetic structure of forgiveness or "pure fotgiveness" or "unconditional forgiveness" is by means of associating this forgiveness with the question of the unforgivable. It is precisely here that the "impossibility" of forgiveness and thus its distinction from an economy of conditionality comes properly into view. Thus, in *Negotiations*, "As if it were possible," referring to his ongoing seminar, Derrida writes, "one only forgives the unforgivable. By only forgiving what is already forgivable, one forgives nothing. Consequently fotgiveness is only possible, as such, where faced with the unforgivable, it seems thus impossible" (349). A similar point is made in his seminar on hospitality that preceded the seminar theme of forgiveness (and perjury): "The impossibility of forgiveness offers itself to

rhought, in truth, as its sole possihility. Why is forgiveness impossible?. . . . Simply because what there is to forgive must be, and musr remain, unforgivable. If forgiveness is possible, if there is forgiveness, ir must forgive the unforgivable—such is the logical aporia. [. . .] If one had to forgive only what is forgivable, even excusable, venial, as one says, or insignificant, then one would not forgive. One would excuse, forgive, erase, one would not be granting forgiveness" (Hostipitality, 385).

As we can readily see, the conditionality of forgiveness is precisely related to the forgivable, to that which can, undet cettain circumstances, be excused, be erased from memory. Here no radical break with the past is involved; the past fault is simply erased as having had no ineluctable consequences for the present or the future; it can become past, really past: "forget about it," we say. Or the past fault is integrated into the economy by means of a kind of countereconomy of supplemental effects (confession, repentance, amendment) that remain within the horizon of a tetributive economy. You confess, I forgive, tit for tat. In either case, the past fault is completely forgivable, either because it was trivial (or venial) or because a supplemental causal nexus is established alongside the one set in train by the fault, one that depends on the work of confession, conttition, and so on. In each case, the law remains in force: the law of temporality, the law of legality, the law of retributive economy. Nothing astonishing has happened; nothing new has arrived.

But forgiveness, if there is such a thing, has, as we have repeatedly seen, a far different structure. It has to do with the impossible. And this means that forgiveness, if it happens, is the forgiveness of what cannot be excused, cannot be forgotten, cannot be erased—in short, with what cannot be forgiven, with what is unforgivable. But what is it that is unforgivable? What is it that is so monstrous a crime, a violation, that it cannot fall within the scope of legality, or of an economy of mitigation or excuse or worthiness?

Here Derrida's reflections are determined by his observations concerning a certain geopolitical phenomenon that is closely associated with what we saw in the last chapter concerning cosmopolitanism and the emergence of something like international law. Accotdingly, in order to clarify the character of the unforgivable, we must return to the scene of the *mondialisation* of politics. In *Negotiations*, Dettida rematks, "Today there is a globalization, a global dramatization of the scene of repentance and of asking forgiveness. It is conditioned both by the ground swell of our Abrahamic heritage and the new position of international law" (381). He refers here, first, to rhe way in which governments acknowledge complicity in past crimes and ask for forgiveness. Thus, fot example, he refers to the Japanese prime minister asking for forgiveness for certain crimes committed by Japanese forces in the period of World War II. More recently, Derrida has discussed the acknowledgment of responsibility for the actions of the Vichy govetnment in Ftance during the same period, an acknowledgment that had been rejected by Mitterrand but that has now been admitted by Chitac on behalf of the Ftench state.[10] Similarly, the United States has even gone so far as to admit to responsibility for the mistreatment of its Japanese Ametican citizens duting World War II (but not for the staggering civilian casualties of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), and even with respect to the institution of slavety (although not admitting to the appropriateness of claims for reparations).

In genetal, these are actions undertaken by officials far removed ftom actual responsibility. A recent exception is the tesignation of the Dutch government on account of responsibility for not halting genocidal practices in ateas of the former Yugoslavia under its (at least nominal) protection. However unevenly, and with quite divetgent degrees of candor, there is nevertheless a noticeable phenomenon of governments and quasi-govetnmental agencies (the Vatican, for example, or even the Southern Baptist convention with respect to slavery, if not tacism) acknowledging culpability with respect to actions taken or not taken in the past that tesulted in widespread violation of the dignity and life of multitudes of human beings. It is of this phenomenon that Derrida is speaking when he says, "the globalization of forgiveness resembles an immense scene of confession in ptogress, thus a vittually Christian convulsion-conversion-confession, a process of Christianisation which has no more need for the Christian chutch" (*On Cosmopolitanism*, 31).[11] What is notable, as Dettida suggests, is that peoples and states that have no connection with Christianity (the government of Japan, for example) seem nevertheless to be engaged in a quasi-Christian exercise of public acts of confession, conttition, and repentance and to be seeking some sort of absolution thereby. It is in this situation that Derrida sees the coming to pass of a kind of Christianity without the church, without explicit reliance upon the "Christian tradition," but that still has an unmistakable connection to that tradition.

If the matter were left here, we would still be in the otder of an economy of excuse or confession that seeks to restore normalcy (smoothing re-

lations between Japan and Korea, for example, or between the Vatican and Israel).[12] But this phenomenon is intimarely connected with another. For the crimes that are thus confessed are or seem to be "crimes againsr humanity." "Nothing less than the human race would suddenly come and accuse itself publicly, dramatically, of all the crimes that have indeed been committed by it against itself, 'against humanity'" (*Negotiations*, 383). That which links the public dramas of confession and repentance to the unforgivable is precisely that the terms in which this scene is articulated is that of crimes against humanity. It is the monstrosity of such crimes, that they violate humanity "as such," that seems to make the dramaturgy of confession and asked-for forgiveness so compelling.

The very idea of crimes against humanity derives from the Nuremhetg trials but has gained ground quite rapidly in the last decade or so. It has become the subject of the trihunals dealing with what occurred in the former Yugoslavia and is at wotk in a quite different way in Rwanda. It was the subject of an unparalleled attempt to attaign Pinochet for ctimes committed against his own people when he was head of state and now with attempts on the part of Chile's govetnment to depose Henry Kissinger. There is obviously something going on here that has achieved an astonishing momentum, in spite of the fact that the United States seeks to exempt itself from any possible application of the international law it so often piously invokes. But in this case, what is so astonishing is not the arrogance of the hegemon (when has that not been true in history?) but the fact that this self-claimed exemption is so cleatly seen to he inexcusable by the overwhelming majotity of govetnments and peoples.[13]

For what has happened is that quite suddenly, and no doubt as a consequence of the Holocaust and its unspeakable enormity, the very notion of crimes against humanity has become common currency in international political discussion and institutionalization. As this has hecome more and more a feature of thought in telation to the *mondialisation* of something like international law, it becomes increasingly cleat that it is impossible to contain the notion of crimes against humanity to certain exceptional regimes or periods. For as Derrida has noted, "All humans are the heits, at least, of people or of events that were matked, in an indelible way, by 'crimes against humanity'" (*Negotiations*, 383). Although this is certainly coming to be visible in relation to the histoty of the West, at least as concetns the inextticable association of that history with colonial conquest, slave ttade, and world war, it is also not limited to the West, as the example of Japan suggests.

However, what still remains to he clarified is how it is that cerrain crimes, even if these are not isolated insrances but are somehow common to all nations and rhus all peoples, come to be seen as especially monsrrous and as being therefore not crimes against certain humans, for example, but crimes against humanity as such.[14] It is precisely here that Dettida sees rhe relevance of a certain Abrahamic ttadition and above all of a certain residual or implicit Chtistianity. Here is what he writes in *Negotiations* (and the end of this citation will be familiar to one who has read, as we did earlier, what he has said in "On Forgiveness"): "if consequently, any crime against humanity touches what is most sacred in the living, and thus already touches the divine in man, some God-become-man or some man-become God-by-God (the death of man and the death of God would betray the same crime here) then the globalization [*mondialisation*] of forgiveness resembles a huge process in progress, an endless procession of repentants, thus a virtually Christian convulsion-conversion-confession, a work of Chtistianization that no longer needs the church or missionaries" (384).

What Derrida says here is rather allusive. But what is clearly at stake is that the characteт of a crime against humanity is that it is felt to be in some way an assault upon what is divine, even if it is "the divine in man" or what is sacred or divine in the human as such. Now we know that for Derrida "every other is wholly other" and that this suggests that the violation of any other is the violation of that which is "wholly other" and is in that sense at least the violation of the divine, the divine in or as human.[15]

But what Dettida does indicate here seems to go tather beyond his more characteristic formulation of *tout autre est tout autre*, or "every other is wholly other." For instead he provocatively invokes an entire theological tradition concerning something like incarnation or inhumanation. "Some God-hecome-man" or even "some man-become-God-by-God." Now here it seems to me that Derrida is deliberately flitting with something like a "christological" tradition. And his formulation, which begins with something like a traditional (Johanine) christology of God-hecome-man, is corrected (almost) to reflect what seems in fact to be a Pauline formulation, one that leads off Paul's discussion in Romans when he speaks of the messiah Jesus as having been designated "son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead" (1:4)—that is, the messiah designated or made divine by the divine (spirit) precisely in or through the resurrection from the dead, that is, in the overturning of the verdict of public authorities whose verdict is therefore not only unjust but also impious.

It is not clear how much we should read into this rather remarkable formulation of Derrida's. But at the very least it may be read as an invitation to explore further the question of the way in which violation is a violation of the divine because it is a violation of the human (and vice versa) and that therefore pardon, if there is such a thing in Paul, is directed precisely to what is, in this sense, unforgivable. Is it the case, for example, that what is unforgivable, or inexcusable, or infinitely grave, is the damage inflicted on the neighbor that is at the same time a violation of the sanctity of life, of the dignity of that which is "the image of God"?

Paul on "Amnesty"

We have already indicated the twofold problem in speaking of forgiveness in Paul. The first is that Paul himself does not speak of forgiveness. The second is that (many of) his readers have scarcely found anything else and so have lost sight of the claim of justice. Thus, if, in spite of the absence of forgiveness as a theme, we find it to be of significance, we run the risk of abolishing the claim of justice in favor of a forgiveness that abolishes justice. Let us deal with the first issue first, and the rest of the discussion will attempt to deal with the second.

Forgiveness and/or Blessedness

We begin with the letters that are now by a kind of scholarly consensus attributed to Paul. In these letters, the only use of the term for forgiveness (*aphiein*) is found in Romans, but it is in the middle of a quotation from the Psalms (attributed here to David).[16] In addition, the term appears in two letters whose Pauline authorship is in dispute, namely Ephesians and Colossians. The term does not appear in any of the other letters that are now attributed to Paul: 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, 1 Thessalonians.

This is remarkable in itself, because one would be led to suppose from the history of western theology, and especially Protestant theology, that Paul is the author of the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins as the basic, indeed exclusive, meaning of the term *justification.*

The occurrence of the term for forgiveness comes in Romans 4:7. Paul has just introduced the figure of Abraham and has begun to make clear the distinction between faith as trust and faithfulness on the one

hand, and work, wages, debt on the other. Thus it is the reliance on the one who makes just the ungodly that itself produces justice (4:5). He then writes, "So also David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons justice apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the one against whom the LORD will not reckon sin.'" Paul then continues, "Is this blessedness, then, pronounced only on the circumcised, or also the uncircumcised?" What introduces the citation and follows from it is precisely "blessedness," and it is this that seems to connect what Paul is saying to the citation from Psalm 32:1–2, in which the term also occurs twice. At no point is it Paul's argument, for example, that Abraham was a "sinner," that he was guilty of an infraction of the law or of a disregard for justice. Indeed, it seems that all that could at this point be alleged against Abraham was that he was ignorant of God, that he had not yet been called or encountered by the divine. In any case, it is no part of Paul's argument to emphasize either that Abraham was a sinner or that he was "forgiven"; indeed, Paul is at pains to separate Abraham from the imputation of sin, because as he himself says, "where there is no law there is no violation"(4:15).

Instead, what Paul emphasizes is Abraham's "blessedness," which comes from his being called by God and his responding to that call with trust and obedience. Thus the emphasis of Paul's argument is not on the past of Abraham (who he was before hearing and heeding the call of the divine), but on Abraham's future. For it is this to which he is pointed by the call of the divine which is therefore "promise": "the promise that he would inherit the world."

But if Paul had no intention of dealing with the question of forgiveness announced in the Psalm, why does he then invoke the Psalm? The most obvious answer is that he has the Psalms on his mind because he has quoted a number of them in a lengthy catena of Psalms regarding universal or general injustice (3:10–18). Thus this last citation marks a new beginning that turns away from the past indicated by the indictments of 3:10–18. The model for this beginning is not, however, the "blessedness" of something like forgiveness, but rather the blessedness of inclusion in the promise made to Abraham, an inclusion made real through sharing in the same sort of reliance on the word of promise itself. Thus forgiveness has here the place simply of making it possible to assert that the new can begin, the new that is indicated by the promise. Forgiveness has the role of putting humanity again in the position of Abraham, a position anterior to the law

(which as Galatians has said came 430 years later but which in Romans 4 appears to be the situation anterior to the command regarding circumcision). It is then the necessary condition of gift or grace but is not yet that gift or grace itself, not yet the promise to which faith and so the gift of justice corresponds. Because Paul is most concerned with precisely that gift or grace, he is not preoccupied with forgiveness. Here, as elsewhere, he is not looking backward to the past but pressing ahead (Philippians 3:13), in response to the promise that makes justice possible beyond the law.

Accordingly, whatever is to be said about forgiveness in Paul must respect the rather preliminary and presuppositional character of this idea in his thought. If we respect the tacitness and preliminary character of the idea of forgiveness, we can nonetheless verify certain features of this question that are illuminated by what we have read of Derrida.

Graciousness and/or Forgiveness

There is one point at which we may find rather surprising confirmation of some of the things that Derrida has maintained about forgiveness in what may also be an illuminating mistranslation of Paul. The English reader of the Bible will recall that there is another point at which Paul seems to speak of forgiveness in his letters. It occurs in 2 Corinthians, where what is in view is a person who had been excluded from the community on account of some outrageous act. It is possible (I think probable) that the case in point is that referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:1–5 of the man who is having carnal relations with his (step) mother. In 2 Corinthians, Paul writes, "this punishment by the majority is enough for such a person; so now instead you should forgive and console him, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. . . . Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of messiah" (2:6–8, 10). The unwary may suppose that Paul is using a term that would normally be translated as "forgive" (*aphiein*) here.[17] But in fact, Paul is using a term that, although it appears elsewhere in his writings, is never otherwise translated as "forgive." The term is the verb form of *charis* (*chariszomai*), that is, gift or grace, and has the sense of be gracious to or favorable to. We may get some sense of how this works if we attempt a retranslation of the passage trying to bring out the sense of grace or favor. If we take the punishment suggested in 1 Corinthians 5 as our starting point,

a kind of excommunication or expulsion from the community, this will be even more evident. The passage in 2 Corinthians would then read: "This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person; so now instead you should welcome [or be gracious to] and console him, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him" (2:6–8). Actually we can see that the idea of welcoming and of being favorably disposed or gracious to someone comports better with the sense of "console" and "love" than what is often known and practiced as "forgiveness." This may even come to expression in the odd phrase to which we may return that concludes the admonition: "Anyone you favor, I also favor. What I have welcomed (or been gracious to) if I have favored any, has been for your sake" (2:10). To be sure there is a change of heart that is at stake here, but it is a change of heart on the part of the community (and subsequently on the part of Paul). Although such a change of heart may be expressed as forgiveness, it is all the more the case that it comes to expression as a gracious welcome and inclusion of the one who had been excluded. And this is precisely conformable to the situation that Paul has expressed by means of the nominative form of grace (*charis*) as the action of the divine that includes the excluded. It is then this gift, rather than the forgiveness that may accompany or even anticipate it, that is the focus of Paul's concern.

Thus, what Paul is saying has nothing to do with a penitential situation. Rather, what Paul is doing is suggesting that one who had been excluded now be welcomed and this by means of a term that has generally been associated with gift. What comes to expression here then is the intimate association between gift and welcome and something like forgiveness that Derrida has claimed to be true in his discussion of forgiveness, even though he has not to my knowledge availed himself of the semantic resources in Pauline Greek to drive home this point. It may therefore be useful to attend further to this semantic field.

The point may be even clearer if we include the use of this term in so-called Deutero-Pauline texts. Thus in Colossians we have, "Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord [or Messiah] has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (3:13); and in Ephesians, we have, "and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in messiah has forgiven you" (4:32). In neither case is the word for *forgiveness* used in the Greek; in both cases it is the word normally translated as being favorable or gracious to an-

other. In both cases, we have what appears to be a rather exact parallel to Paul's exhortation in Romans to "welcome one another" (Romans 15:7). That is, what is in view is the coimplication of gift and welcome that goes beyond debt and that seems to presuppose something like forgiveness even if, contrary to the translated appearances, that is not what seems to be foregrounded by the language itself. In the text from Ephesians, indeed it is clear that we should actually prefer a translation that avoids the sense of forgiveness. Thus the passage would read: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, being gracious to one another just as God in Messiah has been gracious to you." Being kind, tenderhearted, gracious, favorable, or even hospitable to one another are notions that seem to comport better with one another than the insertion of the idea of "forgiveness" here. Of course, we might say with Derrida that gift and welcome presuppose forgiveness in general and so also here, but the emphasis for Paul seems to lie elsewhere, as we have seen to be characteristic of Paul, even where the term for forgiveness does (fleetingly) appear.

The related text from Colossians does seem to at least suggest somewhat more prominently the situation of a presupposed forgiveness because it takes into account the possibility that the members of the community may have a "complaint" against one another. That is, the welcome or graciousness must overcome what may be a preexisting situation of irritation or even animosity. (There is no suggestion, however, of something like sin here in the ordinary sense.) The overcoming of such a past animosity or barrier to gift or hospitality is precisely what may suggest the sense of forgiveness even if that is by no means all that is at stake here.

I have been emphasizing the predominance of the notion of graciousness or even hospitality or welcome in the passages where *charizomai* is translated as "forgive." The grounds for emphasizing this is perhaps more evident if we recall that in the majority of the occurrences of this term, the translation is unarguably one of gift or grant. Thus, for example, in Romans 8:32, 1 Corinthians 2:12, and Galatians 3:18, the English translation correctly emphasizes gracious gift, freely given. It does seem, then, that the favor of gift (grace) and the welcome of the other, in spite of all differences, seem to suggest, at least to translators, something like forgiveness as the presupposition, although sometimes this sense seems to be accorded an undue prominence, even to the point of an exclusive meaning.[18]

This is not, however, entirely an innocent decision in translation, for it conforms only too well to what we will have to contest: the absorption

of gift or grace by forgiveness and the severance of both from justice, even the justice that is based on, and instigated by, gift or grace. Accordingly, we must at every step remind ourselves that Paul's thinking about something like forgiveness is never at the center but is always, at most, an implication or presupposition of his thinking about gift or grace.

Unforgivable and Unconditional

Even if the idea of forgiveness is at best implicit in Paul's argument, rather than an explicit theme or question, it still may be the case that Derrida's reflections on forgiveness may illuminate for us some of what is going on in Paul's thinking of the gift. This we would expect to be true if, as Derrida has suggested, the idea of gift or grace entails something like the idea of forgiveness. Derrida has suggested that forgiveness, if it happens, is addressed to what is fundamentally unforgivable and hence must occur, if it does, in such a way as to be unconditional. In what way does something like this come to expression in Paul's argument?

We may note first that there is in Paul's argument a sense in which injustice is "unforgivable." This is evident in the way in which Paul links together the ideas of impiety and injustice in his blanket indictment of Greco-Roman society: "For the wrath of God [divine wrath] is revealed from heaven against all impiety [*asebeian*] and injustice [*adikia*] of humanity—imprisoning the truth in injustice" (1:18). Although the controlling term here is "injustice" (which, of course, the reader of an English translation would not know because it is rendered as "wickedness"), this is nonetheless linked with impiety as if injustice were in and of itself also and at the same time, impiety. That is, the violation of the other human is at the same time a violation of the divine. And this not as a matter of the infringement of a specific legality but as the violation of justice itself, which, as Paul is at pains to remark, and not only in Romans, is divine.[19] It is because this is so that Paul may conclude his indictment of the rampant injustice in Greco-Roman society as a whole with the assertion that "They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them" (1:32). So pervasive has injustice/impiety become that there is no longer any sense of guilt or shame, but rather what is unjust is treated as if it were just, what is impious as if it were piety itself. At several points Paul underlines the inexcusability of this situation: "they are without excuse" (1:20) he

says at the beginning of the indictment, and he concludes, "Therefore you have no excuse" (2:1). It is the inexcusability of this conjuncrion of impiety/injustice that means that anything other rhan the administration of the sentence of death (and thus something like forgiveness) must be unconditional if it is to occut at all.

If we take this as our point of departure, we can ask to what exrent we may speak of the unconditionality of something like pardon in the thought of Paul. This may be seen in a part of the argument that Paul makes in Romans 5. Here his theme is the orientation of messianic life by hope, a hope that is homologous to the hope that had provoked Abraham to respond with trust and faithfulness and so to be just. The issue, then, is the turn from a past mired in injustice towatd a receiving of the gift of justice. It is in this connection that Paul speaks of a certain kind of nonconditionality: "For while we were yet weak, at the right time Messiah died for the impious. Indeed rarely will anyone die for a just person—though for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Messiah died for us" (5:6–8). At least two points here call for comment. The first is the association that we have already noticed between impiety and injustice. Here four terms are closely coordinated that together specify the lack of merit (and so of conditionality) for the divine response: weakness, injustice, impiety, sin. These four terms are related ways of designating something like the unfittingness of the divine favor and hence its nonconditionality. It is not that these anticonditions are in any way mitigated, excused, or compensated for. Rather, they are allowed to stand as the antipresupposition of the act of kindness, love, genetosity of the divine in and through the messiah.

The messianic event is here summarized in terms of the death of the messiah. As we have already seen, it is the death of the messiah that ruptures the hold of law on history; it is what makes evident that justice comes not from the law as such but from divine gift or grace, and so from hearing and heeding the divine promise, as in the case of Abraham. It is rhen this death that ruptures the hold of law and so makes way for a new provocation to, and "capacity for," justice. It is in this sense that this death produces the justification or being made just of those who are now included in the messianic event: "Much more surely then, now that we are made just through his blood will we be saved through him from the divine wrath" (5:9). The divine wrath, as we know, is what is directed against injustice and impiety. The messianic event is what will have produced, on the conttary, justice and fidelity and thus "saves" from wrath.[20] But it does this without antecedent condition, that is by demonstrating that precisely in spire of the condition of injustice and impiety, nevertheless humanity is given a new beginning by means of an event tbat breaks the hold of law, even the divine law of retribution for injustice and impiety.

The effect of this event then is not that injustice is excused, or mitigated. Nor is there any possibility of the presence of antecedent conditions such as confession or repentance. The effect of the messianic event is that persons become just (not, as we have seen, by compliance with legality, but by means of gift that incites duty beyond debt and so on) and so are saved from the (divine) wrath.

Throughout, Paul's emphasis lies not in the question of the past but in the new freedom for justice that is opened up. Thus his emphasis is on how greatly the new exceeds the past. In our discussion of gift, we noted the "how much more" that cottesponds to talk of gift in Paul and that dominates the passage that follows the one we have been discussing (for example, 5:15, 17, 20).

In his subsequent atgument, Paul will develop several analogies to make clear how the new situation differs from the old that was under the law—indeed, the law of sin and death. But it differs precisely in this: that now there is freedom for justice. Thus in 6:3–14 Paul uses the analogy of death (we have died with messiah) in order to point to the liberation from sin and injustice in order that we become "instruments of justice." Similatly, in 6:16–23 he uses the analogy of slavery, of being the property of another, in order ro show how before we were slaves to sin/injustice but now are to become slaves of justice (6:20). A subsequent analogy of marriage suggests that as the wife is subject to the husband until he dies, upon being widowed, she is free. This freedom, Paul makes clear, is freedom with respect to the law (7:6), but not with respect to justice.

The series of analogies, then, places the emphasis on the new reality that exceeds the old. It exceeds it precisely in the sense that it provides an opening for the arriving of justice. That Paul does not speak of forgiveness here means that his attention is not on the past but on the new that has come and has separated us from the past. If in order to speak of that separation from the past we speak of forgiveness, it must be clear that tbis has ro do only with what may be termed the presupposition for what it is that Paul really wants to say and to stress.

Double Bind

Perhaps it is in these terms, then, that we can seek to understand what it is that Paul is driving at in the last part of the seventh chapter, the place whete Paul has been read as laying bare the inner conflict of the will that subsequently becomes so important to Augustine (and, often, to Derrida's explicit reading of this passage).

What is temarkable here is that Paul does not seem to be continuing with his temporalizing structure (befote and after). If we were to seek to place this new discussion within the "before and after" schema, then we would ask whether Paul is speaking of those who are unjust, whose behavior is thus like that which he has indicted earlier, or whether we are here dealing with the situation of those who are being made just, who are responding to the call and claim of justice. It seems clear that the latter is what Paul has in mind because the one who speaks here "wants to do good," "delights in the law of God," and is consciously "slave to the law of God." These are characteristics of the "after" that Paul has so assiduously emphasized in the ptevious three analogies. But if this is true, how is it that the "befote" of flesh (and thus the law of sin) seems still to have a certain powet? Has nothing been changed, save in the tealm of a divine attitude toward sin, becoming now indulgent where before it was severe? This is what one might suppose to be true if one consulted what has often passed itself off as the tradition of intetpretation.

In otder to think this differently, it may be that we can be helped by some of Derrida's reflections on justice and on the situation of the one who seeks to be just, that is, who responds to the call of justice. As I have intimated before, and indeed alteady in the first chapter, this may come not from what Detrida explicitly says about Romans 7 (where I have contended he temains under the spell of Augustine), but rather in his reflections on the difficulty of one who seeks to be just.

Alteady in *The Gift of Death* Derrida had exposed this structnre. Here he speaks of duty and responsibility and sacrifice as he seeks to make cleat something like the exemplarity of Abraham (another Abraham here, the one who is about to sactifice his son, but is this really a different Abraham?). He writes: "Duty or tesponsibility binds me to the other, to the other as other, and ties me in my absolute singularity to the other as other . . . [. . .] There are also others, an infinite numbet of them, the innumetable genetality of others to whom I should be bound by the same responsibility. . . . I cannot respond to the call, the request, the obligation, or even the love of another without sacrificing the other other, the orher others" (68). If justice means that one responds to the other, then as soon as one seeks to be just with respect to this or that one, one is, it seems, necessarily unjust. Of course Derrida is not yet using here the language of justice. This will come later. But let us stay with the language of this text a bit longer: "As soon as I enter into a relation with the other, with the gaze, look, request, love command, or call of the other, I know that I can respond only by sacrificing ethics, that is, by sacrificing whatever obliges me to also respond, in the same way, in the same instant, to all the others" (68). Now what is critical for our purposes here is that the situation being described is not that of the so-called divided will. It has nothing to do with the way in which, for example, my desire overpowets my good intention, or the way I am controlled by the libidinal impulses of my unconscious. Rather, it is that precisely in responding to the claim of any other, I turn my back on the equally legitimate and urgent claim of all the others. We are then not speaking of the condition of one who has become callous to the call of the other, or who has only in view his or her own advantage, ot who is driven by anxiety and fear to be so self-regarding as to close off the other's call and claim. What is at stake here is neither the captivity of the will nor its impotence but rather the situation of one who really seeks the good of the other, and therefore sacrifices the good of other others.

In a later text, Derrida will return to this situation. But now the terminology that will be deployed is not that of ethics and sacrifice but that of justice and perjury (betrayal) and of forgiveness. This is how Derrida rewrites the dilemma that we have seen sketched out already in other terms:

> I must ask forgiveness—*pour etre juste*. Listen carefully to the equivocation of this "*pour*." I must ask forgiveness in order to be just, *to be* just, with a view to being just; but I must also ask forgiveness for being just, for the fact of being just, because I am just, because in order to be just, I am unjust and I betray. I must ask forgiveness for (the fact of) being just. Because it is unjust to be just. I always betray someone to be just; I always betray one for the other. ("To Forgive," 49)[21]

Here we have related two problems with being just. On the one hand, in order to intend to be just, I must ask for forgiveness. This is what we have seen, for example, in the relation between forgiveness and hospitality. I am never really prepated to welcome enough and so begin by asking for forgiveness in order to begin. But what if somehow I have begun?

What if I am, however incompletely, launched on this enrerprise of welcoming another, responding to the claim of the other, being in this way, howevet imperfectly, just? Then I am already being unjust. For there is always anothet, another other, with a claim on me. And in order to be just to the one, I am alteady betraying the other. Of course it is not here that I actively seek to be unjust to the "third." On the contrary, I seek to be just. But it is precisely in thus seeking to be just that I discover at work another law, the inexorability of injustice, inscribed in the act of seeking to be just, of desiting to be just witb all my heart.

The way Dettida speaks of this bettayal of the other othet, of the third, is by speaking of perjury. In responding to one I neglect others, the third; in respecting the claim of one, I already commit to more than I will do; in the moment of responding to the claim of justice I deny it, in vowing to one I necessatily, ineluctably perjure, that is, bettay my commirment to justice. "This is what I have called the congenital perjury of justice, justice as perjuty. But this also means where I have to ask forgiveness for being just, to ask forgiveness of the other, of every other; where for justice, I have to take account of the other of the other, of another other, of a third." This can even appear to be something like the structute of faith, of fidelity, an infidelity inscribed at the heart of fidelity: "forgiveness for infidelity at the heart of fidelity, for perjury at the heart of swotn faith" ("Hostipitality," 388). That is, it is precisely the situation of fidelity, of faithfulness, of faith in short, that places one in the situation of ineluctable infidelity. Only if I am committed to justice (faithfulness) do I discover this infidelity, here named perjury. "Perjuty is inscribed in advance, as its destiny, its fatality, its inexpiable destination, in the structure of the promise and the oath, in the word of honor, in justice, in the desire for justice." And this is so because since thete ate always at least three "it is justice itself that makes me perjure myself and thtows me into the scene of forgiveness" ("To Forgive," 49).

Now this, it seems, is very like the ptoblem with which Paul is wrestling in Romans 7. At the least, several of Paul's formulations seem to be in accord with what we have been reading in Derrida: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, hut I do the very thing I hate" (15). "I can will what is right but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (18b–19). Or again: "So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand" (21). Here it is quite clear that the situation being desctibed is that of one who desires, wills, intends the good; who seeks justice, who is, or wills to be, faithful. And it is precisely this one who discovers the dilemma of being utterly in need of something like forgiveness.

Moreover, there are a number of indications that for Paul this has precisely to do with the embeddedness of out action, not in a divided will, but in our interaction witb the other. Here Paul speaks therefore of another law, not in the will but in the action. Evil lies close at hand, not in the recesses of the heart ot the divided will; "I see in my members another law at wat with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin tbat dwells in my members" (23). Since Augustine, the interpretation of this conflict as an intetior conflict of the will has also settled upon the interpretation of members hete as sex, most especially "visible" as the absence of male control over a tecalcitrant penis (that either erects or remains flaccid at inopportune moments, thereby betraying tbe inefficacy of the [divided] will).[22] But this seems quite fat from Paul's intention here, for he has earlier spoken of "presenting our members as tools or instruments of justice." It seems clear tbat he means by this out ways of engaging with the wotld, the community and the other. The difficulty is that in precisely willing and doing justice we discovet that we are alteady embedded in a world of injustice in which to respond to the claim of the one I betray the claim of the other.

This is the bind in which not the unjust but the just find themselves, not the one without faith, but the one who is responding to the claim of faithfulness to the call of justice. But how then seek to be just? What is the point of trying to be just, if always already I am bound to be unjust even in seeking to he just? "Wretched man that I am, who will rescue me from this body of death?" (24). The body here as otherwise in Paul (for example, Romans 12:1) tefers to that by virtue of wbich I am in the world—visible, interactive, and so on. It is this that will be said to be offered to justice, to God, to the other (12:1). But here I have discovered a problem; it is precisely here, at the site of my engagement with the other, that I find injustice to be inscribed; and so also death is inscribed: death of the other, and my own deserving to die on account of injustice. How can one (precisely the just one) be delivered from this conundrum? Of course it is impossible (wretched man that I am). "So then with my mind I am a slave to tbe law of God, but with my flesh am a slave to the law of sin" (25b). Paul's way of speaking of this bind is to say that it is flesh, that is my very limited and vulnerable being in tbe world that seems to make it inexorable that I bettay my sworn faith, and thus to turn faith into faithlessness.

Derrida bas said that it is precisely in being just that I am unjust, and

that in order to be just, I need something like forgiveness, something impossible that breaks the hold of the ineluctable perjury or betrayal at the heart of seeking to be just. In a related connection, Derrida has spoken of the need to be able to hope for forgiveness in order to sur-vive. What he writes is, "This being-there, this existence, would be both responsible and guilty in a way that is constitutive ('sin of existing') and could only constitute itself, persevere in its being, sur-vive by asking for forgiveness (knowing or not knowing of whom or why) and by assuming forgiveness to be, if not granted, at least promised, hoped for, enough to be able to continue to persevere in one's being" ("To Forgive," 43). Here, then, in order to be, and all the more in order to be just, one must hope for what is impossible, for what breaks with knowledge and normality, for forgiveness.

Paul writes, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Jesus" (8:1). That is, it is the messianic event that summons us into justice and that at the same time assures us that there is no condemnation, no accusation for those who turn toward this messianic event, who seek to be faithful to the justice that comes. Thus Paul supposes that it is indeed the case that those who seek to be just are delivered from the bind that he has been describing and they are delivered precisely by the assurance that for them there will be no condemnation.

Again, here Paul does not explicitly speak of forgiveness. The closest he comes is in the assurance that there is no condemnation. And we may say that this seems to imply forgiveness, or at least what Derrida was speaking of when he spoke of the need for forgiveness for being just and in order to be just—"to keep on keeping on" as folk say who are engaged in the struggle for justice—to "sur-vive," as Derrida says.

Double Pardon

If, in spite of the absence of the term for forgiveness in Paul we were to apply what we have read in Derrida to an attempt to understand Paul, we might have to make an initial distinction between two very different situations or contexts and so "meanings" of forgiveness. On the one hand, there is that which captures the fatedness to injustice in which humanity is embedded through the universality of the regime of injustice. Here we have in view the great disruption by which the hold of the law is broken and humanity is offered a new beginning in which the hold of the past is broken through. Here in general Paul speaks of the cross. The aim of something like forgiveness (or amnesty) here is that the call or claim of justice

now be heard and responded to. But it is precisely in this new situation that another sense of forgiveness seems to come into play. Here it is a question not so much of a new beginning but of the injustice that accompanies, precisely, justice, the intending, willing, even the doing, of justice. Here it is not a question of the unconditional amnesty that opens up a new future but of the abrogation of condemnation for those who are caught up in the new, in the messianic, in the justice project.

The first (we are calling it amnesty) is unconditional, universal. It is the gift of justice or justice as a gift. But it impels faithfulness. Where it does not provoke faithfulness, it has not (yet) become an event (for us). There is no anterior condition, but there is a kind of telos: in order that there be justice. And this lays upon the one who is caught up in it the claim of a duty beyond debt, the claim of unrestricted hospitality and so on.

But here there is the problem, the dilemma (the aporia) of the injustice of being just, of the struggle for precisely that justice that is outside the law yet complies with what it is that the law really or truly intends. And that conundrum or aporia is that even here, perhaps especially here, for the one caught up in the messianic quest for justice, we discover that "evil lies close at hand." So now there is a need for something like forgiveness again, not in the first sense, for here it is only a question of those who are faithful, who seek justice, who are bound by the messianic. And here it is therefore a question not of a general amnesty, but of the suspension of condemnation.

In a way, this double situation of forgiveness will remind us of what Derrida, following Benjamin, detected as the double violence of the law: the violence that inaugurates law, that founds it, and the violence that sustains or maintains the legal order. Here we have the gift of forgiveness that inaugurates the new (that in a way abrogates the law in the name of justice), and on the other hand the forgiveness/gift that sustains the possibility of seeking to be just.

Here also no absolute distinction can be maintained. For they both have the character of the "impossible" and the structure of breaking the hold of a certain fatedness, or embeddedness in the situation of injustice. Yet they are not simply the same either. For the one is directed at all, at humanity as such. The other is directed at those of that humanity who are caught up in the messianic project launched by the first amnesty. The first aims at or entails the second; the second continues the first and has the same origin and structure (what I have been calling the messianic).[23]

Above all, what predominates in Paul's argument is not forgiveness

but gift as the basis of justice. The gift is opened up by something like forgiveness in the sense of amnesty that ruptures the hold of law and so makes way for a justice that is in a certain sense outside the law. But this gift would be no gift at all if it simply placed us within an impossible situation: that of being unjust because we are attempting to be just. For the gift of justice to be truly gift, then, something else is necessary: precisely the abrogation of condemnation for those who are caught up by the messianic. Otherwise the call of justice would be simply cruel, a poisoned gift. But because justice is gifted, it entails not simply a universal amnesty (or unconditional pardon for all) but it also entails the abolition of condemnation for all who are thus impelled by faithfulness to the gift to seek justice.[24] The claim of justice is inexorable, unavoidable, but it is not merciless. It is mercy, that is, it is gift, through and through.

It is not our task to unpack all that Paul is up to here, and so we will not at this point follow him as he tries to make the difference in relation clear in connection with the messianic event (the one called messiah Jesus), nor to seek to test the hypothesis that when Paul has in mind the first amnesty, he is more inclined to speak of something like the execution of the messiah, and when he speaks of the second he is more inclined to speak of the spirit: "For the law of the spirit of life in messiah Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death" (8:2). For our concern here and throughout has been to see how what Paul is concerned with is justice. And of course this is precisely what the end of condemnation here also means for him, "so that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us" (8:4).

The lodestar of Paul's argument is precisely justice, divine justice that is outside the law but that is nevertheless precisely justice. The difficulty with respect to talk of forgiveness is that this functions so often to break the hold not only of law but also of the claim of justice. If, with the help of Derrida, we are to speak of something like forgiveness in Paul, we may do so only in such a way as not to dismiss or to render ineffectual the call and claim of justice. And this also means not in such a way as to excuse or mitigate injustice. It has seemed to me that this is precisely what Derrida helps us to think through his thinking of forgiveness, a forgiveness that is always "impossible" but that also is necessary if there is to be justice.

We however should not leave this discussion of forgiveness without noting that in a certain sense talk of forgiveness "as such" is not appropriate in the case of Paul. In the first case, that of the general or universal

amnesty that comes to pass in the messianic event, it is certainly not the case that it is without a telos or goal, for this is what precisely Paul wants to insist on, namely that the goal of this event is that we become just and so be saved "from the wrath" that comes to those who are unjust. Thus, although it is unconditional, it is not without a goal outside itself, and this is what Paul is most concerned with.[25] In the second case, that of the abrogation of condemnation for those who are caught up in and by the messianic event, this abrogation is not simply universal and in that way without conditions, for it presupposes precisely the desire and will to be just, to do justice. Thus in neither case is forgiveness simply and purely as such Paul's concern. Hence it is not something that Paul himself speaks of, however much something like the concept of forgiveness may help us to think some aspects of what he is arguing in the letter to the Romans.

Political Effects

We have seen that much of Derrida's concern for the question of forgiveness has been articulated through a concern for the question of the politics of *mondialisation* and the emergence of international law concerning crimes against humanity and the question of amnesty, confession, and so on. In this global scene, Derrida has also detected the work of a kind of Christianization without the church, a sometimes unconscious appropriation of certain themes from the Christian tradition.

But it is also important to notice the global political effects of a certain Christian tradition that has understood grace as swallowed up in forgiveness and a forgiveness that has moreover been severed from the call and claim of justice. Throughout this study, I have maintained that Paul is concerned with justice, a justice beyond or outside the law to be sure, one that comes as or on the basis of gift, but one that is nonetheless to be understood as justice, even divine justice. If, within this context, we are to speak of forgiveness, then that forgiveness must be understood as related to the call and claim of justice. Forgiveness must not be allowed to obviate or substitute for that claim. To be sure, it is an interruption of the legal order, as is justice itself. But it is not a suspension of the call and claim of justice.

However, much of the tradition of reading Paul has been oblivious exactly at this point. Justification has meant simply forgiveness, and its connection to justice has been lost. Instead of being an incitement to or provocation of justice, justification as a certain kind of forgiveness has

come to substitute for justice. Faith has accordingly been separated from faithfulness and so from the obedience of faith—from the form of life that corresponds to the gift of justice. Instead, faith has often come to mean "belief" in the sense of public assent to certain dogmas or in the sense of associating oneself with an institution that claims for itself the capacity to dispense plenary pardon in return for a certain institutional doctrinal conformity. Thus not justice as a consequence, but belief as a prior condition, has been made the concomitant of talk of forgiveness.

The history of this interpretation of Paul has been a history written in blood. For crimes against humanity have been "excused" or "expunged" and sometimes even incited on the basis of the supposition that indulgence is available for the price of belief without reference to the call and claim of justice. Only in this way can we begin to understand, I believe, how the history of the West is also a history of atrocity. The atrocities of crusade, inquisition, and *conquista* can be perpetrated with a "good conscience" on the basis of the supposition that justification does not entail justice—certainly not the kind of justice that can only be expressed as the welcome granted to the other, to any other.

The Reformation, with its emphasis on justification, does nothing to reverse this history. On the contrary. It is Luther whose anti-Semitism provides the template for *Mein Kampf* and whose instructions to the princes concerning the rebellion of the serfs was simply to exterminate them by any means necessary. Nor does Calvin's attitude toward "heretics" provide a more encouraging example. Nor does modernity, whether religious or secular, provide a more encouraging illustration, whether we think of the slave trade or the secular and Protestant robber barons, or the singular good conscience of modern states in the prosecution of world wars, cold war, or even the war on terrorism.

As Derrida has often noted, we are not simply the passive recipients of tradition. Tradition requires to be read, to be appropriated, to be thought. If we are to make headway against this history of blood, a history of unjust suffering inscribed with the torturers' instruments upon the bodies of suffering humanity, then this will require, among other things, a rethinking of our tradition. There is a part to played in this work, I believe, by a rethinking of Paul and by a rereading that is attentive to his complex and difficult, but ultimately rewarding, attempt to think through divine justice as messianic gift. And it is this work for which, I have contended, a reading of Derrida may offer us important help.

8

Conclusion

The Faith of Deconstruction

The argument of the preceding chapters has had the intention of resituating the reading of Paul's Letter to the Romans in such a way that the overriding concern for the question of justice comes to the fore. In this way Paul may be extracted from the clutches of his ecclesial and dogmatic jailers who have all too often done what Paul accused the empire of doing: "imprisoning the truth in injustice." For the result of what has become the traditional appropriation of Paul has been that the question of justice has been effectively silenced, substituting in its place a doctrine of justification that absolves the believer from the claim and call of justice.

In order to show that Paul may be understood (I believe, *should* be understood) in relation to the issues that arise when one considers the question of justice, I have suggested that invaluable help may be found from reading Derrida's reflections on justice and related questions. I have attempted not so much to argue as to exhibit the illuminating effects of the juxtaposition of deconstruction with the thought of Paul. In so doing, I find myself, somewhat to my surprise, doing what I find Derrida had already suggested might be done. In an extraordinarily interesting interview on "Deconstruction in America,"[1] Derrida is asked by James Creech to talk about how religion in America may have affected the reception of deconstruction. In reply, Derrida mentions the necessity of analyzing "a whole history of exegesis, of modern hermeneutics in German and European

concerned (see *Adieu*, 74). This sort of distinction may be at work when Derrida says, "I am aware that you cannot found the politics of hospitality on the principle of unconditional hospitality, of opening the borders to any newcomer" (in Caputo and Scanlon, *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, 132). Here he speaks of "what Kant would call the regulating idea of pure hospitality," although he supposes that it would be necessary to go "beyond Kant's own concept of hospitality as a regulating idea" (133).

22. We should also note that Paul's concern for the conditions of hospitality or welcome has a personal and urgent character in that the immediate occasion for his letter to believers in Rome was his own impending visit (Romans 1:10–15, 15:23–29). This is but a further indication of the priority in his thinking given to the situation of the (prospective) guest.

23. The political importance of the Pauline welcome to strangers and so to one another has been articulated in a related way by Julia Kristeva in *Strangers to Ourselves*, where she suggests that "Paul adopted, developing it to the highest degree, an essential feature of the spirituality characteristic of a place teeming with foreigners: hospitality" (79). And in reference to the same passage from Ephesians that we have seen Derrida cite, she claims, "The Pauline Church emerged as a community of foreigners, first from the periphery, then from the Greco-Roman citadel" (80). At this point, she seems to be suggesting that this is simply a function of the subculture within which Christianity, or at least Pauline Christianity, took shape. However, she also relates this to another theme, which she takes to be central to the Pauline message, one not explored in these terms by Derrida, for she indicates that the cosmopolitanism is to a certain extent based on a movement within an interior division between flesh and spirit: "Foreigners could recover an identity only if they recognized themselves as dependant on a same heterogeneity that divides them within themselves, on a same wandering between flesh and spirit, life and death" (82). What is of particular interest in her approach is the way that she appropriates what has all too often been taken to be merely an interior drama of flesh and spirit and proposed a way of understanding it as having fundamental political importance, thereby demonstrating the reversibility of her own assertion that "Paul is not only a politician. He is also a psychologist" (82).

CHAPTER 7

1. This point was first made by Krister Stendahl in "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 82.

2. In forms of what is called Protestantism, especially as derivative from Luther, "forgiveness of sins" is understood to be the meaning of justification. In Luther, this can even lead to the slogan *simul justus et peccator*, which has often meant the one is "just" in the sense of being declared so through forgiveness as well as simultaneously a sinner (that is, not just). Thus justification, through its identification with forgiveness, no longer has anything to do with actually becoming (more) just. This produces the consequences to which I previously alluded, referring to Levinas.

3. Caputo and Scanlon, *Questioning God*, 49.

4. In *Memoires for Paul de Man*, Derrida writes, "It is always necessary to excuse oneself for giving, for a gift must never appear in a present, given the risk of its being annulled in thanks. . . . It is necessary to be forgiven for appearing to give" (148–49).

5. In "What Is a Relevant Translation," *Critical Inquiry* 27 (2001), Derrida, reflecting on a speech of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, notes that "forgiveness isn't calculated, it is foreign to calculation, to economics, to the transaction and the law, but it is good, like a gift" (192). The irony, of course is that the aneconomic character of forgiveness will lie in ruins before the play is done.

6. Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), had already made the idea and act of forgiveness indispensable for an understanding of human action. She writes, "The possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility—of being unable to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not have known what he was doing—is the faculty of forgiving" (237). Quite rightly, she does not attribute this to Paul but to Jesus, or at least Jesus as represented in the Gospels: "The discoverer of the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs was Jesus of Nazareth. The fact that he made this discovery in a religious context and articulated it in religious language is no reason to take it any less seriously in a strictly secular sense" (238). That this may be understood in a "strictly secular sense" is what links her reflections to those that we are considering from Derrida. She does not here, however, treat of what might be termed the "unforgivable" in Derrida's sense but of what she calls "trespass," a notion that corresponds tolerably well to what I will deal with when discussing the Pauline suspension of condemnation/judgment.

Arendt maintains that forgiveness applies not to willed evil, for which the last judgment works, but "trespassing": "But trespassing is an everyday occurrence which in the very nature of action's constant establishment of new relationships within a web of relationships, and it needs forgiving, dismissing, in order for life to go on by constantly releasing men from what they have done unknowingly" (240). It seems that this is also the sense in which we should understand the position of Julia Kristeva, who has devoted considerable study to Arendt but who also makes use of the notion of forgiveness in relation to the psychoanalytic situation. Kristeva points again to a secular sense of the religious or Christian notion of forgiveness: "analytical interpretation emerges as a secular version of forgiveness, in which I see not just a suspension of judgment but a giving of meaning, beyond judgment, within transference/countertransference." *Intimate Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 2:12.

The importance of transference/countertransference for Kristeva's view is that "it is impossible without the forgiving and interpretation-free listening it im-

plies on the part of the analyst, who identifies with the other's ill-being in order to make better sense of it" (19). The way this works, she explains, is that "the language of forgiveness, beyond judgment, is an interpretation (and here I allude to psychoanalysis) that restores the meaning of the suffering. This interpretation suspends the time of punishment and debt, provided it comes from love" (16). Although this interpretation focuses on the analytic situation, as Kristeva has said, it nonetheless is pertinent for our discussion insofar as it further underscores the relation to questions of debt and, by way of the idea of punishment, to law. Moreover, "forgiveness is the luminous phase of the somber unconscious atemporality, the phase during which the latter changes laws and adopts the attachment to love as a principle of renewal of the other and the self" (20). In Kristeva's view, then, it is forgiveness that serves as the opening to love, and we shall see something similar in our Derridean interpretation of the role of forgiveness as operating on the past in such a way as to open the way to a duty beyond debt, whose name, as we have seen, is love.

7. In "What Is a Relevant Translation?," he offers as his translation of the phrase "when mercy seasons justice": "when mercy elevates and interiorizes, thereby preserving and negating, justice (or the law)" (195). In this discussion, he is constantly referring to his proposed translation of Hegel's *Aufhebung* by *relever*, something developed at some length in his reading of Hegel in *Glas*. What is more important for my immediate purpose, however, is the relation between forgiveness or mercy and justice, or law. Thus, earlier in his essay, he wrote of forgiveness, according to Portia: "It rises above the law or above what in justice is only law" (188).

8. It seems to me that there may be a systematic confusion in the way in which John Milbank interprets Derrida in relation to notions of forgiveness, duty, and gift in that he seems not to notice that Derrida regularly insists on *both* heterogeneity and indissociability. When these are conflated, as it seems to me sometimes happens with Milbank, then we can get incautious formulations like "Forgiveness, therefore, perfects gift-exchange as fusion" (*Being Reconciled*, 70; see also 72). He can even suggest that "the ethical is only genuinely imaginable as a mutual and unending gift exchange, construed as an absolute surrender to moral luck or absolute faith in the arrival of the divine gift, which is grace" (154). It is not the last idea, of "surrender" to grace or the gift (or perhaps the impossible—otherwise, why speak here of surrender?), that is so problematic, but the way in which he seems to economize the aneconomic. When he writes that "only utter exposure constitutes the ethical" (148), this seems to me to be correct. What seems to happen, however, is that in the place of utter exposure, he sometimes is disposed to have a gift and a forgiveness one can count on. When he criticizes Derrida, it is often because he seems to hear only the "heterogeneity" in Derrida and not the "indisscociability." But he seeks to "correct" this by replacing hererogeneity with indissociability and thus to enter into exchange without reserve, an exchange that is able to be described as "fusion."

9. One way of trying to clarify the tension between the unconditionality of forgiveness (it does not depend on confession/repentance/worthiness) and its conditionality (you will be forgiven, as you forgive) would be to say that it is in our forgiving of one another that it becomes clear whether the unconditional divine forgiveness has arrived in us or at us. Insofar as it has arrived, it produces forgivingness in or through us. Insofar as it does not produce or effect this activity of forgiving of the other, it will not have arrived. It will have arrived precisely insofar as it opens up the closedness of the past (e.g., debt, retribution) to the repetition of the new (a forgiveness then that keeps replicating itself as this forgivingness). But where there is no such opening or no such repetition of opening, then forgiveness will not have arrived, will have disappeared without a trace into the endless repetition of the past, of debt, of the economy of retribution.

10. For a remarkable discussion of the French case, see "History of the Lie: Prolegomenon," in *Without Alibi*, 45–52.

11. See also *Negotiations*, 381–84, where the relevant discussion seems to be but a different draft of much of the argument found in the quoted passage.

12. In speaking of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, he writes, "if the aim is reconciliation then it is an economy: It is perhaps a very useful, a very noble strategy, but it is not forgiveness. If I forgive, or ask to be forgiven, in order to be redeemed, that is a noble and worthy calculation" ("To Forgive," in *Questioning God*, 57) but it is not yet pure forgiveness. This is however, not simply opposed to the purity of forgiveness as such, for we recall concerning unconditional forgiveness that it still must "bend toward conditionality," must enter into history and so be contaminated by conditionality if it is not to remain abstract or ineffective. That is, as Derrida will maintain in other connections, it is imperative to negotiate the nonnegotiable. I will return to this briefly in the next chapter.

13. As this was first being written, the United States was threatening a veto of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Bosnia unless its personnel be granted immunity from any war crime prosecution. Because no peacekeeping personnel have ever been so charged, it is evident that the reason for this utter recalcitrance (which is not shared by any other nation involved in U.N. peacekeeping operations) must have a different agenda. It appears that it is an attempt to prevent any possibility of charges of war crimes or of crimes against humanity ever being brought against U.S. citizens. When it is recalled that the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., John Negroponte, was the point man for U.S. policy and operations in Central America during the Reagan administration and thus in charge of Iran-Contra as well as U.S. collaboration with death squads in El Salvador and Honduras, one can begin to imagine why there is so much concern over any possible precedent for the prosecution of any war crime or crime against humanity on the part of an administration that is composed of persons heavily involved in policies that were illegal not only from the standpoint of international law, but also U.S. law. "Today" the United States advances deeper into Iraq in contravention of the U.N. charter. And in a subsequent "today," as I revised this footnote, the evidence of U.S. contravention of the Geneva Convention with respect to prisoners of war had become an international cause célèbre. At the same time, the aforementioned John Negroponte

had been named ambassador (or proconsul, as news reports do not hesitate to affirm) to Iraq.

14. Such distinction between a crime against a human and crimes against humanity as such seems essential for the current development of international law, but it is perhaps impossible to sustain with rigor. Is a crime against humanity a question of number, for example? Certainly the idea seems to begin in the shadow of the Holocaust, under the heading of genocide. But if it is a question of the violation of the sacred in humanity, and if any other is wholly other, then the violation of the other, any other, is a violation of the sacred in humanity and so is a crime against humanity—that humanity which is instantiated in each and every human. If, however, we seek to make the distinction on the basis not of the victim but the status of the victimizer, where the latter is a state, we may at first seem to be on firmer ground. But the ground shifts, for example, in Rwanda, where those arraigned are not simply officers of a state or members of a party. A similar difficulty arises with what is called terrorism, especially where it is not in any meaningful sense state-sponsored. Even if the grounds are shifted to the question of motive, as in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where the crimes to be dealt with had to have a demonstrable political motive, we are still left in perplexity about how and when to say that an atrocity has or had a political motive. For example, in the cases of chattel slavery or of genocidal conquest, how do we distinguish among political, economic, and religious motives? Similar perplexities may arise with respect to the former Yugoslavia. This is only to suggest that the questions here touched on are immense and have as yet unforeseeable consequences.

15. Oddly, Derrida does not invoke this principle at this point, even though it is one of his most characteristic formulations. See *Gift of Death*, 82 ff.

16. It is tempting to launch here a discussion of the idea of authorship, as this is greatly troubled by Derrida. The whole question of Pauline authorship offers itself to a deconstructive reading. After all, what does "Paul" mean? To whom or what does this name refer?

17. This is the term that was used in Romans 4:7 and that occurs throughout the Gospels, especially in Matthew, with the sense of "forgive." It also occurs often in the New Testament with the general sense of "leave (behind)" or "separate" and in this sense occurs in 1 Corinthians 7:11, where husbands are exhorted not to abandon their wives.

18. There is another point here that calls for some comment in Paul's use of the verb form of *charis*, translated in 2 Corinthians as "forgive." It is the odd phrase "if I have forgiven anything." Of course, this oddity may be explained as Paul's way of deferring to the congregation's act so that he will act as they act and so submerge his will in theirs. But certainly one who has read Derrida cannot help but be reminded of Derrida's repeated warnings that it would be indecent to use the phrases "I forgive" or "I forgave," for this would entail a kind of arrogance of the sovereign subject that is out of place in any conceivable—at least, interhuman—scene of forgiveness. The oddity of Paul's locution here exactly anticipates what Derrida seems to suggest about the event of forgiveness, if there is any.

19. Nor is this view of Paul's alien to the Greco-Roman world that he indicts, for notorious injustice is regularly understood as impiety, whether or not a specific law for the occasion exists.

20. The idea of divine wrath is one of the constants of Pauline theology (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 5:9), but it does not have the highly individualized sense that much later comes to be associated with it. Instead, it is the sense of the inevitability of global catastrophe that is the ineluctable and foreseeable consequence of global injustice. If it is not individual but corporate injustice that is the correlative of "wrath," then corporate justice is also the means of averting the fate of catastrophe. Here, however, we focus on the question of justice itself rather than the eschatological horizon, connected to the messianic event, consideration of which must be postponed to a different study. This will be briefly clarified in the last chapter.

21. In *Archive Fever*, Derrida says, "I shall no doubt be unjust out of concern for justice." *Archive Fever*, ed. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 63.

22. See Augustine, *City of God*, book 14, chap. 16.

23. Here we should at least point to what Derrida has maintained about the iterability of the singularity of the event—in this case, the event of something like forgiveness. But again this must be postponed to a point where more detailed attention can be given to the messianic as event in the reading of Derrida and the thinking of what Paul is up to in Romans.

24. As should be quite evident by now, I do not suppose this restriction to be in any way "religious" but rather "ethical."

25. "So forgiveness, if there is such a thing, should be devoid of any attempt to heal or reconcile, or even to save or redeem." At least, this is Derrida's perspective (*Questioning God*, 57). But on this I will have to reserve judgment.

CHAPTER 8

1. The full title is "Deconstruction in America: An Interview with Jacques Derrida," conducted by James Creech, Peggy Kamuf, and Jane Todd, *Critical Exchange* 17 (1985): 1–33.

2. For Heidegger's early attempt to understand Paul and for the way this prefigures his later "method," see the fascinating study by Hent deVries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), esp. 181–232, where there are important discussions of Heidegger's early reading of 1 and 2 Thessalonians and of Galatians.

3. When this interview was conducted and published (with the engagement of two of my friends), I was far removed from the academic scene, teaching would-be evangelical pastors in Mexico, where, as it happens, I first had the op-

READING DERRIDA / THINKING PAUL

On Justice

Theodore W. Jennings, Jr.

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