

CONCEPTUAL UNITY OF THE PROLOGUE AND FINAL DOXOLOGY IN ROMANS: AN ALEXANDRINE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The prologue of Paul's Epistle to the Romans (1:1–7) and the doxology in the final chapter (16:25–27) share core theological concepts about humankind's relationship with God. In what is only the limited space of three verses, the final doxology repeats all major concepts that were introduced in the prologue: God, gospel, Jesus Christ, an ancient divine plan coming true, God revealing himself and his will through holy scriptures, and an invited response of obedience of faith. This article concludes that there is basic conceptual unity of the prologue and final doxology, but also difference, particularly as the prologue explicitly introduces God as Father, a concept implied but not expressed in the doxology. Also the doxology stresses the mystery of the gospel for the gentiles in ages past, while the prologue suggests that within the Jewish context a lot was made known to and by the prophets already. On the basis of this conceptual unity of the prologue and the final doxology, this article follows Clement and Origen of Alexandria in their appreciation to the final chapters of Romans as part of the epistle. It uses a philological, source orientated method to explore the agreement and divergence between both passages and suggests that the author uses repetition of the main contents of the prologue in his final doxology to reinforce his overall message.

KEYWORDS: Romans, Paul, Origen, Alexandrine School, Clement of Alexandria

1 INTRODUCTION

While the prologue of Paul's Epistle to the Romans is amongst the least disputed parts of scripture as far as origins and authorship is concerned, the same cannot be said about the last two chapters of this letter, particularly the final doxology in Romans 16:25–27. The Greek-Alexandrine School has considered these chapters as part of the letter to the Romans and sacred scripture from a very early date. This view is supported by strong and varied text-critical evidence, also followed by Nestle-Aland²⁷ and the UBS.¹

Although some editions (e.g. most recently the SBL Greek New Testament) do not incorporate Romans 16:25–27 in the main text, doubts about the inclusion of the doxology do not necessarily hinge on considerations of a text critical nature. On the contrary, there is wide and diverse text-critical support for their inclusion. Apart from text-critical considerations, one's particular convictions about what is Pauline, un-Pauline, pseudo-Pauline or post-Pauline, as well as the level of complexity that is allowed to the author, is a factor for inclusion or exclusion. William O. Walker discusses this in *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters* (2001:196–198).² A complicating factor is that Romans 15 and 16 are not amongst the most commonly quoted passages of Scripture. Although there is early evidence for their presence in Clement of Alexandria and Origen, other early writers at best allude to these chapters.

Extra-textual considerations, like historical evaluations, become part of the literary assessment. This is, for example, evident in Cranfield, who finds it hard to believe that Tertullian did not refer to these chapters in his polemics against Marcion. He also says the pericope '16.25–27 makes a rather un-Pauline impression'.³ Does this statement find support in the facts and the sources? What if the prologue, universally recognized as genuine, shares a great measure of literary and conceptual unity with this supposed ending of the letter?

Sometimes it is safer to just follow the textual evidence where it leads, particularly if several plausible historical scenarios with support in early sources would explain the available data. This article follows Metzger and the United Bible Society Committee, who included the final doxology towards the end of Romans 16 on the basis of textual evidence. Good manuscripts from very different traditions contain the passage and they reflect how, at the very least, the later early church at the time of the manuscripts valued

1 Other doxologies that are generally recognized as Paul's are Galatians 1:4–5, Ephesians 3:20–21, Philippians 4:20, 1 Timothy 1:17; cf. F. J. Matera, *Galatians* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007), 42.

2 W. O. Walker, *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters* (JSNTSup 213; London: Continuum, 2001); cf. also E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 422–427.

3 C. Cranfield, *Romans 1–8* (New York: T & T Clark, 1975), 7.

these chapters and the doxology. Bruce M. Metzger: ‘While recognizing the possibility that the doxology may not have been part of the original form of the epistle, on the strength of impressive manuscript evidence (p⁶¹ ⋈ B C D 81. 1739 it^{d.61} vg sy^p co^{sa.bo} aeth; Clement *al*) the Committee decided to include the verses at their traditional place in the epistle’.⁴

Although there is speculation as to the origins or the date of the inclusion, commentaries usually treat Romans 16:25–27 as part of the epistle.⁵ According to James D. G. Dunn, especially the expression ‘my gospel’ suggests Pauline authorship of the doxology.⁶ Dunn also thinks that its exclusion would undermine the unity of Romans and cause exegetical problems. At any rate, the doxology is usually included in critical editions of the New Testament, despite a longstanding tendency among continental scholars to take it as non-Pauline.⁷ Among those who support an early inclusion of the doxology, the supposition of a Marcionic corruption affecting Romans 15 and 16 is the most widely held.⁸

Commonly the Latin translation of Origen of Alexandria’s commentary on Romans (in Greek only fragments extant) is taken as a basis for this. Referring to Romans 16:25 and 14:23, he says:

Caput hoc Marcion, a quo Scripturae evangelicae atque apostolicae interpolatae sunt, de hac Epistola penitus abstulit; et non solum hoc, sed ab eo loco, ubi scriptum est omne autem quod non est ex fide, peccatum est [14:23] usque ad finem cuncta dissecuit (‘This chapter was completely cut by Marcion, who falsified the evangelical and apostolic writings. He cut not only this, but also everything from where it is written: ‘anything which does not arise from faith is sin’s right to the end’; Origen, *Comm. Rom.* 10.43; PG 14:1290a–b).

This would explain why Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian do not quote from Romans 15 and 16, at least not in their books known to us. On the other hand, there are many other parts of Scripture they do not quote either and the division in chapters and verses was not yet invented. It is also clear that all of them recognized Paul to the Romans as an authoritative apostolic letter. Although other theories about long and short recensions of Romans being passed on in the church have been developed (e.g. a second longer epistle to Ephesus) to explain what scholars today experience as historical anomalies, this

4 B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: UBS, 1975), 540.

5 D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 936–939.

6 J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (Nashville: Nelson, 1988), 914–917.

7 K. Donfried, ‘A Short Note on Romans 16,’ *JBL* 89/4 (1970): 447.

8 Cf. D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 417–425; B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: UBS, 1975), 533. For the opposite view, see H. Gamble Jr., *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 105–106.

apparently was not a point of discussion in the early church. As far as we know long or short versions of Romans were never a topic of discussion, except in a heretical context (Marcion/Origen). In debates about the canon, the last two chapters of Romans were never an issue (e.g. Papias, Eusebius). Both the historical sources and the manuscript evidence show that by the fourth century the long version was universally recognized as genuinely Pauline and as the authoritative version for the Church.

For the purpose of this article it is sufficient to note that Romans 16:25–27 has been handed down as part of the text from a very early stage. That the early church received it as part of Romans is not only clear from Origen, but also from the second century author Clement of Alexandria, who quotes Romans 16:9 in his *Paedagogus*:

Ἐπὶ δὲ ταῖς καρδίαις τῶν ἀκάκων ἐν τῇ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους ἐπιστολῇ χαίρειν ὁ ἀπόστολος ὁμολογεῖ, καὶ διὸ ὄρον τινὰ νηπίων, ὡς εἰπεῖν, ἀποδίδωσιν εἰπὼν· Ἐθέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς σοφοὺς μὲν εἶναι εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀκεραίους δὲ εἰς τὸ κακόν· (‘On account of the hearts of the innocent, the apostle, in the Epistle to the Romans, owns that he rejoices, and furnishes a kind of definition of children, so to speak, when he says, “I would have you wise toward good, but simple towards evil...”’ Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.5.19.5).

This article will explore the message of the prologue and the final doxology, comparing Romans 1:1–7 and 16:25–27 in language and theological concepts, using a philological, source orientated method.

2 PROLOGUE

1 Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ, 2 ὃ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἀγίαις 3 περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, 4 τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἀγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, 5 δι’ οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ, 6 ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, 7 πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, κλητοῖς ἀγίοις, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ¹(‘Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’; Rom. 1:1–7 [NRSV]).

This passage contains many words and concepts that have since become central to Christianity: Jesus Christ, gospel, God, an ancient divine plan coming true, God revealing himself and his will through Holy Scriptures, and an invited response of obedience of faith.

To pagans and early converts in the first century, this passage would have contained at least one fascinating claim: the fact that the author presents himself as someone who speaks to his readers on behalf of God. In other words, God has a message for them. This good news concerns Jesus as God's anointed king, son of David and son of God. Both the sonship of Jesus, but also the fatherhood of God receives attention. This concept of God as father comes through implicitly in v. 4 (as having a son) and as father of believers who share in new spiritual life that flows from the father, in v. 7.

From the prologue it is also clear that the author considers himself a herald in the service of the heavenly king. He has had an encounter with God that has deeply influenced his life. He now considers himself a servant of God with a special message to the Romans from the realms of glory. God's grace to him personally and his apostleship go hand in hand (ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολήν).

Paul sees himself as a slave of the anointed king Jesus (Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). God reached out to him and called him to be a special emissary to reach the world with good news from God (κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφορισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ). The author's servant role is stressed by these words. It is God who has taken control of his life and has a message for the Romans as well, for which he is going to use Paul's letter. The author treats God as a person and a present reality, a spiritual entity who reaches out to the recipients of this letter with a message that contains good news. He addresses them personally as people whom king Jesus calls (κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and speaks grace and peace to them on behalf of God (πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). This combination of Jesus and Christ, not only in v. 1, but also in the vv. 4, 6 and 7 is significant as it reinforces the author's claim that it is this Jesus who is lord and king with God's authority. Not surprisingly the two are mentioned together in v. 4 (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν).

Notably Paul uses the words 'Christ, the anointed'. Although some prophets and priests were also anointed (cf. Ex. 28:41, 1 Kgs. 19:16), the title Messiah is exclusively used in a context of kingship. Paul presents himself as a slave in the service of this eschatological king, the promised ruler by divine right and promise. Paul's use of this word bears these Old Testament connotations. Interestingly, many important kings, like Saul, David and Jehu were anointed before, sometimes long before they took up their role as king and were publicly acknowledged as such. This brings in a faith element, a notion of trusting God for something to happen. As truly as the prophet poured the sacred oil on the head of the future king, the anointed could be certain that he would be, one day, king over Israel. In David's case his faith was tested and it took many years. In a similar way, king Jesus, although anointed from eternity, would take many years to take up his throne. This anointing comes with a sacramental force. When God has a plan, it will happen, seems to be the message. He sets the future king apart, and the dripping oil confirms physically what God's future holds in store, so that the recipient may reach out to this future in faith.

This notion of a divine plan is reinforced by what the author says about the message of God that he is preaching. Paul claims that God used prophets to announce it long ago and that it actually was in holy scriptures that he made these promises (ὁ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις). Klaus Haacker comments:

The fact that Rom.1:2 refers to the prophets does not mean that the quotations or allusions to Scripture are confined to the prophetic books alone. Rather, it is an indication of the essential assumption which governs Paul's use of Scripture – the conviction that the Old Testament points to Christ and to the experience of those who believe in him. This conviction is expressed at the end of Paul's exegesis of Gen.15:6 in Rom.4:23–24, and as a general principle in the conclusion of the whole letter-body in Rom.15:4.⁹

Haacker is probably right in suggesting that Paul's is a general statement and that prophetic statements can be handed down and picked up in different ways and quotes in other writings and sermons among them. Still it would be fair to state that Paul's wording does not indicate any intention of conveying subdivisions of holy writ. Moses was regarded one of the greatest prophets, and in this sense the Torah is also prophetic. The prophets and the scriptures are taken together as divine instruments for the same thing. God's promises were announced by the prophets in writings, set apart for God's use. In this way the prologue points to a divine master-plan, and suggests continuance and accountability. Paul is not a self-appointed religious instructor, but claims to be called by God and to stand in an ancient religious tradition. He submits faithfulness to a long and esteemed tradition of divine revelation. This implies that the author presents himself as accountable. His message may be tested against the Holy Scriptures that contain the words of God's prophets. The written word was more special to Paul's contemporaries than it is today. It took a lot of effort and time to write and to copy. The art of printing was still 1400 years away and word-processors less imaginable than the strangest of apocalyptic visions. The written word served to communicate over distance and time, geographically and from one generation to many to come. While verbal communications fades away with breath, the written word can be passed on without problems of recollection. In Paul's day it stood for communication and reliability. He adds the word 'holy', as the scriptures he is referring to are singled out, set apart, especially used by God to pass on his message. This conveys a sense of awe and authority. These are not just books, but the vehicles of divine communication.

The very words of God through his prophets still linger with the faithful by means of holy writ. Joachim Schaper explored the significance of the transition from prophecy as an oral phenomenon to prophecy as (written) text and concludes that this phenomenon

9 K. Haacker, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 98.

is at least pre-exilic and particularly visible in Ezekiel already.¹⁰ There is also a distinct element of revelation ascribed to these words of old. God promised something which could not yet be seen, or known at the time. Paul wants to stand in this tradition. The gospel of the prophets is also his gospel. As the anointing of old inspired faith in God, to make his purposes come true, he calls his readers to obedience of faith (εις ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ, ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς). This is his aim: to inspire trust in God's message (of which the words of God spoken by the prophets in the holy scriptures are one part) and subjection to the claims of king Jesus on his readers' lives.

3 HOW THE PROLOGUE'S THEMES RETURN IN THE DOXOLOGY

²⁵τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ ὑμᾶς στηρίζαι κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν μυστηρίου χρόνοις αἰωνίοις σεσιγημένου, ²⁶ φανερωθέντος δὲ νῦν διὰ τε γραφῶν προφητικῶν κατ' ἐπιταγὴν τοῦ αἰωνίου θεοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη γνωρισθέντος, ²⁷ μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.²⁵ ('Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith – ²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever! Amen'; Rom. 16)

The theological key concepts that were identified in the prologue return in this doxology. In v. 25 one meets with God, the good news of the gospel and Jesus as the anointed king, the Christ. In v. 26 the vital role of prophetic writings in revealing and spreading God's message is pointed to, and the aim of obedience of faith is reiterated.

It does not take a long time, even for a superficial reader, to conclude that the prologue and doxology contain many of the same ingredients. They are both about God, reaching out with a good message (gospel), involving the anointed king Jesus, a divine plan that is now happening, scriptures as tools of revelation, and obedience of faith.

10 J. Schaper, 'The Death of a Prophet: The Transition from the Spoken to the Written Word of God in the Book of Ezekiel,' in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (ed. M. H. Floyd, R. D. Haak; London: Continuum, 2006), 79.

Schematically it looks like this:

Contents	Rom 1:1–7	Rom 16:25–27
God	1:1, 1:4, 1:7, 1:7	16:25, 16:26, 16:27
Gospel	1:1, 1:2	16:25
Jesus Christ	1:1, 1:4, 1:6, 1:7	16:25, 16:27
Ancient Divine plan come true	1:2	16:25–26
Prophetic Scriptures	1:2	16:26
Obedience of faith	1:5	16:26

One needs to consider that these are not mere words that happen to coincide, but theological concepts that represent Paul’s overall idea of God’s reaching out to this world. When these are recalled in close proximity, in what is effectually only a few short lines at the end of a letter, they suggest reinforcement and summary of an author’s main points. Indirectly this summary and reinforcement of concepts contributes to the literary unity of the epistle in its final format.

Not only in words and concepts, but also in grammar, there are important similarities between the prologue and doxology. This becomes clear in an expression like ὑπακοὴν πίστεως, which reveals a typically Pauline use of the *genitivus objectivus* (with a verb that usually comes with the dative case, but now as a genitive object), used in exactly the same way as in Romans 1:5.¹¹

Perhaps the most helpful course in a situation of so much agreement is to have a look at possible differences. Does the doxology use the concepts in the same way? There are two differences that could be identified. The prologue explicitly introduces God as Father (περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα). This concept is implied or alluded (μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας), but as such not expressed in the doxology. Also, the doxology stresses the mystery of the gospel for the gentiles in ages past, and the revelation in the present times (κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν μυστηρίου χρόνοις αἰωνίοις σεσηγημένον, ²⁶ φανερωθέντος δὲ νῦν διὰ τε γραφῶν προφητικῶν). The prologue suggests that there was not a lot of mystery as far as the prophets were concerned and that they knew already, while their writings made it known to others as well (ὁ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἀγίαις). Still, this could be explained as a different emphasis and context, when it is appreciated that the prologue describes a Jewish context (e.g. Jesus referred to as ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα) where a lot was made known to and by the prophets already. The doxology emphasizes that God’s revelation is now being carried beyond the Jewish nation and at his command proclaimed to the gentiles (κατ’ ἐπιταγὴν τοῦ αἰωνίου θεοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη γνωρισθέντος).

11 Cf. F. Blass, A. Debrunner and F. Rehkopf, *Grammatik des Neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 134–135.

The role of the scriptures¹² in revealing God's plans and purposes in past (Jews) and present (now also Gentiles) is stressed by prologue and doxology. Christopher Rowe: 'Thus is such unity and continuity theological in the strict sense of the word, as it is the same God who provides the continuation of that which had been promised in the Scriptures of Israel: fulfilment and unity rest upon divine identity and purpose.'¹³

Both Romans 1:2 and Romans 16:25 connect scripture and the prophets.¹⁴ Their revelatory giftedness serves as a mediator for God as he reaches out to this world. As prophetic writings the Scriptures become official and lasting proclamation of divine revelation, no longer dependent on the memory of some but accessible to all. Whilst Romans 1:2 seems concerned with confirmation from the past, Romans 16:26 has got its eye on proclamation in the present: κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν μυστηρίου χρόνοις αἰώνιους σεσιγημένου, ²⁶ φανερωθέντος δὲ νῦν διὰ τε γραφῶν προφητικῶν κατ' ἐπιταγὴν τοῦ αἰωνίου θεοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη γνωρισθέντος. It is noteworthy that the silence about the mystery in ages past is mentioned in a context of present proclamation to the gentiles. In Romans 3:2, the apostle says that it was the main

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- 12 Bauer et al., *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 331 assert that in the New Testament γραφή exclusively refers to 'holy Scripture': 'in NT ausschl. in dolenner Bedeut. v.d. Hl. Schrift'.
- 13 C. K. Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 139; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 34.
- 14 A similar pattern in contents is visible in Ephesians 3:5–7. Jerome discusses this in his commentary on Ephesians (Jerome, *Comm. Eph.* (PL 26:2.3.592c–d, 481–482), which seems largely based on Origen's work, as he relies heavily on Origen for Galatians and Ephesians in particular; cf. R. E. Heine, 'The Prologues of Origen's Pauline Commentaries,' in *Studia Patristica: Volume 36 of Papers Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1995* (ed. W. F. Wiles; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 429. According to Jerome the prophets spoke God's oracles in ecstasy, so that they themselves did not understand the true meaning of the prophecies as yet: *Qui volunt prophetas non intellexisse quod dixerint, et [al. sed] quasi in extasi locutos, dum praesenti testimonio, illud quoque quod ad Romanos in plerisque codicibus invenitur, ad confirmationem sui dogmatis trahunt, legentes: Ei autem qui potest vos roborare juxta Evangelium meum, et praedicationem Jesu Christi secundum revelationem mysterii temporibus aeternis taciti, manifestati autem nunc per Scripturas propheticas, et adventum Domini nostri Jesu Christi, et reliqua.* ('About which the prophets were willing but could not understand what they said, and as speaking in ecstasy, with their testimony of things perceived well before their time, those things are also found in almost everywhere in Romans. They are presented for the confirmation of his doctrine, as they read: and to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known, and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so more.' Jerome, *Comm. Eph.* (PL 26:2.3.592c–d)).

benefit of the Jews that they had been entrusted with the oracles of God. Whether the Jews of old took heed or not, the availability of God's revelation and message was the main advantage that they held over the heathen. In Paul's day this main advantage has disappeared as God has broken his silence to the gentiles and the apostles are passing on God's message which is revealed in prophetic writings. Technically this may still refer to the Jewish prophets, but there is no compelling philological evidence to rule out contemporary prophetic writings that contain God's revealed will, like, for instance the gospels about the life of Jesus. Apart from Old Testament connotations, of recent events confirming the proclamation of the prophets, now taken across national borders, Paul may have had these written gospels in mind also. Contemporary prophetic writing with divine authority is not a concept unfamiliar to the authors of the New Testament. 2 Peter 3:15–16 makes reference to Paul's letters as scriptures and 1 Timothy 5:18 contains a likely reference to Luke 10:7 as scripture. For all intents and purposes, this author of Romans has introduced himself as someone sent on his way by God, with a specific message to proclaim on God's behalf (1:1, 5, 7). This is reinforced by the doxology (κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). It is according to Paul's Gospel, the one that he preaches (cf. Rom. 2:16, 2 Tim. 2:8, 2 Cor. 4:3, 1 Thess. 1:5, 2 Thess. 2:14), and according to the official proclamation about the anointed King Jesus, of which God is the source (cf. Rom. 1:1, 3).

At the very least Paul presents himself as someone in close contact with the divine, not just sharing religious insights, but proclaiming a message on God's behalf. Sandra M. Schneiders: 'The effects of divine inspiration will have to be discovered in and through the community's historical experience with the text as revelatory, just as the meaning of creation and incarnation are discovered in the unfolding of human experience with the universe and with Jesus the Christ.'¹⁵ It is not by accident that the author refers to his message as an official proclamation (κήρυγμα) on God's behalf. He regards himself as God's herald and slave (cf. Rom. 1:1, 5). His gospel is God's message (cf. Rom. 2:16), as Paul is under the authority of king Jesus. Joseph Ratzinger says: 'The first title, taken by itself, made little sense out of Semitic culture. It quickly ceased to function as a title and was joined with the name of Jesus: Jesus Christ. What began as an interpretation ended up as a name, and therein lies a deeper message: He is completely one with his office, his task and his person are totally inseparable from each other.'¹⁶ It is the proclamation of Jesus Christ that qualifies Paul's gospel.

This proclamation is directed to the world at large, no longer to Jews only, as in the prologue the believers are addressed as coming from all the gentiles and the doxology stresses that the messages comes to all gentiles. Stanley E. Porter states:

15 S. M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 51.

16 J. Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 319.

‘Paul is not ashamed to take this gospel to this entire Gentile world, because it is the power of salvation to Jews and Greeks, as the Jewish Scriptures themselves attest (Hab. 2:4).’¹⁷ In both prologue and doxology, the author connects the prophetic scriptures and the revelation of God’s message with obedience of faith. Those who take God’s Word seriously should go out and do it.

The aim of the prologue (εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως) and doxology (εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως) is linguistically the same: to work obedience of faith. God communicates with this world so that people everywhere should trust his message and act upon it, accepting the authority of king Jesus. Tom Wright affirms: ‘The good news is not, first and foremost, about something that can happen to us. What happens to us through the gospel is indeed dramatic and exciting: God’s good news will catch us up and transform our lives and our hopes like nothing else. But the good news which Paul announces is primarily good news about something that has happened, events through which the world is now a different place. It is about what God has done in Jesus, the Messiah, Israel’s true king, the world’s true Lord’.¹⁸

4 CONCLUSION

The prologue of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (1:1–7) and the doxology in the final chapter (16:25–27) share core theological concepts about humankind’s relationship with God. In what is only the limited space of three verses, the final doxology repeats all major concepts that were introduced in the prologue: God, gospel, Jesus Christ, an ancient divine plan coming true, God revealing himself and his will through Holy Scriptures, and an invited response of obedience of faith. Not only are the words that the prologue and doxology use identical, but they also represent mature concepts that represent the core message of Paul to the Romans. God relates to this world. The way he communicates, is through the holy scriptures. There is good news: the gospel sets people free to serve God in the way of faith. This trust in God’s message leads to obedience, to recognizing that Jesus is the authority that every human being owes obedience to as God’s anointed king. From a literary perspective it makes sense that this message is announced in a general way at the commencement of the letter and then summarized at the end. It is also natural that this should not be done in exactly the same way, but with different emphasis, which accounts for the limited divergence. As a whole, both the prologue and the doxology reinforce the conceptual and literary unity of Romans, as they contain the message of Paul’s epistle in a nutshell.

17 S. E. Porter, *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 23.

18 N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans: Part One: Chapters 1–8* (Louisville: Westminster, 2005), 4.

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