

HOPE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

PACIFIC CHRISTIAN COLLEGE
OF
MINISTRY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

FINAL PROJECT:
PAUL'S INCLUSIVE ETHIC
(ROMANS 14:1-15:13)

BIB5720
PAULINES EPISTLES

DR. CARL TONEY

BY
MARY S. SMITH

APRIL 12, 2012

Introduction

In Romans, Paul promotes an inclusive ethic which allows for Jewish and Gentile Christians to worship together in a united community (Jewett 2006, 889–90, 893, 895, 897). While some scholars argue that Paul is writing about a hypothetical situation (Karris 1991b, 65–84), it is more likely that Paul is addressing real problems in the Roman community. Romans 15:8 mentions a division between Jewish Christians, literally the “circumcision” (περιτομή) and Gentile Christians in Rome, two groups which Paul seeks to unify (Marcus 1989, 67–81). The groundbreaking work of Minear 1971 (1–23) reminded modern scholarship of the importance of Rom 14–15 as he used these chapters to reinterpret the rest of the letter. Tobin (2004, 58–76) draws attention to the need to place the issues of Rom 14:1–15:13 in the context of Paul’s past controversies in Galatia and Corinth. In Galatians, Paul defends the place of Gentile Christians by presenting a Spirit-guided ethic (Gal 5:16–26), which appears to cut out the place of the Jewish people and the Jewish Law from God’s plan of salvation (Gal 4:21–31; Tobin 2004, 74–76). However, in Romans, he defends the freedom of Jews to be Christians as Jews (Campbell 1991, 272–73). The greeting of Rom 16 indicates that Paul wrote Romans from Corinth (Karris 1991a, 44–52). In 1 Corinthians Paul encourages Gentile Christians to adapt to others, who are deemed to be weak, for the sake of the gospel (Tobin 2004, 76–78). As in 1 Corinthians, Paul in Romans uses a model of adapting to the needs of others in order to further their salvation. This study reminds us of the importance of the freedom of the gospel, and salvation is by faith in Christ alone. Today’s church should be reminded to avoid imposing cultural ideals when calling people to be included among the people of God. “[F]aith in Jesus Christ has pluralistic possibilities” (Jewett 1982, 62).

Bibliography

- Campbell, William S. 1991. "The Rule of Faith in Rom 12:1–15:13: the Obligation of Humble Obedience to Christ as the Only Adequate Response to the Mercies of God." Pages 259–86 in *Pauline Theology: Romans*. Edited by Elizabeth Johnson and David Hays. Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 4. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Jewett, Robert. 1982. *Christian Tolerance: Paul's Message to the Modern Church*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- , 2006. *Romans*. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Karris, Robert. 1991a. "A Short Note on Romans 16." Pages 44–52 in *The Romans Debate*. Rev. ed. Edited by Karl Donfried. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson.
- , 1991b. "Romans 14:1–15:13 and the Occasion of Romans." Pages 65–84 in *The Romans Debate*. Rev. ed. Edited by Karl Donfried. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson.
- Marcus, Joel. 1989. "The Circumcision and the Uncircumcision in Rome." *New Testament Studies* 35: 67–81.
- Minear, Paul. 1971. *The Obedience of Faith: the Purpose of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans*. SBTSS 19. Naperville, Ill: SCM Press.
- Tobin, Thomas. 2004. *Paul's Rhetoric in Its Contexts: the Argument of Romans*. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson.