

An Exegetical-Hermeneutical Study of Romans 2:24: Christian Witness in Light of Orwell's Animal Farm

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Description

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Abstract

This article interprets Romans 2:24 within Paul's argument in Romans 2:17–29 and in light of its prophetic background in Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20–23. Using a qualitative exegetical-hermeneutical approach, the study argues that Romans 2:24 should be read not merely as a moral rebuke against religious inconsistency but as a theological indictment of failed public representation: the people of God may become the very occasion through which God's name is dishonored among outsiders. The exegetical analysis is then placed in a disciplined hermeneutical dialogue with George Orwell's Animal Farm, treated not as a primary source of meaning but as a secondary allegorical lens that clarifies how a community can maintain normative claims while betraying them in practice. The study shows that the contradiction between confession and conduct, sustained at times by narrative self-justification, undermines the credibility of Christian witness in the public sphere. Accordingly, Romans 2:24 carries enduring significance for Biblical Studies and for contemporary ecclesial life: it locates credible public witness not in communicative strategy but in the covenantal coherence of a community whose embodied life either commends or dishonors the name it bears.

Keywords: *Romans 2:24; Christian Witness; Public Theology; Biblical Hermeneutics; Animal Farm; Intertextuality*

INTRODUCTION

Romans 2:24 constitutes one of the sharpest moments in Paul's argument in Romans 1–3 because it shows that Paul's primary concern is not merely individual ethical failure but the failure of God's people to represent God before the nations. In that framework, the blaspheming of God's name is not presented as an external attack upon faith, but as the theological consequence of a people who claim to know the will of God yet do not embody it. For that reason, Romans 2:24 is important for Biblical Studies not only as a text of moral rebuke, but as a statement about the relationship between covenant identity, communal conduct, and the reputation of God's name in the public sphere. Recent readings of Romans confirm that this verse must be interpreted rhetorically, intertextually, and

theologically, since Paul links his charge against the people with Israel's prophetic tradition and with the Jew-Gentile dynamics within the Roman community (Ryšková, 2020; Wilson & Blois, 2023; Windsor, 2025).

The scholarly significance of the text also lies in its location within contemporary debates concerning Paul's interlocutor in Romans 2, the function of diatribe, and the extent to which Paul's criticism should be understood as an intra-Jewish prophetic critique rather than anti-Jewish polemic. These issues matter because the identification of Paul's addressee shapes the interpretation of the statement that "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Recent studies have shown that Romans 2 cannot be reduced to an abstract condemnation of "religious hypocrisy"; it is a covenantal indictment framed by divine judgment, the law, and the representative vocation of God's people before outsiders (Sloan, 2023a; Storbakken, 2024; Windsor, 2025).

Three intersecting lines of inquiry inform the present study, yet none has been pursued to the point of adequate synthesis. The first concerns Paul's interlocutor in Romans 2: Sloan argues that the addressee should be understood as a representative Jewish figure whose covenantal identity is at stake, while Storbakken contests a simplistic identification by emphasizing the rhetorical complexity of the diatribal form (Sloan, 2023a; Storbakken, 2024). The interpretive consequence is considerable, since the identity of the addressee directly shapes the weight one assigns to the phrase "because of you" in verse 24. The second line of inquiry concerns the prophetic intertextuality of Paul's argument: Ryšková traces the centrality of Isaiah in Romans, while Windsor situates Paul's critique within the broader tradition of Jewish prophetic self-critique rather than anti-Jewish polemic (Ryšková, 2020; Windsor, 2025). The third line emerges from the discussion of public theology and ecclesial witness, where Bodrožić, Schliesser, and Setyawan have argued that credibility in the public sphere is inseparable from the integrity of communal practice (Bodrožić, 2023; Schliesser, 2023; Setyawan, 2024). What remains undone is the integration of these three lines with a methodologically controlled use of secular literature as a secondary hermeneutical lens, a gap this study addresses.

At the same time, when the question of public witness is brought into the realm of hermeneutics, it becomes apparent that only a few studies connect Pauline exegesis with the disciplined theological use of secular literature. Recent work on religious reading has argued that non-biblical literary texts may function as secondary hermeneutical lenses for theological reflection, provided that they do not displace the authority and semantic priority of the biblical text. Sixta and Hrabovecký and Sidor show that secular literature may illuminate questions of transcendence, humanity, and theological perception, while Merzah (2024) and Gning demonstrate that *Animal Farm* is especially powerful in exposing the betrayal of principles, the manipulation of narrative, and the erosion of moral ideals from within a community (Hrabovecký & Sidor, 2025; Merzah, 2024; Sixta, 2025). In this sense, *Animal Farm* is not treated here as a decorative illustration but as a hermeneutically relevant text that helps contemporary readers perceive how contradiction between normative claims and communal practice undermines religious credibility in the public sphere.

Even so, a clear research gap remains. Existing scholarship has not adequately combined, first, a close exegetical reading of Romans 2:24 within Romans 2:17–29 and its prophetic background in Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20–23; second, a theological reading of the verse as a statement about failed public representation; and third, the disciplined use of *Animal Farm* as a secondary hermeneutical lens for illuminating how betrayed principles and narrative manipulation contribute to public dishonor without becoming the primary source of meaning. This gap matters because, without such methodological discipline, interpretation of Romans 2:24 tends either toward narrow exegesis with little contemporary force or toward moral-literary reflection detached from Paul's argument.

Accordingly, this article seeks to interpret Romans 2:24 exegetically within Paul's argument and prophetic horizon and then to explore its implications for Christian witness through a hermeneutical dialogue with George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The study is guided by the following question: how should Romans 2:24 be understood within Romans 2:17–29 and its prophetic background, and how may *Animal Farm* function as a secondary hermeneutical lens for clarifying its implications for Christian witness in the public sphere? The article's contribution is therefore twofold: it advances the exegesis of Romans 2:24 by reading it as a covenantal indictment of failed public representation, and it demonstrates that secular literature, when read with methodological discipline, can function as a legitimate secondary hermeneutical instrument for biblical scholarship without displacing the semantic priority of Scripture.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach in the form of an exegetical-hermeneutical investigation. The exegetical dimension of the study operates within the framework of historical-grammatical exegesis, which prioritizes the meaning of the text within its original literary, rhetorical, and historical context as the necessary condition for any subsequent theological or contemporary appropriation. This commitment entails that the semantic range of key Greek terms, the syntactical force of prepositional phrases, and the function of formulaic expressions are treated as primary evidence before broader theological inferences are drawn. The approach is not naively positivist; it recognizes that grammatical decisions are already hermeneutical. But it insists that hermeneutical moves remain accountable to the text's own linguistic and intertextual signals. Its primary textual focus is Romans 2:24, read within the immediate argumentative context of Romans 2:17–29, with Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20–23 serving as the primary intertexts. This textual focus is justified by the fact that Romans 2:24 does not function as an isolated moral remark but as the climax of Paul's indictment against a people who claim covenant privilege, rely on the law, and know the will of God, yet fail to embody that knowledge in practice. The study therefore treats Romans 2:24 not merely as an ethical statement but as part of Paul's wider argument about covenant identity, moral contradiction, and the public representation of God's name (Ryšková, 2020; Storbakken, 2024; Windsor, 2025).

The exegetical procedure unfolds in four stages. First, the study analyzes the argumentative context of Romans 2:17–29 in order to locate Romans 2:24 within the rhetorical structure of Paul’s charge. Second, it examines key terms and syntactical features in Romans 2:24, especially the clause concerning the blaspheming of God’s name and its relation to those being addressed. Third, it conducts an intertextual analysis of Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20–23 in order to clarify how Paul draws upon prophetic traditions concerning the profanation of the divine name among the nations. Fourth, the results are brought together in a theological synthesis that interprets Romans 2:24 as a warning about failed public representation. In this way, exegesis remains the controlling center of the study, while theological implications emerge from the text and its scriptural horizon rather than being imposed upon it (Ryšková, 2020; Windsor, 2025).

The hermeneutical procedure employs what recent scholarship calls "religious reading" (Hrabovecký & Sidor, 2025; Sixta, 2025): the practice of reading non-biblical literary texts theologically, not as sources of primary meaning but as secondary analogical lenses that illuminate patterns already present in the biblical text. A key methodological constraint governs this procedure throughout: the literary text does not determine the exegesis; rather, the exegesis determines which features of the literary text are hermeneutically relevant. Orwell's *Animal Farm* is therefore read not for what it says about Paul but for what patterns in its narrative structure help contemporary readers perceive with greater precision what Paul has already said.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Romans 2:24 in Its Literary and Theological Context

Romans 2:24 must be interpreted within the argumentative movement of Romans 2:17–29 rather than as an isolated moral maxim. Paul addresses an interlocutor who “calls himself a Jew,” “relies on the law,” and “boasts in God,” which means that the issue at stake is not generic religiosity but the tension between covenantal identity and embodied obedience. The sequence of rhetorical questions in Romans 2:21–23 deliberately exposes that contradiction: those who teach others do not teach themselves; those who prohibit theft steal; those who denounce idols commit sacrilege; and those who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. Within that structure, verse 24 functions as the climax. Recent scholarship has shown that Romans 2–4 must be read with close attention to Paul’s constructed Jewish addressee and that the diatribal form should not be collapsed into a simplistic caricature of “the hypocrite.” Rather, Paul’s concern is with religious claims that fail to take covenantally appropriate form in practice (Sloan, 2023a; Storbakken, 2024; Windsor, 2025).

The rhetorical force of Romans 2:24 becomes even more evident when its Greek text is examined closely: τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ δι’ ὑμᾶς βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καθὼς γέγραπται (Nestle-Aland, 2012). The key verb is βλασφημεῖται (*blasphēmeitai*), a present indicative passive of βλασφημέω. In standard New Testament lexicography, the lemma denotes speech or action that slanders, demeans, or profanes a revered figure, and when its object is

God or the name of God it carries the force of public dishonor rather than casual insult (Bauer & Danker, 2013, p. 178; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, 1989, p. 33.400). The present tense suggests an ongoing state rather than a momentary event, while the passive form shifts attention from the direct speaker of the blasphemy to the fact that God's name is in fact being blasphemed as the concrete result of the community's conduct. Thus the problem is not merely that God's people behave badly; their behavior produces a public misreading of God. Major commentators on Romans consistently identify this verse as the apex of Paul's charge against privileged religiosity that lacks obedience (Gaventa, 2024; Jewett, 2007; Moo, 2018; Schreiner, 2018).

A second decisive element is the phrase δι' ὑμᾶς (*di' hymas*). Syntactically, διὰ with the accusative can signify cause, reason, or instrumentality, yielding the sense "because of you" or "through you." Both nuances matter. If translated "because of you," Paul emphasizes the moral cause of the dishonor. If translated "through you," he underscores its representative medium. Taken together, the phrase intensifies the indictment: the very people who are supposed to mediate the honor of God among the nations have become the means by which God's name is dishonored. Romans 2:24 is therefore more than a statement about inconsistency; it is a statement about failed representation. Wilson and Blois are right to stress that Romans 1:18–2:29 concerns internal obedience, for Paul's point is not that possession of the law is insufficient in an abstract sense, but that a community bearing the name of God must embody what it claims to know (Wilson & Blois, 2023). The emphasis already present in the earlier version of the manuscript, namely that God is blasphemed "through" his own people, should therefore be retained because it captures the representational weight of the verse most clearly.

A third feature is the closing formula καθὼς γέγραπται (*kathōs gegrapται*), "as it is written." The perfect passive γέγραπται, from γράφω, does more than introduce a quotation. In Pauline scriptural practice it signals that what has been written continues to possess normative and interpretive force. Romans 2:24 is thus not an isolated remark but a rereading of present communal failure in light of Israel's Scriptures. Ryšková has shown the importance of Isaiah in Romans, while Windsor demonstrates that Paul's critique is best understood within Jewish prophetic discourse (Ryšková, 2020; Windsor, 2025). Read together, these studies illuminate how Paul revives an older scriptural pattern: God's people, though entrusted with privilege, may nevertheless dishonor God's name among the nations when their conduct contradicts their covenantal identity. Romans 2:24 is therefore literary, intertextual, and theological at once.

Taken together, these textual features show that Romans 2:24 is a theological indictment of failed public representation. Paul does not merely say, "you break the law"; he says, in effect, "because of you, the name of God is being blasphemed among the nations." The verse thus joins identity, ethics, divine reputation, and the perception of outsiders in a single theological claim. Before it can be applied to contemporary Christian witness, however, it must be read more fully within the prophetic horizon that underwrites it. The next step,

therefore, is to trace how the logic of God's name being dishonored because of God's people is shaped in Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20–23.

Intertextual Background: Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20–23

The theological logic of Romans 2:24 becomes clearer when the verse is read within its intertextual horizon. The formula *καθὼς γέγραπται* indicates that Paul intentionally situates his charge within continuity with Israel's Scriptures. The question, therefore, is not simply which text is being quoted, but what theological world is being activated by the quotation. Most interpreters agree that Isaiah 52:5 is the most immediate source, yet Ezekiel 36:20–23 is also highly relevant as a conceptual background because it likewise concerns the profanation of God's name among the nations as a result of the condition of God's people. Ryšková demonstrates the importance of Isaiah in Romans, while Windsor shows that Romans 1–3 reflects the patterns of Jewish prophetic critique (Ryšková, 2020; Windsor, 2025). Romans 2:24 should therefore be read not as a free-floating moral slogan but as a prophetic reactivation of an older biblical pattern in which the people who bear God's name become the occasion for its dishonor among outsiders.

It is exegetically significant that Paul's citation follows the Septuagint version of Isaiah 52:5 rather than the Masoretic Text. The LXX renders the profanation of the divine name with the present indicative passive *blasphēmeitai*, describing an ongoing state of dishonor, whereas the Masoretic Text uses a different formulation that stresses the continuous nature of the mocking differently. Paul's choice of the LXX is not incidental; it reinforces the ongoing, habitual character of the profanation, a detail that coheres precisely with his use of the present passive *blasphēmeitai* in Romans 2:24 itself. The LXX thus provides Paul not merely with a lexical parallel but with a rhetorical template whose verbal aspect he deliberately inhabits in order to intensify the charge that the dishonoring of God's name is not a past event but a present and continuing reality produced by the community's conduct (Hays & Koch, 1988, pp. 168–172; Stanley, 1992, pp. 84–87).

The relation to Isaiah 52:5 is most evident at the verbal and rhetorical level. In Isaiah, the nations demean the name of Yahweh because his people are in a state of humiliation and exile. Paul takes that pattern and sharpens it by linking the dishonor of God's name directly to the moral contradiction of those who claim to possess the law yet violate it. This is a profound rhetorical move. Paul does not merely cite Scripture; he relocates its prophetic force into his own present situation. Moo reads the citation as an accusation that law-breaking by those who boast in the law results in the dishonor of God among the nations, and Jewett similarly argues that religious superiority not embodied in obedience produces public scandal rather than divine glory (Jewett, 2007, pp. 223–225; Moo, 2018, pp. 164–166). In this way, Isaiah 52:5 supplies more than verbal material; it provides a theological pattern in which the condition and conduct of God's people shape how the nations perceive God.

Yet if interpretation stops with Isaiah 52:5 alone, an important layer of Paul's logic remains underdeveloped. This is where Ezekiel 36:20–23 becomes especially significant. In that passage, the house of Israel is said to have profaned God's holy name among the nations,

not merely because the nations misread events, but because Israel's own condition and conduct occasioned that profanation. The emphasis falls on the desecration of the divine name and on God's resolve to sanctify that name again before the nations. The conceptual affinity with Romans 2:24 is striking. The people who should have mediated the holiness of God's name instead become the cause of its profanation. Schreiner notes that the echo of Ezekiel clarifies why Paul's accusation is not merely ethical but theological, while Bird stresses that in prophetic tradition the people's conduct always has a public dimension because outsiders judge Israel's God through Israel (Bird, 2016, pp. 98–100; Schreiner, 2018, pp. 126–128).

If Isaiah 52:5 clarifies the dimension of public dishonor, Ezekiel 36:20–23 clarifies the dimension of covenantal profanation. The two texts converge at a crucial point: the nations read God through God's people, and when God's people are unfaithful, God's name is publicly compromised. Paul does not quote these texts mechanically; he reads them hermeneutically to construct a densely theological accusation. The failure of God's people to do the will of God does not merely damage their own standing; it damages the public witness borne by the divine name itself. Without Isaiah and Ezekiel, Romans 2:24 is easily reduced to an individualized moral rebuke. With them, it emerges as a prophetic indictment of a people whose covenantal failure has public theological consequences. From this intertextual horizon, the discussion can now move toward the theological meaning of Romans 2:24 as a text about public witness and failed representation.

The name theology of Romans 2:24 should be made explicit at this point. In Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20-23, the "name of God" is not a decorative expression for divine identity. It refers to the public visibility of God's holiness among the nations. Ezekiel 36 is especially important because Israel's presence among the nations becomes the place where Yahweh's name is either profaned or sanctified. The problem is therefore representational. The nations do not evaluate Israel in isolation. They draw conclusions about Israel's God from Israel's visible life. Paul's use of Isaiah 52:5 in Romans 2:24 works within this prophetic logic. Those who possess the law should make God's holiness visible. Yet their transgression gives the nations grounds to speak against God's name. The issue is not merely hypocrisy. It is the collapse of Israel's public vocation before a Gentile audience (Windsor, 2025; Young, 2024).

This also sharpens the shame and honor dimension of the verse. Honor in Paul's world was not only an inner quality. It required public recognition. Shame was not only private guilt. It was a public loss of standing before a watching audience. Romans 2:24 works inside this social field. The Gentiles are not passive observers. They are the audience before whom the divine name is either honored or dishonored. They hear claims about law, election, and instruction. They also see conduct that contradicts those claims. The result is public dishonor directed not only at the teacher, but also at the God represented by that teacher. Paul therefore turns the charge into a communal crisis of reputation. The one who boasts in the law becomes the medium through which God is shamed among outsiders. This shame is not the honorable suffering of the righteous. It is the shame of failed witness (Klinker-De Klerck, 2020; Sloan, 2023b; Vaughn, 2019).

Theological Meaning of Romans 2:24: Public Witness and Failed Representation

Once Romans 2:24 is read within its immediate context and prophetic background, its theological meaning becomes more explicit. Paul is not simply condemning inconsistency; he is exposing the failure of God's people to represent God before outsiders. The verse matters because it binds together three elements that are often considered separately: the identity of God's people, the conduct of God's people, and the reputation of God's name. In Paul's logic, communal failure does not remain an internal matter. It becomes publicly legible among the nations. Romans 2:24 is therefore a text about public witness before it ever becomes a modern theological category. God's people live in a space where their life is read, assessed, and interpreted by outsiders, and their unfaithfulness may become the occasion for the dishonor of God's name. This reading coheres with recent work on public theology and with Windsor's insistence that Romans reflects a prophetic critique of God's people within Israel's own tradition.

For this reason, Romans 2:24 is not adequately explained by the language of "hypocrisy" alone. That term captures something of the problem, but it is too narrow for the theological burden of the verse. Paul is confronting failed representation. The issue is not simply that the law is broken, but that God is dishonored through the breaking of the law by those who claim to know and teach it. Major commentators make this point in different ways. Jewett emphasizes that religious pride not embodied in obedience creates public scandal. Moo interprets verse 24 as the climax of the contradiction between boasting in the law and violating it. Schreiner argues that covenant privilege without obedience not only proves useless but turns into dishonor against God. Gaventa similarly hears in Romans a challenge to any form of religious security grounded in status rather than in faithful life (Gaventa, 2024, pp. 62–65; Jewett, 2007, pp. 223–225; Moo, 2018, pp. 164–167; Schreiner, 2018, pp. 126–129).

Seen from this angle, the notion of public witness is not a modern supplement attached to Romans 2:24, but an implication generated by the text itself. Witness is not first a matter of communicative strategy; it concerns whether the life of God's people makes God honored or despised in the eyes of others. Schliesser argues that public theology as cultural witness requires forms of Christian presence that are morally and socially credible, while Davison likewise treats witness as embodied participation rather than merely verbal assertion (Davison, 2023; Schliesser, 2023). Read in light of Romans 2:24, such observations sharpen an already Pauline point: God's people are never publicly neutral. They either bear the divine name in ways that commend God or in ways that bring that name into contempt. This insight prepares the way for a carefully controlled hermeneutical dialogue with Orwell's *Animal Farm*, which can illuminate how betrayed principles and communal contradiction operate without displacing the semantic priority of the biblical text.

Reading Romans 2:24 through Orwell's *Animal Farm*

At this stage, it is necessary to reaffirm that *Animal Farm* is not used to determine the meaning of Romans 2:24. The meaning of the Pauline text has already emerged from its argumentative context and prophetic background. Orwell's text is therefore employed only as

a secondary hermeneutical lens, one that helps contemporary readers perceive more sharply a pattern already exposed by Paul: the gap between normative confession and lived reality, together with the public consequences of that gap for a community's credibility. This approach is consistent with recent work on religious reading, which argues that secular literature may function as a theological conversation partner without displacing the semantic authority of Scripture (Philip, 2025; Sixta, 2025).

The first is the progressive revision of the Seven Commandments. The animals begin their revolution with a normative code rooted in a founding vision of equality and justice. Yet this code is never publicly repudiated; it is quietly rewritten. The most famous instance is the gradual transformation of "All animals are equal" into "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (Orwell, 2000, p. 90). The commandments remain visible on the barn wall; their discursive existence is maintained even as their content is inverted. The parallel with Paul's interlocutor in Romans 2 is structurally precise: the law is never renounced; it is boasted in even as it is violated. The normative claim persists as a public assertion while being systematically emptied of practical force. In both cases, the mechanism of betrayal is not overt rejection but internal erosion sustained by the continued use of the founding vocabulary.

The second moment is Squealer's function as the regime's narrator. When the pigs begin sleeping in beds, contravening one of the original commandments, Squealer does not justify this as a policy revision. He insists instead that the animals have misremembered the original rule, and that it was always "No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets" (Orwell, 2000, p. 45). Contradiction is not acknowledged; it is narratively dissolved. This mechanism illuminates what Paul exposes in Romans 2 at a level beyond the individual and the institutional. A community may learn to rename deviation as faithfulness, to frame contradiction as wisdom, and to deploy the vocabulary of its founding principles precisely in order to obscure how far it has departed from them. Merzah rightly characterizes this as systematic linguistic manipulation, but the theological weight of the observation is not Orwell's alone; it is already present in Paul's accusation that a people may dishonor God's name through the very religious identity they publicly maintain (Merzah, 2024; Orwell, 2000).

The use of Orwell must nonetheless remain methodologically disciplined. This article does not claim that Orwell provides a key to Paul, nor that his political allegory should be absorbed into Christian exegesis. Rather, *Animal Farm* clarifies, on the level of social and moral imagination, a pattern that Paul has already diagnosed theologically. Paul states that God's name is blasphemed among the nations because of God's people. Orwell shows how a community can retain the rhetoric of principle while structurally betraying it in practice. In that sense, the Orwellian lens does not replace exegesis; it intensifies reception. It allows contemporary readers to see more concretely how contradiction between confession and practice can destroy public credibility and deepen dishonor. The next step is therefore to draw out the implications of Romans 2:24 for contemporary Christian witness, especially in relation to ecclesial credibility, performative piety, and the need for integrity, repentance, and accountability.

Implications for Contemporary Christian Witness

Ecclesial credibility in the public sphere

If Romans 2:24 is read within Paul's argument and prophetic horizon, its first implication for contemporary Christian witness concerns ecclesial credibility in the public sphere. God's people never exist as a purely private body. This is not merely a sociological observation. The covenantal logic of Romans 2:24 makes a stronger claim: the church is constitutively representational. Its public presence does not merely affect how it is perceived; it affects how God is perceived. This distinction matters because it shifts the question of ecclesial credibility from a problem of reputation management to a problem of theological faithfulness. A church that loses public credibility has not only failed its institutional mission; it has, in Pauline terms, produced the conditions for the dishonoring of God's name among outsiders. In contexts where the church operates as a visible minority institution under social scrutiny, as is the case in significant parts of Indonesia and Southeast Asia, this representational weight is particularly acute: the public conduct of Christian communities shapes, for better or worse, how God is read by those who observe them (Setyawan, 2024). Religious identity always has a public dimension because communal life is read, evaluated, and interpreted by those beyond the community itself. In that sense, the church does not merely proclaim a message; it also serves as a social medium through which others form judgments about the God it proclaims. When ecclesial life displays a serious contradiction between confession and practice, what is damaged is not only institutional reputation but also the credibility of witness concerning God. In the language of Romans 2:24, the name of God may be blasphemed because of God's people. Public theology has increasingly stressed that witness must be understood not merely as speech in public but as a morally credible mode of presence. Davison underscores that cultural witness concerns the source, medium, and end of Christian presence, while Schliesser argues that public theology as cultural witness requires forms of presence that are christologically grounded and publicly responsible. In the Indonesian context, Setyawan similarly insists that biblical theology must not remain confined to internal ecclesial discourse but must engage public space responsibly (Davison, 2023; Schliesser, 2023; Setyawan, 2024).

The danger of performative piety

A second implication concerns the danger of performative piety. Romans 2:17–24 already reveals the structure of such religiosity: boasting in the law, claiming knowledge of God's will, and assuming the role of teacher, while living in contradiction to those claims. Romans 2:24 shows that the problem is not ordinary moral weakness alone, but a form of religiosity capable of preserving confessional performance while severing it from embodied integrity. At precisely this point, the dialogue with *Animal Farm* sharpens the issue. A community may preserve slogans, symbols, and claims to moral legitimacy even while its actual life moves in the opposite direction. Merzah's analysis of linguistic manipulation in *Animal Farm* is therefore relevant because it demonstrates how moral contradiction may be sustained through language that obscures deviation and normalizes betrayal (Merzah, 2024). Performative piety is dangerous not simply because it is pastorally unhealthy, but because it

renders public witness increasingly unintelligible by separating religious reputation from ethical coherence.

The necessity of integrity, repentance, and accountability

A third implication is the necessity of integrity, repentance, and accountability. If God's name may be dishonored because of the failure of God's people, then the response cannot be reduced to image management, institutional defensiveness, or stronger rhetoric. What is required is restored integrity, understood as the alignment of confessed identity, theological truth, and publicly legible communal practice. Repentance is necessary because failed representation is not merely an administrative or public-relations problem; it is a theological problem. Accountability is likewise indispensable because, without structures that allow criticism, correction, and truthful self-examination, religious communities easily become trapped in the patterns of self-justification that deepen the gap between confession and reality. Read in this way, Romans 2:24 speaks with continuing force to the contemporary church. It calls not for institutional reputation management but for the kind of communal repentance that addresses contradiction at its root. Accountability structures, understood theologically, are not mechanisms of ecclesiastical governance alone; they are the communal conditions under which the name of God can be progressively re-honored among those who have witnessed its dishonoring. Romans 2:24, read within its covenantal and prophetic horizon, demands nothing less than a form of ecclesial life in which the coherence between confession and conduct is treated as a theological obligation, not a pastoral ideal.

CONCLUSION

This study has argued that Romans 2:24 should be interpreted not merely as a moral criticism of inconsistency, but as a theological indictment of failed public representation. Read within the argumentative flow of Romans 2:17–29, the verse functions as the climax of Paul's exposure of the contradiction between covenantal identity and actual practice. The people who boast in the law but violate it do not simply fail ethically; they become the occasion through which the name of God is dishonored among the nations. The exegetical and intertextual analysis has also shown that this claim is rooted in the prophetic traditions of Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20–23, where the fate of God's name is bound to the life of God's people before outsiders. In this sense, Romans 2:24 is best read as a statement about the public theological consequences of covenantal failure.

The hermeneutical dialogue with Orwell's *Animal Farm* has served to clarify the contemporary force of this Pauline warning without displacing the primacy of the biblical text. Used as a secondary allegorical lens, *Animal Farm* illuminates how a community may continue to speak in the language of moral principle while progressively betraying those principles in practice. This literary dialogue helps expose the mechanism by which contradiction between confession and conduct erodes communal credibility and intensifies public dishonor. The study therefore does not use Orwell to generate the meaning of Romans 2:24, but to make more

visible for contemporary readers the pattern already diagnosed by Paul: the disjunction between normative religious claims and embodied communal life.

Accordingly, the theological implication of Romans 2:24 lies in its relevance for contemporary Christian witness. The verse demonstrates that witness is inseparable from the public intelligibility of the life of God's people. Where confession, ethics, and communal practice are fractured, the credibility of ecclesial witness is weakened and the name of God is exposed to contempt. For that reason, the study has underscored the necessity of integrity, repentance, and accountability as theological rather than merely institutional concerns. Its specific contribution to Biblical Studies is threefold. First, it demonstrates that Romans 2:24 functions not as a secondary ethical observation within Paul's argument but as its rhetorical and theological climax, a reading made possible by attending closely to the syntactical force of *di' hymas* and the verbal aspect of *blasphemeitai* within the logic of Romans 2:17–29. Second, it shows that the prophetic intertextuality of Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20–23 is not merely illustrative but constitutive of the verse's theological claim: Paul inhabits a prophetic pattern in which the fate of God's name is bound to the representational conduct of God's people, and he sharpens that pattern by relocating its cause from external humiliation to internal moral contradiction. Third, it establishes a methodological precedent for the disciplined use of secular allegory in biblical hermeneutics: *Animal Farm* is shown to function as a hermeneutical intensifier rather than a meaning-generator, illuminating the social and moral mechanisms of what Paul diagnoses theologically without displacing the semantic authority of the scriptural text.

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