

Christ as a Model for Eschatological Worshipping Community: Rereading Romans 15:7-13

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1. Introduction¹⁾

It is widely recognized that Romans 15:7-13 serves as a double conclusion. In other words, the passage is not only the conclusion to the immediate discussion of the strong and the weak (14:1-15:6),²⁾ but also the climax of the entire letter.³⁾ The verbal and thematic links with both the immediate passage and the preceding chapters reinforce this commonly held view. Since much ink has already been spilled on describing how Romans 15:7-13 functions as the conclusion to the entire letter by encapsulating different themes in the preceding chapters, in this article I will focus more on this passage as the conclusion to the immediate section of the letter (14:1-15:6).

The present study has two particular concerns in examining Romans 15:7-13:

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- 1) This is a revised excerpt of my unpublished Th. M. thesis that was submitted to Duke Divinity School as a degree requirement.
- 2) Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, IBC (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 225; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, rev. ed., BNTC (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 248; Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, SP 6 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 428-429; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 753-754; Charles H. Talbert, *Romans*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 320.
- 3) Sam K. Williams, "The 'Righteousness of God' in Romans", *JBL* 99:2 (1980), 285; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC 38B (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 844-845; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 70-73; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 235; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 205; J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul "in Concert" in the Letter to the Romans*, NovTSup 101 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 307-308; Ben Witherington and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 343; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 887.

theological and intertextual concerns. The theological concern of this article is to argue that Paul's *theology*—especially his christological and eschatological beliefs—plays a significant role in formulating various ethical admonitions in this passage. The intertextual concern of this article is to demonstrate how nicely the catena of scriptural citations in Romans 15:9b-12 functions as a hermeneutical key to unlock the meaning of our passage. As the following exegesis will show in more detail, christological and eschatological motifs are deeply embedded in this chain of four citations from Israel's Scripture. Given these two concerns, the main purpose of this paper is to argue that the fabrics of christological and eschatological motifs are intricately interwoven into the tapestry of Paul's exhortations in our passage, culminating in his use of Scripture.

2. Mutual welcoming as an eschatological gesture (15:7)

Summing up the previous discussion in 14:1-15:6, Paul reiterates the exhortation to mutual welcoming: "Therefore welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God" (15:7).⁴ Some scholars argue that Paul's exhortation in 15:7 broadens his initial exhortation in 14:1, implying that the exhortation to mutual welcoming is now applicable to all Christians.⁵ Although this claim is certainly legitimate, we must stress that in the exhortation in 15:7 Paul still has in view the strong and the weak. There are three reasons for this. First, *διό* indicates that Paul is picking up the previous arguments of 14:1-15:6.⁶ Second, the use of the same verb (*προσλαμβάνω*) in 14:1 and 14:3 leads us to conclude that there is a certain relationship between 15:7 and the preceding discussion of the strong and the weak.⁷ The third reason is most relevant to our discussion and thus merits an extended account here.

Following the majority of scholars, I believe that "the strong" is roughly a reference to Gentile Christians and "the weak" to Jewish Christians, though

4) Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptural citations are my translation.

5) Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, 225; Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 529.

6) N. T. Wright, *Romans*, NIB 10 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 746; Robert Jewett, *Romans*, 888.

7) Frank J. Matera, *Romans*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 322. The verb *προσλαμβάνω* is used five times in the entire Pauline corpus, four of which appear in Rom 14-15 (14:1, 3; two times in 15:7). This seems to highlight the strong connection between Rom 14:1-15:6 and 15:7-13.

“each group likely included sympathetic people from the ‘other’ ethnic group”.⁸⁾ This rough designation shows the tension between Jews and Gentiles in the Roman churches. If we take this designation seriously, then Paul’s exhortation to mutual welcoming directed to the strong and the weak in 14:1-15:6 can be read as a call for unity between Jews and Gentiles. This is why I think that 15:7-13 is not merely the conclusion to the entire letter, but also the climax of 14:1-15:6. Just as in his exhortation to communal harmony between the strong (roughly *Gentile* Christians) and the weak (roughly *Jewish* Christians) in 14:1-15:6, Paul shows the same concern for unity between Jews and Gentiles in our passage: Romans 15:7-13 precisely depicts a grand vision of a unified worshipping community consisting of Jews *and* Gentiles.

In view of this concern about Jews and Gentiles, an important point regarding

8) Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 250. For this broad identification of the strong and the weak (though some proponents of this view offer cautionary remarks about the neat identification), see C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Vol. 2: Commentary on Romans 9-16 and Essays*, ICC 32 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 695-697; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 800; Leander E. Keck, “Christology, Soteriology, and the Praise of God (Romans 15:7-13)”, Robert T. Fortna and Gaventa Beverly Roberts, eds., *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul & John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 86-87; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 687; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 829-832; Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, 404-406; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 708-709; John M. G. Barclay, “‘Do We Undermine the Law?’: A Study of Romans 14:1-15:6”, James D. G. Dunn, ed., *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 293; Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 342; Ben Witherington and Darlene Hyatt, *Romans*, 326; David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 183-184; Leander E. Keck, *Romans*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 335; Francis Watson, “The Two Roman Congregations: Romans 14:1-15:13”, Karl P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed. and exp. ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009), 203. But some scholars argue that the “oblique” nature of Paul’s statements does not allow us to make any identification of these groups; see J. Paul Sampley, “The Weak and the Strong: Paul’s Careful and Crafty Rhetorical Strategy in Romans 14:1-15:13”, L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough, eds., *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 40-52; Robert Jewett, *Romans*, 834. An alternative view of identifying the weak as non-Christian Jews has been proposed by Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 86-165; Neil Elliott, “Asceticism Among the ‘Weak’ and ‘Strong’ in Romans 14-15”, Leif E. Vaage and Vincent L. Wimbush, eds., *Asceticism and the New Testament* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 231-251. But this view is successfully debunked by Robert A. J. Gagnon, “Why the ‘Weak’ at Rome Cannot Be Non-Christian Jews”, *CBQ* 62:1 (2000), 64-82.

the interpretation of 15:7 must be noted: that Paul's overarching exhortation to mutual welcoming in v. 7 is fundamentally derived from his theology, especially christological and eschatological beliefs. The christological motivation is quite apparent as we see the direct reference to "Christ" in this verse. But eschatological conviction that undergirds Paul's exhortation is not explicitly stated and thus merits further discussion here.

There has been a strong tradition in Judaism that Gentiles will be incorporated into a new people of God in the eschatologically opportune time. God's eschatological blessing to Gentiles was a part of his initial promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3); and this promise was freshly reminded in different points of salvation history where Israel found herself (Psa 22:27; 98:1-3; 102:13-16; 117; Isa 2:2-4; 11:10-11; 25:6-10; 42:1-2; 45:14-25; 49:6; 52:8-10; 55:3-5; 56:6-8; 59:19-20; 60:1-5; 60-62; 66:18-21; Jer 3:17; 16:14-19; Eze 37:21-28; Amo 9:11-12; Mic 4:1-8; Zep 3:8-10; Zec 2:1-11; 8:20-23); and the theme of the eschatological participation of Gentiles in the final days is also prominent enough in the Second Temple Jewish literature (Tob 13:5-18; 14:4-7; Pss 17:21-32; 1En 48:4-5; 90:33; T. Sim. 7:2; T. Lev. 4:4; 18:2-9; T. Jud. 24:6; 25:5; T. Nap. 8:3-4; T. Ben. 9:2; 10:5; 11:2-3; T. Zeb. 9:8-9; 2Ba 68.5; Sib. Or. 3:710-30).⁹⁾ On this eschatological belief about the inclusion of Gentiles, Paul is not an exception. He firmly stands in this tradition (after all, he was an apostle to the Gentiles) and thus I would argue that Paul's ethical call for mutual welcoming is the natural outworking of this eschatological belief. In other words, since now is a new eschatological age, the strong (roughly Gentile Christians) and the weak (roughly Jewish Christians) should welcome one another. The crucial question here is, what makes Paul think that this is a new eschatological age? Here Paul's christological belief comes into play.

For Paul, it is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that results in the inbreaking of the new age into the old.¹⁰⁾ By way of contrast,¹¹⁾ in Jewish

9) I owe these scriptural references to James M. Scott, "'For as Many as Are of Works of the Law Are under a Curse' (Galatians 3.10)," Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, eds., *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, JSNTSup 83 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 187-221, esp. 212; Seyoon Kim, "Paul as an Eschatological Herald", Trevor J. Burke and Brian S. Rosner, eds., *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, LNTS 420 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 9-24, esp. 15; John W. Taylor, "The Eschatological Interdependence of Jews and Gentiles in Galatians", *TynBul* 63:2 (2012), 291-316, esp. 292.

10) J. Paul Sampley, *Walking Between the Times: Paul's Moral Reasoning* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 10; Cilliers Breitenbach, "'For in Hope We Were Saved': Discerning Time in Paul's Letter to the Romans", Jan G. van der Watt, ed., *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, WUNT 315 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 188.

11) The following description is a simplified summary of the difference between Jewish

apocalyptic thought-world, the present age and the age to come are in stark contrast and thus cannot coexist; and the old age will be ultimately replaced by the new through God's intervention, but the new age is yet to come. But in Paul's eschatological outlook, the new age has already dawned and this has been decisively achieved by Christ's death and resurrection. The final consummation still needs to come, but given the arrival of the new age believers are living in a creative tension between already and not yet. They already enjoy some benefits of the new age, but its full realization will not occur until the parousia. In the meantime, they should continue to embody the implications of the new age in their everyday lives. If we apply this idea to the interpretation of Romans 15:7, then Paul's rationale becomes clear: since Christ's death and resurrection has brought a new eschatological age into the present, the strong's contempt for, and the weak's condemnation of, the other party (14:3-4, 10, 13) is not the proper response, because "they behave as if the powers defeated by Jesus Christ still rule the world".¹²⁾ Then the proper response would be, says Paul, a mutual welcoming that is a way of embodying an eschatological reality, that is, a unified community of Jews and Gentiles.

Although Paul's christological belief (i.e., Christ's death and resurrection) is bound up with his eschatological belief (i.e., the inclusion of Gentiles at the eschaton), Paul once again presents Christ as the model that both parties should imitate: "welcome one another καθὼς Christ has welcomed you". In spite of the fact that scholars have debated over the nature of καθὼς (comparative or causal),¹³⁾ the essential point remains the same in either way of interpretation:

apocalyptic eschatology and Paul's counterpart. But for detailed discussions on this issue, see J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 29-54; Vincent P. Branick, "Apocalyptic Paul", *CBQ* 47:4 (1985), 666; Nancy J. Duff, "The Significance of Pauline Apocalyptic for Theological Ethics", Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards, eds., *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, JSNTSup 24 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 281, 285-289; J. Paul Sampley, *Walking Between the Times*, 7-24, 107-109; Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 19-27; Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 115-135; Michael Wolter, "The Distinctiveness of Paul's Eschatology", Jan G. van der Watt, ed., *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, WUNT 315 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 416-426; Victor Paul Furnish, "Living to God, Walking in Love: Theology and Ethics in Romans", Jerry L. Sumney, ed., *Reading Paul's Letter to the Romans*, RBS 73 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 194-195.

12) J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel*, 35-36.

13) Schreiner (*Romans*, 754) well summarizes the causal sense of καθὼς: "The conjunction καθὼς

Christ is the theological basis for Paul's exhortation to mutual welcoming. Given that Paul has been speaking of Christ's death and resurrection in this hortatory section (14:9, 15; 15:3), it is probably the case that Paul has in mind the Christ-event when mentioning Christ's welcoming.¹⁴⁾

3. Christ's servanthood as a theological basis for mutual welcoming (15:8-9a)

After depicting Christ as a supreme example of welcoming others, Paul continues to explain in more detail *how* Christ has welcomed Jews and Gentiles: "For I say that Christ has become a servant of the Jews for the sake of God's truthfulness¹⁵⁾— in order to confirm the promises to the fathers and so that, consequently, the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy".¹⁶⁾ Due to the complexity of the structure (particularly regarding the issue of how v. 9a is to be related to v. 8), scholars have proposed different readings of these verses.¹⁷⁾ Although there are numerous exegetical issues here, I will refer to two things that are relevant to our discussion. The above translation highlights the tension between (1) "the salvation-historical priority of the Jews" and (2) "the equality

is causal here, denoting the reason why believers should accept one another. Mutual acceptance is not exhorted because other members of the church are naturally pleasing or attractive. Paul returns to the fundamental baseline of the gospel. Believers should accept one another *because* Christ accepted us, despite our hostility to him, in order to bring glory to God" (emphasis mine). On the other hand, Dunn (*Romans 9-16*, 846) is a proponent of the view that takes καθὼς as a comparative sense: "Some sort of comparison is indicated, otherwise a different conjunction would have chosen. What Paul has in mind is not simply the fact of Christ's acceptance, but the manner of it (δύκονος—v. 8): it is precisely the humbling of oneself to a position where one's own opinions do not count and may not be thrust on another (one's master!), which both weak and strong, Gentile and Jew, need to practice".

14) For Christ's welcoming as referring to Christ's redemptive work in the larger context of Romans and Jesus tradition, see Michael B. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1-15.13*, JSNTSup 59 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 230-232; Robert Jewett, *Romans*, 888-889.

15) The truthfulness (ἀληθείας) of God probably means God's faithfulness to his promises. For a detailed discussion, see J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 310; similarly, Craig S. Keener, *Romans*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene: Cascade, 2009), 172.

16) This translation reflects the discussion of Sam K. Williams, "The 'Righteousness of God' in Roman", 285-289.

17) J. Ross Wagner, "The Christ, Servant of Jew and Gentile: A Fresh Approach to Romans 15:8-9", *JBL* 116:3 (1997), 473-485.

of Jews and Gentiles” as beneficiaries of God’s promises.¹⁸⁾ According to our translation, the primary purpose of Christ’s becoming a servant is to confirm God’s promises to the fathers (thus Israel’s priority in God’s salvific plan) whereby God’s faithfulness to his promises is shown.¹⁹⁾ But interestingly, it is Gentiles who glorify God for this mercy; the reason is that the promises to the fathers have always assumed the ultimate inclusion of Gentiles into a new eschatological people of God (thus the equality of Jews and Gentiles).²⁰⁾ N. T. Wright encapsulates the point²¹⁾:

It is by bringing Israel’s history to its climax that God, through the Messiah, has opened the way of mercy to all the nations. It is not that God has done one thing for Jews, and another thing for Gentiles; God has designed mercy for all ... [The] promises [made to the fathers] were never simply for ethnic Israel; nor were they divided, with one part belonging to Israel and the other to the nations. The promises were both to Israel and through Israel to the world.

How does this analysis enhance our understanding of the passage in view? Given that the conjunction γὰρ implies that 15:8-9a is the warrant for the exhortation to mutual welcoming in 15:7,²²⁾ Paul’s line of argument seems as follows: since Christ welcomed Jews first and then Gentiles by becoming a servant of the Jews, the strong (roughly *Gentile* Christians) and the weak (roughly *Jewish* Christians) welcome one another as an expression of Christlike service. In view of the relationship of Jews and Gentiles in salvation history, the strong’s welcoming of the weak may mean that the Gentiles must remember the salvation-historical priority of Jews; Gentiles are the ones who were grafted to the olive tree (11:23-24). Since Gentiles’ incorporation into a new people of God comes by way of the fulfillment of promises made to Jews, the strong must welcome the weak rather than judging their limited eating habit. After all, if

18) Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, 876.

19) Sam K. Williams, “The ‘Righteousness of God’ in Romans”, 288.

20) *Ibid.*

21) N. T. Wright, *Romans*, 747.

22) Pace Joshua Garraway, “The Circumcision of Christ: Romans 15.7-13”, *JSNT* 34:4 (2012), 303-322, who argues that Paul’s admonitions in Rom 15:7-13 are exclusively directed to the Gentiles or the strong. *Mutual* welcoming must be emphasized; that is, Paul’s ethical admonitions have different implications for the strong *and* the weak, though Paul’s primary concern is undoubtedly on the strong.

Jesus became a servant of Jews, why cannot the strong do likewise to the weak by restraining their freedom to eat? By contrast, the weak's welcoming of the strong may mean that Jews must remember that God's covenantal faithfulness always entails the salvific plan for Gentiles. If Jesus "became a servant in order that ultimately the Gentiles might be included in God's family, how can Jewish Christians complain about their eating habits?"²³⁾ Thus the weak must welcome the strong rather than despising their liberal eating habit. In short, Christ's example functions as a theological basis for both parties' ethical conduct, that is, mutual welcoming.

There is another piece of evidence to support our thesis. Scholars have noted that it is unusual for Paul to describe Christ as a servant in v. 8. The only other occurrence of such a description can be found in Galatians 2:17 where Christ is hypothetically depicted as "a servant of sin" in explaining the law, Christ, and justification. The Galatians text does not greatly enhance the understanding of our passage, and so a number of scholars propose the possibility that in Romans 15:8 Paul probably draws on Jesus tradition.²⁴⁾ This interpretive avenue seems more fruitful because Paul's description of Jesus as a servant of the Jews fits well into "Jesus' own sense of calling 'to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'" (Mat 15:24).²⁵⁾ Furthermore, Paul's description of Jesus Christ becoming a servant is likely to echo Mark 10:45 where Jesus is portrayed as the one who "did not come to be served but to serve, and give his life a ransom for many".²⁶⁾ This echo of Jesus tradition cannot be missed if one realizes that Paul previously made various expressions of Jesus' death (14:9, 15; 15:3). If Christ's becoming a servant specifically refers to his death—which undoubtedly carries an eschatological connotation—then this again nicely supports our thesis that the fabrics of christological and eschatological motifs are intricately interwoven into the tapestry of Paul's concrete exhortations in our passage.

4. Eschatological Worshipping Community (15:9b-11)

23) Michael B. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, 233.

24) Pace Jae Won Lee, *Paul and the Politics of Difference: A Contextual Study of the Jewish-Gentile Difference in Galatians and Romans* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2014), 157, who read Rom 15:8 in light of Gal 2:7.

25) Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, 877.

26) Michael B. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, 233-234; Ben Witherington and Darlene Hyatt, *Romans*, 344; Robert Jewett, *Romans*, 891.

The exhortation to mutual welcoming sets the tone for the unified worship of Jews and Gentiles. Paul drives his point home by using a chain of four scriptural citations. The citations from every part of the OT – Torah (Deu 32:43), Prophets (Isa 11:10), and Writings (Psa 18:49; 117:1) – indicate that “the inclusion of Gentiles with Jews in the praise of God has always been part of God’s purposes”.²⁷⁾

Paul begins his scriptural argument with a citation of Psalm 18:49 (17:50 LXX) in Romans 15:9b: “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and I will sing to your name”. Although the superscription attributes this psalm to David, and its final verse identifies God’s anointed king as the speaker of these words, the statement of God’s mercy to “David and his seed forever” (18:50) opens up the possibility that here David is to be understood as “an eschatological king”,²⁸⁾ “typologically”,²⁹⁾ or “messianically”.³⁰⁾ Any reading of these makes it plausible that the speaker of Psalm 18:49 is none other than Christ.³¹⁾ This christological reading of Psalm 18 makes more sense when we observe Paul’s adaptation of this psalm in support of his argument.

The citation is verbatim from the LXX of Psalm 18:49, except for the omission of κύριε. The omission of κύριε is perfectly understandable if the voice singing this psalm is attributed to Christ, since it is Paul’s common practice to “reserve the title κύριος for Christ”.³²⁾ In other words, Paul’s omission of κύριε is probably due to the fact that, for Paul, κύριος is the one who rehearses this psalm.³³⁾ In addition, given that the earlier verse in Romans 15:3 also depicts Christ praying the Psalms,³⁴⁾ the christological reading of Psalm 18 seems to be

27) Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, 878; similarly Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, 430.

28) J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 312.

29) Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, 878-879.

30) James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 849. But Dunn ultimately argues that this psalm is sung by David rather than Christ.

31) Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 72.

32) J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 313.

33) Christopher D. Stanley (*Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature*, SNTSMS 69 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 180) summarizes this view well: “Another approach would see Christ himself as the speaker ... In this case the omission would presumably reflect the apostle’s discomfort at having the exalted Christ address God by his own usual designation, ‘Lord’”.

34) A. T. Hanson, *Studies in Paul’s Technique and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1974), 16; C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, 733; Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, 425; J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 312; A. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God’s*

the best interpretive option. According to Hays, if we read the whole narrative of David's song messianically or christologically, "it must be read as a post-resurrection discourse, celebrating (proleptically?) the eschatological triumph of God".³⁵⁾ The point pertinent to our concern is that it is the *resurrected Christ* who prays this psalm in which Gentiles are joining in the praise of God. In other words, christological (*Christ* as the one praying this psalm) and eschatological (*Christ's resurrection*) motifs are intricately woven together in such a way as to invite the Roman believers to conduct a unified worship.

In terms of how our passage serves as the conclusion to Romans 14:1–15:6, the function of the first scriptural citation is this: since Christ (the *Jewish* Messiah) has worshiped God among *Gentiles* in his resurrection, the weak (roughly *Jewish* Christians) should also welcome the strong (roughly *Gentile* Christians) for corporate worship.³⁶⁾ In short, the citation of Psalm 18:49 highlights the responsibility of the weak (or Jews) to welcome the strong (or Gentiles).

Paul continues to admonish his audience concerning the corporate worship of Jews and Gentiles with a citation of Deuteronomy 32:43 in Romans 15:10: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people". Here Paul balances the preceding citation in Romans 15:9b that emphasized the responsibility of Jews. Now he summons *Gentiles* to rejoice with his people by citing a passage from the Song of Moses. Watson captures this point well: "The Jewish worshipper must worship God in

Righteousness (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 130; Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 64; G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 686. This point has been most persuasively argued in Richard B. Hays, "Christ Prays the Psalms: Paul's Use of an Early Christian Exegetical Convention", Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks, eds., *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 122-136, reprinted in Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 101-118. Furthermore, after tracing the tradition of christological reading of the Psalms in other NT writings as well as Pauline letters, Hays concludes, "the interpretation of the lament psalms as prayers of the Messiah is already a presupposition of the earliest stratum of New Testament tradition" (Richard B. Hays, *Conversion of Imagination*, 117).

35) Richard B. Hays, *Conversion of Imagination*, 116.

36) Given that most of Paul's exhortations to mutual welcoming is directed to "the strong" rather than "the weak" in Rom 14:1-15:6, this claim seems to lose its argumentative force. However, we should not ignore the fact that Paul addresses the same exhortations to "the weak" as well (Rom 14:3b, 13a). Thus Paul's exhortation is *mutual* welcoming.

the company of Gentiles [Psa 18:49]; the Gentile worshipper must worship God ‘with his people [Deu 32:43]’.³⁷⁾

One remarkable point regarding the *Vorlage* of Deuteronomy 32:43 is that LXX is radically different from the MT.³⁸⁾ Paul’s citation of Deuteronomy 32:43 generally follows LXX. In support of the unified worship of Jews *and* Gentiles, Paul’s choice of LXX appears to be natural because it contains a solidarity motif (“with his people”) as far as worship is concerned. On the other hand, the MT contains a very different admonition (“Praise, O Gentiles, his people”), which Paul might find unhelpful in order to express his grand vision of a unified worshipping community. For Paul, LXX is a better choice because it highlights the inclusion of Gentiles as the people of God. To put it differently, in citing Deuteronomy 32:43 as the LXX reads, Paul continues to exhort the Roman believers to share the grand vision of forming an *eschatological* community in which Jews *and* Gentiles together worship the same God. The eschatological motif becomes more obvious when we look at the context of Moses’ song in Deuteronomy.³⁹⁾

After a brief opening declaration (vv. 1-3), Moses narrates Yahweh’s faithfulness and Israel’s faithlessness (vv. 4-9). Even though Yahweh had relentlessly cared for Israel (vv. 10-14), she betrayed him by constantly turning

37) Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 452.

38) *Ibid.*, 450. Watson offers us the rendering of the LXX with italics indicating the portions that are lacking in the MT:

*Rejoice, heavens, with him,
and let all the sons of God worship him.*
Rejoice, Gentiles, *with his people,*
and let all the angels of God ascribe power with him.
For he avenges the blood of his sons,
and he will take vengeance *and execute judgment* on his enemies,
and *those who hate him he will recompense.*
And the Lord will purify his people’s land. (Deut. 32.43 LXX)

Even a cursory reading of this verse makes two things clear. First, we can surely find universal languages such as “all” in the LXX. Without these, the MT seems to focus more on God’s covenant faithfulness to his people, namely, Israel. Second, the solidarity motif (e.g., “with his people”) “transforms a potentially very hostile meaning into one much more sympathetic to the Gentiles” (James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 849).

39) For a brief overview of Moses’s song, here I follow McConville’s structure with slight modifications. For a detailed discussion, see J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, ApOTC 5 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 451.

to “strange gods” (vv. 15-18). For this reason, Yahweh was determined to purify his people through massive *eschatological* judgment (vv. 19-34): Yahweh will hide his face from them and “see what their *end* will be” (v. 20, 29). In this time of eschatological judgment, what Gentiles should do is to rejoice with God’s people (v. 43), that is, to turn away from idols and to worship one and only God with his people (v. 39).⁴⁰⁾ If the full force of this original context is taken seriously, then one may safely to conclude that Gentiles’ rejoicing with the Jews in the worship of God is an *eschatological* response.

To describe his vision of a unified worshipping community, Paul uses another scriptural quotation from Psalm 117:1 (116:1 LXX) in Romans 15:11: “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him”. Paul slightly modifies the LXX, but the alterations do not greatly affect the meaning of the verse.⁴¹⁾ Regarding the issue of how Paul’s scriptural citation backs up his argument, more light can be thrown when one gives due attention to the ancient usage of Psalm 117. Strikingly enough, only a few commentators mention the important fact that Psalm 117 is one of the *Hallel* psalms (Psa 113–118 MT) whose primary concern is to express the praise of God for his deliverance.⁴²⁾ Then how can this fact enhance our understanding of the verse in view? On this, Wagner’s comment is particularly helpful: “As part of the important liturgical cycle of psalms known as the *Hallel*, Psalm 116 [LXX] would have been well known not only in the land of Israel, but also throughout the Diaspora. Its incorporation into the *Hallel* imbued the psalm with strong *eschatological* overtones of Israel’s national restoration”.⁴³⁾ According to Wagner, since *Hallel* was frequently sung at Jewish major feasts in order to commemorate “the acts of divine deliverance”, the *Hallel* psalms might have been interpreted eschatologically, that is, celebrating “God’s *future* deliverance of Israel”.⁴⁴⁾

40) Scott Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics: The Future of Israel and the Nations in Romans 15:1-13”, *TynBul* 51:2 (2000), 180-181. For the view that the verb εὐφραίνω has an eschatological sense, see Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, Geoffrey William Bromiley, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 386; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 849.

41) For a detailed discussion of Paul’s alterations of LXX, see Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture*, 181-182; John Paul Heil, “The Voices of Scripture and Paul’s Rhetorical Strategy of Hope in Romans 15:7-13”, *Theoforum* 33:2 (2002), 202-204.

42) It is striking enough that most commentators do not even mention this, or do not explicate how it can shed light on the understanding of Paul’s use of Scripture. For those who have dealt with this issue, see J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 313-315; Scott Hafemann, “Eschatology and Ethics”, 182.

43) J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 313-314 (emphasis added).

The understanding of Paul's use of Scripture in Romans 15:11 will be further enhanced if we seriously consider the context of Psalm 117, the shortest psalm in the entire Psalter, which has only two verses. The second verse informs us of the *reasons* for universal worship: Praise the Lord, all Gentiles and all the peoples (paraphrase of Psa 117:1), "for great is his mercy (ἔλεος) toward us, and the truthfulness (ἀλήθεια) of the LORD endures forever" (Psa 117:2). The important point here is that these two motifs of mercy and truthfulness previously appear in Romans 15:8-9a, in association with Gentiles and Jews, respectively. This is strong evidence that supports the argument that the "peoples" (λαοί) are to be understood as a specific reference to Jews, not just peoples in a general sense.⁴⁵⁾ If Paul intends λαοί as a reference to Jews, his citation of Psalm 117:1 again reinforces the exhortation to the unified worship of Jews and Gentiles *all together*. To sum up, both (1) Psalm 117:1 as a part of the *Hallel* psalms (full of eschatological overtones) and (2) the content of Paul's exhortation (corporate worship of Jews and Gentiles) highlight our thesis that eschatological motifs are intricately interwoven into Paul's exhortation.

5. The shoot of Jesse as the ruler of Gentiles (15:12-13)

Paul's last scriptural quotation is from Isaiah 11:10 in Romans 15:12: "The shoot of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope". Here Paul closely follows the LXX, except for the omission of the phrase ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ.⁴⁶⁾ At first glance, Paul's elimination

44) Ibid., 314 n. 28 (emphasis original).

45) Wagner (Ibid., 314-315) makes a convincing case for this argument, providing several more reasons. First, his analysis of Paul's interpretation of Isa 65:1-2 shows that Paul "treats ἔθνη and λαοί not as synonyms, but as references to distinct groups: Gentiles and Israel, respectively". Second, "in view of Paul's emphasis in Romans 15:7-13 on the fact that Christ unified Jew and Gentile in himself for the glory of God, it is quite possible that he understands λαοί in Psalm 116:1[LXX] to refer to Israel." Third, the wider context of Psa 116 LXX seems to support this view because "at the end of the preceding psalm, the speaker vows to give thanks to the Lord 'before all his people (λαός), in the courts of the house of the Lord, O Jerusalem' (115:9-10). The following psalm calls on 'the house of Israel' to praise the Lord (117:2)". Fourth, in the preceding quotation from Deu 32:43 in Rom 15:10, Paul "speaks of Gentiles rejoicing together with 'his people (λαός)'" which clearly indicates Israel. These pieces of evidence all point to the fact that λαός is to be understood as a reference to Israel or Jews. For an alternative interpretation of λαός taking it generally as "peoples", see; John Paul Heil, "Paul's Rhetorical Strategy of Hope", 203-204.

46) James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 850.

of this phrase seems to be crucial evidence *against* our thesis that the eschatological motif is the major backdrop of Paul's exhortations. However, it is in fact another evidence *for* our thesis because it underscores the present aspect of eschatology. Wagner's comments are again helpful here: "Paul omits the phrase, 'in that day,' precisely because he contends that this eschatological prophecy finds its realization *now* in the worshipping communities of Jews and Gentiles that God is calling into being in Christ".⁴⁷⁾ In other words, the elimination of this phrase emphasizes the 'already' aspect of eschatology, the inaugurated eschatology.

Along with this eschatological motif, there are two christological motifs in Paul's citation of Isaiah 11:10. First, according to Dunn, "'the root or shoot ... of Jesse' was already established as a title for the royal Messiah".⁴⁸⁾ The phrase seems to point to Christ Jesus who was previously depicted as "the seed of David" (Rom 1:3). Second, Paul probably has Christ's resurrection in mind when he uses the verb ἀνίστημι. Although some scholars are dubious about this interpretation,⁴⁹⁾ there are a number of reasons for the preference of this view. First, the frequent use of this verb in association with resurrection in Pauline letters as well as other NT writings forces us to construe the verb referring to Christ's resurrection.⁵⁰⁾ Second, when we juxtapose this verse with "the creedal formula" in Romans 1:3-5, a strikingly similar pattern emerges: Jesus Christ, the royal Messiah, brings some benefits for Gentiles through his resurrection (ἀναστάσεως in 1:4 vs. ἀνιστάμενος in 15:12).⁵¹⁾ Third, in 14:9 Paul already explicitly stated that Jesus, through his death and resurrection, became the Lord of all (i.e., "the dead and the living", which certainly includes the strong and the weak, and Jews and Gentiles). Fourth, if the verb ἀνίστημι in 15:12 refers to Christ's resurrection, then the meaning of the verse will cohere well with the prominent message of the letter that "Jesus' resurrection and exaltation [is] the anchor for the hopes of Gentiles as well as Jews (1:4; 4:25; 8:11;

47) J. Ross Wagner, "Moses and Isaiah in Concert: Paul's Reading of Isaiah and Deuteronomy in the Letter to the Romans", Claire Mathews McGinnis and Patricia K. Tull, eds., *As Those Who Are Taught: The Interpretation of Isaiah from the LXX to the SBL* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 101.

48) James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 850.

49) C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, 747; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 758.

50) James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 850; Leander E. Keck, *Romans*, 358.

51) Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, 432; similarly, N. T. Wright, *Romans*, 748; Matthew V. Novenson, "The Jewish Messiahs, the Pauline Christ, and the Gentile Question", *JBL* 128:2 (2009), 369-370.

10:6-13)”.⁵²⁾ The accumulative impact of this analysis is none other than magnifying the significance of Christ’s resurrection in determining believers’ conduct.⁵³⁾ Paul’s essential argument seems to be this: since Christ, the royal Messiah of Israel (“the shoot of Jesse”), has now also become the Lord of Gentiles (“rises to rule the Gentiles”), the strong and the weak should follow the lead of Christ who urges them to participate in the unified worship (vv. 9b-11). Once again, Paul offers his christological conviction as the theological ground for his ethical admonition.

Paul concludes our passage in Romans 15:13 with a solemn prayer full of eschatological connotations. The eschatological expressions such as hope, joy, peace, and the Holy Spirit in this verse all point to the fact that the Roman churches are, and should continue to be, an eschatological worshipping community in which Jews and Gentiles are to be unified.⁵⁴⁾

In sum, christological motifs dominate in Paul’s use of Scripture in 15:12, whereas eschatological motifs are resounding in 15:13.

6. Conclusion

The primary concern of this article is the interrelationship between Paul’s theology and ethics; and the essential argument of this article is that Paul’s ethical admonitions are profoundly shaped by his theological beliefs. To be more precise, Paul’s repeated exhortations such as mutual welcoming and unified worship in our passage are primarily derived from his christological and eschatological convictions. According to Paul, mutual welcoming and unified worship are not tactical solutions to contingent problems in Roman churches. Rather, they are about acknowledging and actualizing a new identity that the

52) J. Ross Wagner, “Moses and Isaiah in Concert”, 101.

53) For a recent discussion about how the resurrection plays a significant role in shaping Paul’s exhortations to mutual welcoming and unified worship, see J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 49-55.

54) With regard to these four words that appear in v. 13, we can easily understand that hope and Holy Spirit have eschatological implications. But what about joy and peace? At first sight, these words do not seem to have eschatological overtones. However, in Rom 14:17, Paul explicitly states the values of God’s kingdom in his exhortation: “The kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and *peace* and *joy* in the Holy Spirit” (emphasis added). Here peace and joy are described as the core values of God’s kingdom that certainly conveys an eschatological connotation.

Roman believers have received through Christ's death and resurrection at the dawn of a new eschatological age.

This article also argues that Paul cites several Old Testament texts in order to emphasize his vision of unified worship. What becomes clear in this exegetical investigation is that christological and eschatological motifs are intricately interwoven into Paul's different scriptural quotations. Paul uses Old Testament texts in such a way as to underscore that Christ is an exemplar of the corporate worship, and that the corporate worship itself is an eschatological act. In other words, the portrayal of Jesus as a Jew worshipping God among Gentiles (v. 9) is a strong theological motivation for the Roman believers' ethical conduct, that is, participating in the eschatological corporate worship in which Jews and Gentiles alike glorify one and the same God (vv. 10-12).

<Keywords>

Romans, theology and ethics, christology, eschatology, Jews and Gentiles.

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<Abstract>

**Christ as a Model for Eschatological Worshipping Community:
Rereading Romans 15:7-13**

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Based on the premise that Paul's theology and ethics are interrelated rather than separated, this article rereads Romans 15:7-13 with a particular concern to prove that Paul's various ethical admonitions are profoundly shaped by his theology, especially christological and eschatological beliefs. Despite the presence of a number of christological and eschatological beliefs interwoven in this passage, there are two undergirding beliefs. Regarding the eschatological belief, Paul believes that, through the eschatological Christ's event (i.e., his death and resurrection), Gentiles are now incorporated into a new eschatological people of God. His various ethical call for unified worship are the natural corollary of this eschatological belief. Regarding the christological belief, in the catena of scriptural citations (15:9b-12), Christ is essentially depicted as the one who both exemplifies and exhorts mutual welcoming and unified worship. In short, Paul's ethical admonitions are not arbitrary or tactical solutions to ad hoc pastoral problems, but the thoughtful outworking of his coherent theology.