

Romans 12-13

Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί,
Therefore I urge you brothers and sisters
διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ
by the mercies of God
παραστῆσαι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν
present your bodies
θυσίαν ζῶσαν ἀγίαν εὐάρεστον τῷ Θεῷ,
as a sacrifice living holy acceptable to God
τὴν λογικήν λατρείαν ὑμῶν.
(which is) your rational worship and service

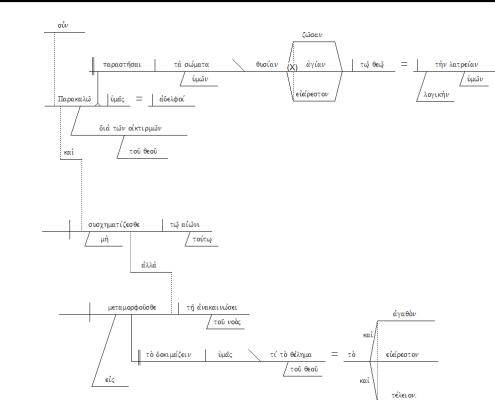
Romans 12-15

- The move from ‘indicative’ to ‘imperative’
- Summary of these chapters: How the Roman believers are to be God’s people in a pagan world, demonstrating that the church is a model of reconciliation and unity of different ethnic groups.

καὶ
and
μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ,
do not be conformed to this age
ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοὸς
but be transformed (metamorphosis) in the
renewing of mind

εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ,
so that you may discern/approve/test what the
will of God is
τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον καὶ τέλειον.
the good and pleasing and perfect (will of God)

Δοκιμάζω: to draw a conclusion about worth on
the basis of testing, prove, approve, here the
focus is on the result of a procedure or
examination.



Rom 12:1-2

- Several issues with translation:
 - Living sacrifice? Or sacrifice that is living, holy and acceptable?

Rom 12:1-2

- Several issues with translation:
 - Spiritual worship? Greek: worship that is λογικός “logikos”
 - BDAG: “being carefully thought through”, dealing with the cognitive aspect. How would this connect to 12:2 concerning renewing of the mind?
 - Hence the “worship” that Paul has in mind is a worship that involves the mind, being rational (logikos) and thoughtful; not merely “spiritual” as in emotional

Rom 12:1-2

- Several issues:
 - What about the καὶ “kai” (and) – at the beginning of 12:2 that is left untranslated in almost all translation?

Various Translations of Rom 12:1-2

- NIV: Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Various Translations of Rom 12:1-2

- TNIV: Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your proper worship as rational beings. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Various Translations of Rom 12:1-2

- NIV 2011: Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Various Translations of Rom 12:1-2

- NASB: Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. **2 And** do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect

Various Translations of Rom 12:1-2

- NRSV: I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual (or reasonable) worship. **2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Various Translations of Rom 12:1-2

- ESV: I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect

Various Translations of Rom 12:1-2

- NET: Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—alive, holy, and pleasing to God—which is your reasonable service. Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God—what is good and well-pleasing and perfect

Various Translations of Rom 12:1-2

- NT Wright: So dear family, this is my appeal to you by the mercies of God: offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Worship like this brings your mind into line with God's. What's more, don't let yourselves be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age. Instead, be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you can work out what God's will is, what is good, acceptable and complete.

World

- David Wells: Worldliness – “that system of values, in any given age, which has at its center our fallen human perspective, which displaces God and his truth from the world, and which makes sin look normal and righteousness seem strange. It thus gives great plausibility to what is morally wrong and, for that reason, makes what is wrong seem normal.”

Romans 12:1-2

- καὶ “kai” between 12:1 and 12:2
- Most translations omit the “and” thereby giving the idea that 12:2 begins a new sentence. But it is a continuation of 12:1
- Syntactically, Paul is urging 2 things:
 - Present your bodies
 - Not conforming to this world but renewing the mind (cf Romans 1)
 - leading to discerning the will of God

Romans 12:1-2

- Cultic language used in temple, priesthood and sacrifice
 - Offering our body as sacrifice that is living, holy and pleasing as true and rational worship
 - Renewing of the mind
 - Worship/sacrifice/offering lead to actions!

Discussion

- In what ways do you think Romans 12:1-2 connects to the entire book of Romans?
- In Romans 12:2, Paul refers to the need to “discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect”. What do you think “the will of God” is?

Romans 12:3-8

- “discern the will of God” is now spelt out – building the body of Christ comprising both Jews and Gentiles
- Not to be arrogant (12:3) but to embrace diversity in the body (12:4-8)
- working towards ethnic reconciliation?

Romans 12:3-8

- 12:3: For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think (ὑπερφρονεῖν) of yourself more highly than you ought to think (φρονεῖν), but to think (φρονεῖν) with sober judgment/sober thinking way (σωφρονεῖν), each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.
- 4x the words related to “think” appear in 12:3 → worship that is rational? Renewing of the mind?

Romans 12:3-8

- Using different gifts for building up the body of Christ comprising Jews and Gentiles – this is only possible if there is humility (back to 12:3)
- Charles Simeon: “The three lessons which a minister has to learn are; 1) humility, 2) humility, 3) humility.”

Romans 12:3-8

- The use of body metaphor in 12:4-5
⁴ *For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function,* ⁵ *so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.*
- Paul's use of body imagery in Romans 12:4-5 echoes 1 Cor 12

- The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.
- For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.
- Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.

- As it is, there are many parts, but one body.
- Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

- 1 Cor 12:12-14, 20, 27

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

- 1 Cor 12:15-16

If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

- 1 Cor 12:17-18

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment.

But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

- 1 Cor 12:21-26

12:12-30 – The Image of the Body

- Paul's use of body imagery
 - 91x in Paul's letters (eg Rom 12:4-8; Eph 1:22-23; 3:6; 4:14-16; 5:23, 29-30; Col 1:18; 3:15)
 - Most developed in 1 Corinthians: Out of these, 41x in 1 Corinthians (51%)
 - In 1 Cor 12:12-31 – 18x (39% of usage in 1 Corinthians)

Imagery of the body

- The provenance of Paul's image of the body
 - Hellenistic sources
 - Galen and Hippocrates
 - The temple of Asklepios

1) Hellenistic Sources

- See Livy, *History of Rome* 2.32.7-2.33.1; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 6.681-5
- Famous speech by Menenius Agrippa
- Agrippa persuaded the plebeians to cease their rebellion against the senate.
- Use of body imagery

- Various parts of the body revolt against the belly, a reference to the revolt of the people against the senate.
- The senate, like a body, is made up of a number of diverse parts, and all these parts perform a necessary function for the good of the whole.
- Agrippa also relates the story about the body that is destroyed because different members of the body, the hands, mouth, and teeth rebelled against the belly.

- When the hand refuses to pass food to the mouth and the mouth refuses to open to accept it and the teeth refuse to chew the food, the entire members become weak and exhausted.
- Highlight failure of various members of the body to recognize the important role of the stomach in processing the food it received.
- Moral of story: highlight to the masses that the ruling classes, who appeared to be taking from them all the time, were in fact essential to the wellbeing of the society.

- Seneca, *On Anger* 2.31.7: "To injure one's country is a crime; consequently, also, to injure a fellow-citizen – for he is a part of the country, and if we reverence the whole, the parts are sacred – consequently to injure any man is a crime, for he is your fellow-citizen in the greater commonwealth."

- What if the hands should desire to harm the feet, or the eyes the hands? As all the members of the body are in harmony one with another because it is to the advantage of the whole that the individual members be unharmed, so mankind should spare the individual man, because all are born for a life of fellowship, and society can be kept unharmed only by the mutual protection and love of its parts."

- Dio Chrysostom, *1 Tars.* 33.16: advices that one should not attempt to perform the function of others.
- The eyes "believed themselves to be the most important organs of the body, and yet they observed that it was the mouth that got the benefit of most things and in particular of honey... So they were angry and even found fault with their owner. But when he placed in them some of the honey, they smarted and wept and thought it a stinging, unpleasant substance."

2) Galen, *On Hippocrates' On the Nature of Man* 2.108-109

- "whatever diseases arise from the strongest members of the body are the most to be feared. For if the disease remains in the place where it began, it is necessarily the case that, as the strongest member suffers, the entire body is disturbed. And if the disease should come to one of the weaker parts from the stronger, it is difficult to expel. But whatever disease goes from the weaker to the stronger it is more easily released. For the flux is released by the strength."

• Hippocratic writings:

- Some physical parts are stronger and some are weaker, and varies from individuals
- The disease-working humours can move from the strong parts to the weak and also from weak to the strong.
- No problem if humours move from weak to strong, but disastrous if move from strong to weak.
- Stronger parts have power to pass excess humours to weaker parts and also to draw excess humours from the weaker parts to neutralise and release them.

- Galen (a physician that practised in Rome during Paul's days) comments on Hippocratic writings:
 - Questions Hippocratic writer – how can the humours move from weak to strong, as Galen's understanding is that the strong part would simply be able to repel the humour back into the weaker parts.

- Questions raised by Galen:
 - What then are the most essential parts of the body?
 - The stronger or the weaker parts?
 - Hippocrates does not discuss this matter – it became an issue of subsequent debate
 - Some thought it is the stronger parts, perhaps because diseases originated in the strongest parts were the most serious

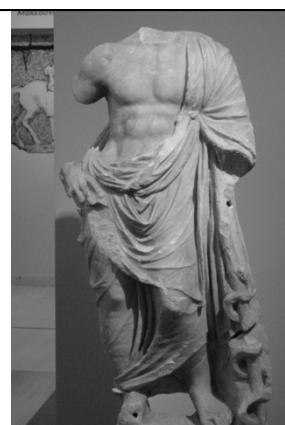
- Galen observes (*On the Natural Faculties* 135):
 - Some now say that the most essential parts are the strongest, but their argument is false. For it is better if the offending humours move from the most essential parts to the non-essential, not from the non-essential to the most essential. For in arthritis and gout we have already observed the effect of humours being carried into the legs, and being repelled from there; but if on the other hand they go into some essential part, the person will die; the one chance of recovery is if we could draw the humours back into the leg”

- If it is correct that according to Hippocrates, it is better for humours to move from the weaker parts to the stronger parts of the body, then the stronger parts of the body cannot be the most essential.
- Hence, the more essential parts seem to be the weaker parts, and not the stronger parts!

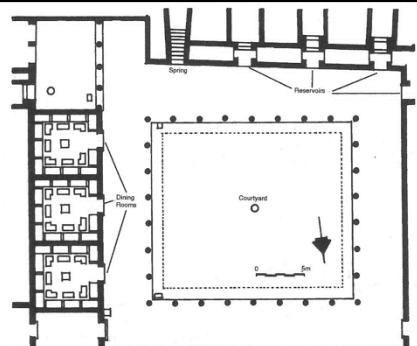
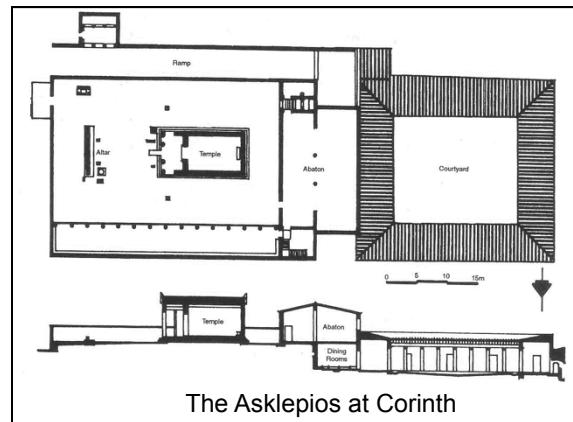
3) Temple of Asklepios

- God of healing
- Popularity attested by the terra cotta replicas of various parts of the body healed

Statue of Asklepius
The rod and the sacred snake are symbols of the god.
1st century BCE



Another Statue of Asklepios



Marble relief of left leg with inscription dedicating it to Asklepios and Hygeia (health) from Tyche as thank offering, presumably for cure of affliction on the leg

- Parts of the body that is sick, not well, are being sought for healing
- “weaker” parts of the body

- Paul’s Use of Body Imagery
- LISTEN TO PAUL AGAIN!! – pay attention to how Paul uses the body imagery – which are the “stronger” parts? Which are the “weaker” parts?
- Compare to Romans 14:1-15:13

Think!

- Romans 12 has high ecclesiology!
- Paul calls for mutual acceptance in the church
- Within the body of Christ, do we tend to honour the strong, the powerful, the gifted, the talented, and the popular ones? Who are the weaker, less honourable, and unpresentable parts of the body of Christ?
- How have we treated them?

Romans 12:9-21

- A series of exhortations – are these random? Sounds more like Paul’s Twitter account?

Reflect:

How would this series of exhortations fit into the Jews-Gentiles tension in the letter of Romans and the historical background of the letter (the Edict of Claudius)?

Reflections: Romans 12

- How would Romans 12 speak about ethnic reconciliation/Jews-Gentile relationship?
- How would Romans 12 be applicable in our church/Malaysian context today?

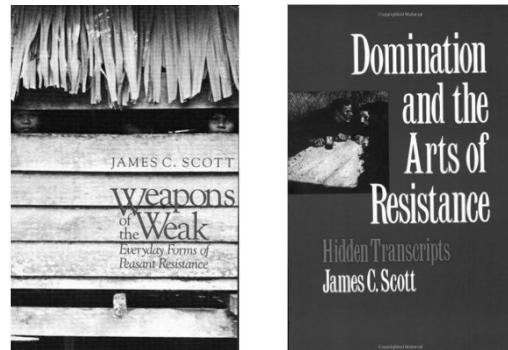
Romans 13:1-7

- Problematic passage subject to diverse interpretation, ranging from unqualified submission to rebellion

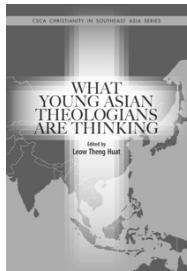
Romans 13:1-7

- How would this passage sound to the audience who were affected by the Edict of Claudius?
- Could this passage be read as a piece of ironic rhetoric?
- Suggestion: Reading Romans 13:1-7 utilising James Scott's theory "public discourse and hidden transcript"

James Scott and Romans 13:1-7

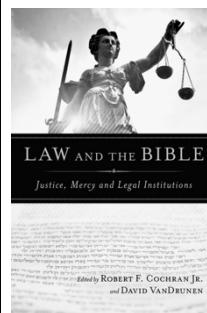


Some references



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"Living as Christians under Civil Law: The New Testament Letters, Law, and Politics," co-authored with David M. Smolin in Robert F. Cochran Jr. & David VanDrunen, eds., *Law and the Bible: Justice, Mercy and Legal Institutions*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013. Pp. 208-238

Romans 13:1-7

- Need to bear in mind Romans 13:7: "Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour."
- The punch line!

Romans 13:1-7

- Believers are to submit to authorities on the assumption that they are just
- If ruling authorities do not rule in line with God's justice, the obedience is not due them
- Obedience to what is right, never to what is wrong.
- Important: Romans 13:1-7 is NOT the last word on church-state relations

Romans 13:1-7

- Civil disobedience?
- Lesson from Bonhoeffer
- Lesson from *fumi-e* (Asian Civilisation Museum, Singapore)



Wooden signboard proclaiming the ban of Christianity in Japan. Dated 1868, a few years before the ban was lifted in 1873. Placed in Hyuga province in Kyushu, the main centre for the Christian missions.



Confiscated Christian object used to identify converts and eradicate Christianity from Japan. Called *fumi-e* (pictures to trample), they were used to test suspected Christians as early as 1626 in Nagasaki.

Plaque depicts the Virgin and the body of Christ crucified



This *fumi-e* shows the Crucifixion. This is made in Japan dated around 1670 expressly for use in *fumi-e* ceremonies, and thus was produced to be stepped on. It sits on four risers like a Japanese clog.

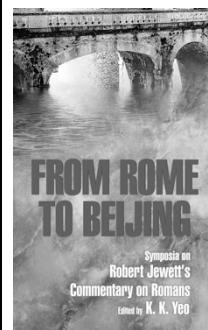
Romans 13:8-10: Chiastic Structure

13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

13:9 The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:8-14



“The Agape Meal: A Sacramental Model for Ministry drawn from Romans 13:8,” co-authored with Ezra Kok in K. K. Yeo, ed., *From Rome to Beijing: Symposia on Robert Jewett’s Commentary on Romans*. Lincoln: Kairos Studies, 2013. Pp.447-454

Romans 13:11-14

Eschatological focus:

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.