Uncovering key biblical principle in handling disputable music matters in *missio Dei* perspective – a basic theoretical study

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This article investigates key biblical principles in handling disputable music matters from Romans 14:1–15:13 and their implications for a missional church. It becomes clear that the principles uncovered in this biblical passage are synecdochically and analogically applicable to many varied disputable matters, which could confront the church anywhere at any given time. These matters include disputes on worship music and songs. The multicultural context in which the church find herself in cities, continues to pose a challenge to individual Christians and the church as a body. Hence, it exposes both Christians and the church to more and more inevitable need for clear biblical principles in handling disputable matters including liturgical music wars. The goal of this article is not only to reduce time and energy used in arguing over disputable matters, but also to turn the disagreements into redeeming encounters, which will strengthen the missional witness of the church by enriching diversity in unity.

Die ontsluiting van bybelse sleutelbeginsels vir die hantering van strydvrae oor liturgiese musiek vanuit 'n *missio Dei* perspektief – 'n basiese teoriese studie. Hierdie artikel ondersoek bybelse sleutelbeginsels vir die hantering van strydvrae oor liturgiese sang en musiek vanuit Romeine 14:1–15:13 en die implikasies daarvan vir 'n missionale kerk. Die beginsels wat vanuit hierdie Skrifgedeelte ontsluit word, kan sinvol toegepas word op 'n verskeidenheid van sake wat nie-essensieel van aard is, maar waaroor daar oral en altyd skerp standpuntverskille in kerke voorkom. Dit sluit debatte oor musiek en sang in die erediens in. Die multikulturele konteks waarin kerke hulle bevind vra na duidelike beginsels wat as uitgangspunte in debatte oor liturgiese musiek kan dien. Die doel van hierdie artikel is nie net om baie tyd en energie wat dikwels aan sulke debatte bestee word, te verminder nie, maar ook om strydvrae om te keer in positiewe opbouende en verrykende ontmoetings, en die kerk se missionale getuienis oor eenheid en verskeidenheid te versterk.

Introduction

> 'I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.' (Jn 17:20–21, NIV)

> 'Diversity enriches unity rather than eliminates it. Unity emphasises diversity rather than suspends it.' Van der Walt (1997:163)

The prayer of Jesus (as given above) makes it very clear that unity in the church has a missional impact on the world. But how should it be achieved in urban local churches consisting of a wide variety of ethnic, cultural and denominational differences? The conflicts about liturgical music severely hamper the local church's corporate worship, her joyful celebration and missional impact of a local church to the surrounding communities (Von Allmen 1965:79). Worship provides a sign as well as a challenge and promise to the world. Thus, it has a power of evangelisation hardly guessed at. That is why it is so important that the Christian cult should be celebrated with a maximum of theological urgency, unity and spiritual fervour.

Van der Walt (1997:162) argues that when one thinks of the multicultural challenge the church faces, one should think in terms of unity in diversity. Conversely, it could be added that one should think in terms of diversity within unity. Van der Walt used a metaphor comparing one dish of soup with separate ingredients to the rainbow nation of South Africa, which stands for one nation or rainbow with many diverse cultures or colours. Along the same line of thinking, Muller (2004:2) argued that the symbol of the birth of the new nation in South Africa is clear in the national anthem. The anthem was blended from two previously distinct national anthems, which

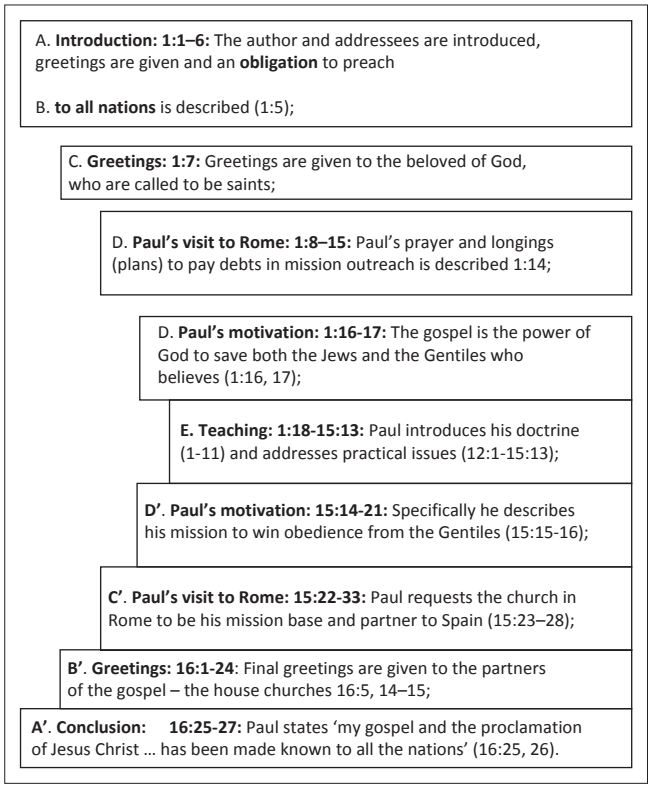
are '*Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*' [God bless Africa], a composition which is sung in Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho, and '*Die Stem*' [The Call], which was composed in the early 20th century and is sung in English and Afrikaans.

When the North-West University Anthem is sung in Afrikaans, Tswana and English, it reflects and expresses the multicultural character in and around the university. The symbolic expressions given in these metaphors and songs summarise God's message through Paul in Romans 14:1–15:13. The need to 'retain and promote unity despite the differences …' as far as worship songs in the worship services was noted in the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA Synod Acts 2012:226–227, especially in the Report 1.1.4 for the Deputies of Liturgical matters; cf. also RCSA Synod Act 2009:743). It may now be valuable to explore the principles given in Romans 14:1–15:13 in greater depth so as to apply them to the handling of disputable music matters. This will be done firstly by attempting to understand the disputable matters within the context of letter writing.

Towards a better understanding of the disputable music matters

Within Paul's overall vision of God's mission

This article is aware of the fact that there is much more to say about the content of the letter to the Romans; yet it reads Romans 14:1–15:13 within Paul's missional purpose. This has been illustrated in a general way, using the 'chiastic' structure of Paul's letter uncovered by Mitchell (1993:2; cf. Figure 1).



Source: Adapted from Mitchell, R., 1993, *The Apostle Paul's vision for world mission*, viewed 05 April 2014, from http://www.onechallenge.org

FIGURE 1: The chiastic structure of the letter to the Romans.

What dominated Paul's life and ministry?

Paul's life and ministry, including the writing of the letter to the Romans in the early summer of AD 57 from Corinth, were dominated by God's mission. God's mission includes his ultimate plan of gathering Gentiles from every nation so that there are unified praises to God of and from all nations. God's plan to gather the Gentiles was also realised in Paul's calling (Ac 9:27; 22:15; 26:15ff.; Gl 1:18ff.). Paul cited as his authority the words from Isaiah 49:6, '… I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.' To Paul, the end of the world was beyond Rome (Is 66:19; Ps 72:8ff.; Kaiser 2000:8).

In the time of Paul's writings, the Gentile mission was viewed as a betrayal of Judaism

There was tension even after resolutions were taken in Jerusalem two or three years before Paul's letter was written regarding accepting Gentile Christians as equal partners in the Lord and not compelling them to live like Jews and/or to be viewed as second-class Christians compared to Jews (Gl 2:11–14; Ac 15:1ff.; Bruce 1977:177, 178, 321). The majority of Jewish Christians seemed to be gradually accepting Jewish nationalism. This was not only because of the church's Jewish environs and its proximity to the temple and its ritual (Raymond 2002:219), but also because of pressure within Jewish Christian groups from former priests and Pharisee Christians (Ac 6:7; 15:5) and pressure from the Jews outside Judea, particularly from the province of Asia (21:27ff.). Luke does not mention any expression of gratitude on behalf of James and Jerusalem leaders for the collection of money from the Gentile churches even when he knew about it (Ac 21:20ff.; 24:17). Apparently Paul and his Gentile mission continued to be regarded as a betrayal to Judaism (or Jewish heritage and identity). Paul could have been conscious of his negative image (Ac 21:11–14; 20–25). There were emerging discussions in Judea about whether or not it was lawful to accept gifts from Gentiles (Haacker 2003:17) and whether the Jews in Diaspora who became Christians should be instructed to continue to live as Jews or whether they should be informed that they could live as 'Gentile Christians'. The tension was so intense that other Christians tried to stop Paul from going to Jerusalem (Ac 21:27ff.). Paul insisted and paid his last visit to Jerusalem. This visit nearly cost him his life (Wedderburn 1988:50).

Paul's emphasis of his Gentile mission in the introduction and conclusion of his letter to the Romans despite of tension

In the introduction and the conclusion of his letter to the Romans, Paul emphasises his mission (Rm 1:5; 16:26; Mitchell 1993:1). According to Wan (2010:1) 'Paul had a strong motivation to win the Gentiles (Rm 15:15–16) and a strong desire to push on to new frontiers beyond Rome to Spain (Rm 15:19–20, 23–24, 28).' In this regard, Mitchell (1993:1) concluded that '… the introduction and conclusion … provide an important "missiological frame" for understanding Paul's message in Romans'. The same framework will be used in this article.

Potential to stir-up church division

Mixed feelings about the influx of the Gentile converts in Jerusalem's church is witnessed

According to Bruce (1977:173–175) Jerusalem's church leaders were not only alarmed by the strong growth of the Gentile Christian community, but felt that such a growth was a betrayal of Judaism (or Jewish heritage and identity). They wanted to take precautionary measures to limit, if not get rid of, the influx of Gentiles in the late forties AD in Caesarea, Antioch and places farther afield by tightening the ethical standards based on Moses' laws. These standards included circumcision. Their exclusive mentality, a sign of national superiority, became a spiritual badge. It implied that non-Jewish peoples were outside the circle of God's love and the circumcised were described as his 'chosen' people. Luke reported the resolution taken in Jerusalem in Acts 15 on accepting the Gentile Christians as equal partners in the Lord and not compelling them to live like Jews and/or viewing them as second-class Christians compared to Jews (Gl 2:11–14; Ac 15:1ff.; cf. also Bosch 1991:45; Bruce 1977:177ff., 321). The tension intensified during the time of Paul's writing of the letter to the Romans, because Christianity was in the process of breaking out of its Jewish cultural moulds. It was taking shape in diverse cultures and transforming religious expressions, including the worship music of Christian converts in multicultural and pluralistic Ephesus and Colossae (Bosch 1991:57; Liesch 1996:36)

Paul's experience of conflict in his multicultural worship ministry in the late fifties AD

During the late fifties AD, Paul's multicultural ministry, which started late fourties AD in Antioch (Ac 11:26) and elsewhere (where the disciples were called Christians for the first time), was gradually taking roots and standing out in multicultural churches such as Corinthians, Ephesus and Colossae. Although diversity was identifiable (1 Cor 1:11), church unity was sought (v. 12ff.). To Paul, church unity should be demonstrated or manifested (lived out) in a local church, which should form 'one body' (Eph 4:4; Jn 13:35; 17:23). Even in matters of worship (1 Cor 14:15, 24, 26), a church's spiritual unity or vertical relation with God and their fellowship or horizontal relationship with each other are both aimed at edification and evangelisation (Frame 1996:8, 54). However, Paul still often faced the threat of conflict within churches. Eating meat previously offered to idols was one of the disputable matters experienced by Paul. The so-called 'super Apostles' (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11) or the 'designated Jerusalem messengers' who held 'original' apostles in high regard and advocated a Judaizers' stance (11:22–23) not only attacked Paul's apostolic authority and his law-free gospel (Bruce 1971:277), but could have fuelled church factions or division using the meat offered to the idols as one of the disputable matters. To the Judaizers, eating all meat, including meat which was either properly slaughtered or offered to idols, was a sign of an 'uncircumcised' heart and hence implied that one was outside the circle of God's love and his nation. Thus, they advocated dietary purity as an ethical standard based on the Mosaic law, which became a spiritual badge and a sign of the national superiority of God's people (Reasoner 1999:90ff.).

Paul's manner of dealing with disputable matters in Romans 14:1–15:13

Paul's action of writing a letter (in AD 57) to the church in Rome (the church that he did not establish) and addressing disputable matters (Rm 14:1–15:13) was partly informed by his grassroots and concrete Corinthian ministry of approximately three months and his three years of Ephesian ministry (Ac 20:2ff.; Raymond 2002:168, 205). The Gentile converts continued to be regarded as 'the uncircumcised', a term of disrespect. This symbolically and emotionally charged term gradually caused confusion, which led to discord in the New Testament church. Paul dealt with this conflict (Rm 2:28, 29) by pointing out that genuine circumcision was internal and a matter of heart. In Romans 14:1–15:13 Paul handled disputable matters by giving guidelines, which are going to be discussed in this article. Romans 14:1–15:13 will be interpreted as part of the practical or imperative section (chapters 12–16) of the body of the letter to the Romans (1:18–15:13). Due to the limits of time and space, in this article there are 10 figures which are used below to illustrate in general the essence of Paul's argument (e.g. cf. the summary in Table 1 and Figure 2).

The disputable matters are defined in Romans 14:1b

In this article, specific disputable matters (designated by a Greek word διαλογισμων) stated by Paul in Romans 14:1b (as illustrated in Table 1), namely food, drink and holy days, are defined as matters which are neither directly commanded nor forbidden by God (Warren 1991:2054). By their nature, disputable matters are just like scruples. The word *scruple* was derived from the Latin word '*scrupus*' for rough pebble (Stott 1994:360). This reflects the word's meaning in the context in which Paul used it: a scruple is a small, unnecessary or peripheral matter. Some cultural aspects, like scruples are internalised in one's conscience and hence operate powerfully and even irrationally through the subconscious. It has the potential to stir-up disputes, wound the weak conscience of fellow believers and cause them to fall into sin (1 Cor 8:12, 13; Van der Walt 1997:1, 4). Mitchell (1993:20) argued that such internalised cultural aspects are stored in the subconscious mind (from the conscious mind) indiscriminately without distinguishing fact from fiction.

At least six key guidelines (or principles or criteria or parameters) for disputable matters

There are remarkable parallels in three subsections of Romans, namely 14:1–23, 15:1–6 and 15:7–13:9 as illustrated in Figure 3 (Hafemann 2000:169). In each of these three subsections it is apparent that Paul repeatedly highlighted love, prayer, Scripture, Christ and God's glory (as indicated under the comments on the right hand side in Figure 3) as some of the main, core or key guiding principles regarding Christian life in general and disputable matters in particular. These main, core or key guiding principles are explained

TABLE 1: The general argument of Paul on disputable matters.

Extreme groups Extreme tendencies	Weak christians (jews) 'conservative'	Strong christians (gentiles) 'liberal'
The disputable matters Viewed synecdochically and analogically	1. They eat vegetables only (v. 2); 2. They observe "sacred" days (v. 5, 6); 3. They neither eat meat coming from pagan temples nor drink wine (v. 6, 21)	1. They eat everything (v. 2); 2. They observe all days as "sacred" days (v. 5, 6); 3. They eat meat coming from pagan temples and drink wine (v. 6, 21)
Each group's definition	Committed, faithful and godly Christians (v. 1, 21)	Committed, faithful and godly Christians (v. 14, 20)
Both groups praise god	Praise God with conviction (v. 5b,1 4, 22–23)	Praised God with conviction (faith) (v. 5b, 14, 22-23)
The general problem (a negative command for both)	With a sensitive conscience they call innocent actions sinful and they condemn Liberal Christians and their actions (v. 3–4, 10)	With liberal ideas they despise, show contempt towards (or look down on) and put pressure on sensitive or conservative Christians (v. 1ff.,10, 13, 20ff.)
The effects caused	The effects are indirect and implicit. They cause the 'liberals' to become proud.	The effects are to cause the weak to stumble or be distressed or destroyed or grieved by doing that which violates their conscience (v. 15, 20; 1 Cor 8:9ff.).
The general solution Towards a general remedy for both	Blessing to those who do not condemn themselves or doubt what they approve as everything should be done in faith, otherwise it is sin (v. 22-23). They become Christ-centred and are guided by his love.	Bear with, lift up or remove or carry others' burdens (Gl 6:2) and please your neighbours (or fellow Christians) for their own good to build them up (v. 2) and they will become Christ-centred and be guided by his love.
The general solution Towards a general remedy for both	Blessing to those who do not condemn themselves or doubt what they approves – as everything should be done in faith, otherwise it is sin (v. 22–23) and so they become Christ-centred and are guided by his love.	Instead in love bear with (lift up/remove) or carry his burden (Gl 6:2) and please your neighbour (fellow Christian) for his own good to build him up (Rm 15:2) and they become Christ-centred and be guided by his love

Source: Adapted from Wan, E. 2010, 'A missio-relational reading of Romans: A complementary study of current approaches,' *Occasional Bulletin of the Evangelical Missiological Society* 23 (1), 1–8, Winter, viewed 05 March 2014, from www.globalmissiology.org

For both the weak and the strong In Romans 14:1 – 13a, 22b–23	For the strong (gentiles) in particular in Romans 14:14 – 15:6
The strong should stop despising and the weak should stop judging them because: 1. Both are accepted by God (Rom.14:3); Who are you? Judging someone's servant (Rom.14:4a); 2. Both are God's servants (Rom.14:4a); 3. Both are approved by God (Rom.14:4b); 4. Both live to glorify/thank the Lord (Rom.14:6-8a); 5. Both belong to Christ as He died for all (Rom.14:8f); A. Who are you? Judging your brother! (Rom.14:10a); 6. Both will be judged by the Lord (Rom.14:10-11); 7. Both will be accountable to God alone (Rom.14:12);	**HANDLE DISPUTABLE ISSUES FROM A KINGDOM PERSPECTIVE:** **A.** Food is clean (as created by God (1 Tim.4:3) and can be unclean (in diverse cultures) (Rom.14:14b); **B.** Do not destroy whom Christ died for, but **walk in love** and allow/respect diverse opinions (Rom.14:15); **C.** For peace/unity's sake **pursue love** and not what you consider good (your privileges)-(Rom.14:16); **D. For the Kingdom of God is not of...., but of righteousness, peace and Joy.....(Rom. 14:17);** **C.** For peace & mutual edifying, **pursue love** to win God's pleasure & men's approval (Rom.14:18,19); **B.** Do not destroy God's work in the weak ones, but **build him up in love** & respect diversity (Rom.14:20a); **A.** Clean in itself (in principle/essence) & unclean (in diverse local practices)–a paradox (Rom.14:20b);

Source: Adapted from Wan, E. 2010, 'A missio-relational reading of Romans: A complementary study of current approaches,' *Occasional Bulletin of the Evangelical Missiological Society* 23 (1), 1–8, Winter, viewed 05 March 2014, from www.globalmissiology.org

FIGURE 2: The specific argument of Paul on disputable matters.

Romans 14:1 – 23 (to strong)	Romans 15:1 – 6 (to strong ones)	Romans 15:7 – 13 (widened to both groups)	Comments
14:1: Accept the weak ones.	15:2: Each of us should please his neighbor.	15:7a: Accept one another (mutually/reciprocally).	Command: Love
14:3, 9,15b: We were accepted or died for.	15:3a: We should do this for Christ did not please Himself.	15:7b –9a: Christ accepted and is serving both groups.	Motive: Christ
14:11: Uses the words "It is written" (Isa.45:23).	15:3b (4–5): Uses the words "as it is written" (Ps.69:9).	15: 9a (9b – 12): Uses the words "as it is written" (in the entire OT).	Base: Scriptures
14:6a: Each action we do is done unto the Lord.	15:5: There should be prayer for a spirit of unity among you.	15:9a: Christ has become a servant so that Gentiles (and Jews) may glorify God.	Goal: Glorify God
14:6b: Each Christian gives thanks to Him.	15:6: This spirit should exist so that with unity you may glorify God.	15:13: Pray so as to be filled with joy and peace.	Meaning: Prayer and praises

Source: Adapted from Hafemann (2000:169)

FIGURE 3: Paul's six key or main guiding principles for disputable matters.

from the perspective of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not only a central concept in the Bible, but it also occupies a prominent place in Romans 14 and 15. In Figure 4 in general, and the chiastic structure of Romans 14:13–23 in particular, which is based on the work of Dunn (1988:816), confirms the fact that the kingdom of God occupies a prominent place in Paul's letters where Paul used the concept in varied contexts (1 Th 2:12; 2 Th 1:5; Gl 5:21; 1 Cor 6:9–10; 15:50; Eph 5:5; cf. Van der Walt 1994:292). In this article, the following six key or main guiding principles, which guide

Greetings

Rom.1:1–7: The author and addressees are introduced, greetings are given and an **obligation** to preach the gospel **to all nations** is described (1:5);

Thanksgiving

Rom. 1:8–15 Paul gives thanks. This includes his prayer and obligation as an **Apostle** to preach the gospel **to all nations** (Rom. 11:13; 16:26)

Letter body' s theme

Romans 1:16 –17 "The righteous will live by faith". The power and the heart of the gospel is extended **to the Jews first and then to all Gentile nations.**

Letter body's main sub-themes

1. **Romans 1:18–11:36** – This section is about what to believe and serves as an exposition, primarily in the indicative. (Osborne, 2004:317)

2. **Romans 12:1–15:13** – This section is about how to behave. It serves as an exhortation, primarily in the imperative. (Osborne, 2004:317)

2.1. **Romans. 12:1–13:14** – This section describes how to behave generally. Love is seen as a base (Rom.12:9,14,17ff; 13:8ff),

Δε (de) connect two parts (i.e. 2.1. above and 2.2. below) and love is a base of how to behave (Osborne, 2004:356);

2.2. **Romans. 14:1–15:13** – This section describes how to behave specifically. Love is once again seen as a base (Rom. 14:15; Stott, 1994:355)

2.2.1. Romans. 14:1-13a Paul gives guiding principles for the Christian groups in dispute to accept each other when dealing with such matters

2.2.2. Romans. 14:13b–23 Paul gives guiding principles in particular for the strong to accept the weak on disputable matters (Stott, 1994:359)

A. Judging (v. 13a).
B. Stumbling block (v. 13b).
C. Clean / unclean (v. 14).
D. Destroying (v. 15).
E. Peace and Unity (vv. 16 -18)
F. **For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit - v.17.**
E. Peace and Unity (vv. 19)
D. Destroying (v. 20a)
C. Clean / unclean (v. 20b).
B. Stumbling block (v. 21).
A. Judging (vv. 22-23).

[The above Chiastic structure of Romans 14:13 – 23 is based on Dunn (1988:816)]

2.2.3. Romans. 15:1–6 Paul describes how the strong in particular should follow Christ's example by not pleasing themselves (Stott, 1994:359).

2.2.4. Romans 15:7 Paul encourages Christians to accept one another as Christ accepted them so as to glorify (or praise) God.

2.2.5. Romans 15:8–13 Paul states that the weak in particular should accept God's mission to all nations which is aimed at unified praises to Him.

Conclusion

Romans 15:14 – 16:27 Paul describes his missional ministry plans in Spain, calling the church in Rome to participate in it through their intercessions.

Source: Adapted from Stott, J., 1994, *The Living Church: Conviction of a life-long pastor*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL and Dunn, J.D.G., 1988, *Romans*, Word Books, Dallas

FIGURE 4: The thought structure of the letter to the Romans.

Christian life including matters of dispute, will be discussed, namely the essence (fruit) of the kingdom of God as a guide (or tour guide), love as a gear (or cogwheel); prayer as a gate (which is wide open); Scripture as a ground (or foundation); Christ as the guarantee (or confirmation) and glory as the goal (or ultimate purpose).

God's Kingdom: a guide of the thought-structure to Godly direction

The Aramaic word for Kingdom is 'sovereignty' or 'kingly rule' and it refers to God's reign or rule (not merely a realm where it is exercised). It has been established in the person of Jesus Christ here on earth, but it is also something which is not yet fully perfect and will only be perfect and complete when Christ returns at the second coming. We live in this 'middle period', the period between Christ's two comings (Hartin 1984:127; Ladd 1962:65; Ps 103:19; 145:11, 13; Dn 2:37; Lk 11:20; 12:32; 17:21; 19:11–12.).

Paul referred to the kingdom of God in antithetical style (Rm 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20). The kingdom of God is at the centre of reconciliation and restoration, and the righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit is the criteria by which Christians should guide their lives, including handling disputable matters (Stott 1994:366). According to Constantineanu (2008):

> When Christians from different churches take the kingdom of God as the ultimate framework of reference, it gives a very strong sense of the same direction … (and) helps focus on Jesus and on his lordship over history, over the world, over his church, and so helps concentrate on what unites us around Christ, on the fact that we are all one 'in Christ'. (pp. 23, 25)

The implication is that the kingdom of God is and should not to be equated with any particular church denomination and/or any church (worship) service. Instead the kingdom of God should unite Christians, liberal and conservative alike toward the same King and kingdom. According to Constantineanu (2008):

When all Christians are aware that they serve the same King and the same kingdom, they will be able to challenge any structure and/or behaviour which contradicts or opposes the arrival of the kingdom of God. (p. 25)

As an example, the kingdom of God is like a tour guide who leads travellers or tourists to 'destinations outside the places where they normally live and work' (Beaver 2002:313). The tour guide is an indispensable crossing point between tourists and destination, as he or she represents a destination and hence not only makes both the traveling (tour) and the destination enjoyable (Chilembwe & Mweiwa 2014:30, 33). The attention and focus of the travellers is and should be on what unite them, namely, the tour guide, his professional and authoritative expertise, and authoritative codes of conduct (Ezzat 2008:16, 82). Jesus Christ as the King (like a tour guide) and the kingdom of God (like the tour's sphere of authority) he represents, is a model and/or a frame of reference for diverse Christians and churches to follow. God's kingdom (like the tour guide's sphere of authority) is and should be the center of focus and attention of different Christians, liberals and conservative alike (like travellers or tourists from different countries and cultures). The essence or core characteristics of the God's kingdom (like the tour guide's codes of conduct) are the fundamental element of the different Christians' unity and fellowship. In Romans 14:17 Paul referred to these essence or

core characteristics of the God's kingdom in an antithetical style to indicate these fundamental elements of unity and fellowship. The Bible refers to them as fruit of the Holy Spirit (Rm 8:23; Gl 5:22). In Romans 14:17, these essence or core characteristics of God's kingdom can be explained in two senses: the vertical and horizontal sense. From the vertical sense, the righteousness, peace and joy are explained as something done once and for all (in a legal sense). As clarified by Cranfield (2004:718) and Coetzee (1995:48), amongst others, the δικαιοσύνη is the righteousness before God as a God-given gift, είρήνη is the peace with God as a state of having been reconciled to God in Christ, and χαρά is the joy in God as the work of the Spirit in the believer. From the horizontal sense, the righteousness, peace and joy are explained as something continuously and progressively done by the triune God in our lives, which enables us to be righteous, peaceful and joyful, so as to preserve, reflect on, express and promote Christianity through our attitudes, words and deeds to the world around us (Bosch 1991:72; Stott 1994:366). To serve Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men (Rm 14:18, 19). John Calvin (1848) commented on 1 Corinthians 14:33 by saying:

> Here we have a most valuable statement, by which we are taught, that we do not serve God unless in the event of our being lovers of peace, and eager to promote it.

According to Calvin (1848), non-essential matters should not be confused with essential or prescribed matters. In this context, John Calvin's comments on 1 Corinthians 14:40 imply that non-essential disputable matters should be handled in a decent and orderly manner. It is in this context that the inferences made by Calvin, which is based on his study about the Early Church and Jewish customs of singing Psalms, should be understood, not in terms of prescription, but in terms of inferences. Due to this, he arrived at an informed conclusion, which remains an inference and not a prescription (Hacking 2011). Hence, it can be inferred that it is not necessarily the case that 'what Scripture does not prescribe, it forbids', but it is safe to say 'what Scripture does not prescribe, it does not necessarily forbid' (Calvin 1848). The righteousness, peace and joy, specifically in Romans 14:17 and generally in Galatians 5:22, are the essence or the core characteristics or the terms and conditions set by the King to guide all who are citizens of God's kingdom (like the tour guide's codes of conduct in his or her sphere of authority). The unity, relationship and fellowship between and amongst the citizens (horizontal sense) and between the citizens and the King, Jesus Christ (vertical sense) in his kingdom (or sovereign sphere of authority) is determined by the righteousness, peace and joy specifically stated in Romans 14:17 and generally in Galatians 5:22. They are prerequisite criteria and/or parameters and should be the center of focus and attention for diverse Christians, liberals and conservative alike. Hence, disputable matters should remain secondary and in fact in service of these essence or core characteristics set by the King of God's kingdom. They give a right direction (in the jungle of worship wars), namely the vertical (God-ward) direction and the horizontal (human-to-human) direction regarding the handling of disputable matters.

Paul singled out love as a gear (which initiates the movement of different parts)

Love is compared to a gear. A gear is a simple machine with teeth that increases the force needed for pushing or pulling and hence enables movement (Lewis 1993:110). Like gear, love enables Christians to move above and beyond the boundaries, including one's enemies' boundary (Mt 5:43–48; Stott 1994:355). Cole (2012:3) also argued that love moves beyond stumbling blocks caused by disputable matters to meet a brother. According to Moo (1988):

> This does not necessarily mean that the 'strong' are to adopt the scruples of the 'weak'. But what it does mean is that they are sympathetically to enter into their attitudes, refrain from criticizing and judging them and do what love would require toward them. (p. 866)

Paul called the 'strong' Christians to be 'guided by love' (Rm 14:15) and go beyond a mere tolerance and treat the 'weak' Christians as brothers and sisters, and not as step or half-brothers and step or half-sisters (Moo 1988:866). Love constitutes God's nature and attributes (1 Jn 4:12) and is the greatest commandment, which summarises and fulfils the teaching of the law and the prophets (Dt 6:5; Mt 22:34–40; Rm 13:8–9; Gl 5:13, 14); Love unified, expressed and represent the diverse virtues of the one fruit of the Spirit (Rm 8:23; 13:10; Gl 5:22–23; 1 Cor 13:13). Osborne (2004:317) argued that love enables Christians to solve problems about spiritual gifts (Rm 12:3–8), persecutors (12:14–21), the government (13:1–7) and the strong and the weak (14:1–15:13).

Prayer remains a gate wide open to realise unified praises (Rm 15:6, 13, 31)

Prayer is like an open gate directed to God the Father as the source of patience, comfort and hope. Paul prays that diverse Christians, liberal and conservative similar than God's gifts of patience, comfort and hope (Rm 15:4) and apply them in their interpersonal relationships as they lead to unity of mind (Krell 1996:3). According to Cole (2012:3), Paul is asking God to give an underlying spirit of unity (Rm 15:5a) so that there is unity, relationship and fellowship between and amongst the diverse Christians in accordance with the sovereign and authoritative rule of Christ (15:5b). Praying for like-mindedness (Rm 15:5) echoes Jesus Christ's prayer (Jn 17:20–23). According to Cole (2012:2), vertical unity by which the diverse Christians are united with God in Christ, determines horizontal unity whereby the diverse Christians set aside their differences and getting along with each other by following Christ. It concurs with what Spurgeon (2011), said: 'We shall be like-minded with one another when we become like-minded with Christ, but not till then.' Paul is not praying for the 'weak' and the 'strong' to have same opinion or uniformity of mind and voice, but as Moo (1988) stated:

> Paul is asking God to give them, despite their differences of opinion, a common perspective and purpose … that they remain united in their devotion to the Lord Jesus and to his service in the world (p. 871).

Cole (2012:7) said that true Christian unity begins on the heart level (same accord of diverse Christians), but continue to express itself in their outward unified God-glorifying worship (one voice). God-glorifying worship includes all acts of worship like praying, praising, singing, et cetera. Diverse Christians are expected to express, reflect and promote an underlying spirit of unity in utter dependence on the Lord alone (Col 3:11; MacArthur 2011:31).

Scripture as a ground or authoritative foundation for unified doxology

Scripture serves as a ground for the past prophesies and promises that remain written as an authoritative foundation of patience and comfort, which effects hope (Cereghin 2011:294; cf. also Rm 14:11; 15:3a, 4–5, 9a, 9b–12, 13). Paul appeals to the unchanging Word of God, the Old Testament, using different passages at different times and in different ways (cf. Table 2). According to Deffinbaugh (2009):

> There is a common thread running through each of these four Old Testament quotations, which give a unity to Paul's argument. *The unified praises to God is the central theme and focus.* The participants in each case are both Jews and Gentiles. Their praise is united and harmonious.

This is an appeal to both Jewish and Gentile believers that a unified or joint mind and harmonious praises, which should be inevitably realised in the Church, was always God's ultimate purpose. Paul wants to soften the prejudice of Christian Jews against Christian Gentiles that God's ultimate purpose in the Scripture is neither a divine nor a human afterthought. God has always predicted that the Gentiles will also be included in God's people and thus reminds them of God's mission as the real goal of his covenant with Israel (cf. Table 2). To the Gentile believers in particular, Paul indicates that Scripture is a ground for their patience and comfort in pleasing their Jewish neighbours as it effects hope (Rm 15:3a, 4–5). Constantineanu (2008) concluded that:

> When all Christians are aware that they serve the same King and the same Kingdom, they will be able to challenge any structure and/or behaviour which contradicts or opposes the arrival (and) … the reality of the Kingdom. (p. 25)

In Figure 6, as types of Christ, the Jewish heroes Moses, David, Isaiah and Psalmist (who represent the Hebrew Bible's three major divisions, the Law, the historical or prophetic books and the writings respectively) responded through their songs to their immediate context of God's mission (deliverance). These songs were intended and extended to all people from all nations (as distance singers) for the ultimate unified praises of all nations (Hafemann 2000:177; Wagner 1997:476). Although Christ's personal ministry was limited to the Jews, the efficacy of his work was not confined to them, for the prophesy was to be fulfilled on his behalf by his people as one with him (Haldane 2010; cf. also Heil 2002:2–3).

Christ guaranteed unified praises since all nations are accepted

Christ accepted both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Paul, in the initial chapters of Romans, indicated that, whilst the Gentiles (Rm 1:19–32) and the Jews (2:1–3:20) were still sinners falling short of God's glory (3:23), Christ died for them and reconciled them with God (5:8, 10; 15:7b) so that both may glorify God due to his mercy (12:1). Both the Jews and Gentiles or heathen nations refused God's glory and not only the Gentiles as implied by Du Toit (1993:69–77) and Cranfield (1985:396) in their *antithetical correlation* of Romans 1:1–17, 18–21 and 15:1–13. Therefore, Christ's acceptance of both Jewish and Gentile Christians should be their motivation to accept, please and edify each other. Christ's humble attitude (Rm 15:3a) is their guaranteed model to be imitated by each group in response to their reciprocal and mutual call to accept each other beyond their restraining and limiting ethnocentric and egocentric excuses, preferences and judgements. This cannot be postponed to an eschatological future as implied by Hafemann (2000:166). Special attention is given to the 'strong' who are encouraged to love, respect and accept the 'weak' first, without making excuses such as 'I'm not a 'people pleaser', 'my freedom, or rights before the Lord come first', or 'I'm not responsible for their spiritual edification and building' (Rm 15:3–6; Gl 1:10, 19; Eph 6:6; Col 3:22; 1 Th 2:4)

Christ guaranteed his continuous service to all nations (Rm 15:6, 7b–12, 13)

The complementary word pair of ἔλεος [mercy] and ἀλήθεια [truth] of God modifies or qualifies the continuous service or ministry of Christ (Wagner 1997:481ff.). The perfect tense γεγενῆσθαι (Rm 15:8) indicates that the truth and the mercy

TABLE 2: The Jewish Heroes, type of Christ.

Text	Text quoted	Jewish heroes	Personal context	The song responding to God's missio dei or plan	God's mission to the jews first	God's mission to the gentiles
Rom. 15:9b	Psalm 18:49 and 2 Sam.22:50; Historical book	David – the type of Christ David omitted	At the end of David's life (his last song)	Song of praise after God gave David the victory over his enemies (Hafemann, 2000:175)	David confessing (Lord) amongst the Gentiles (his defeated enemies)	David was omitted- a type of Christ and the Lord was omitted as the subject of action
Rom. 15:10	Deut. 32:43 The Torah (Law)	God's exhortation through Moses	At the end of Moses's life	Song of praise for being delivered from enemies (Calvin disagreed with[a] this interpretation)	God dictated the words of the song written by Moses	In Abraham's seed all nations will be blessed
Rom. 15:11	Psalm 117:1 The writings	Psalmist – the type of Christ	At the end of the Psalmist's life	Hallel-Psalm of praise. Ps.111–118) for God's deliverance from enemies	God expected/predicted the praises of all nations	By creation, redemption and commission rights
Rom. 15:12	Isaiah 11:1,10 The Prophets	Isaiah – the type of Christ	At the end of Isaiah's life	Deliverance after Ahaz's alliance with the Assyrians (Isa.7:11)	Christ—Jesse's seed as the Gentiles' hope	Many and diverse multitudes under God's rule in Christ

Source: Adapted from Hafemann (2000:177), Wagner, J.R., 1997, 'The Christ, servant of Jew and Gentile: A fresh approach to Romans 15:8–9', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116(3), 473–485 and Heil, J.P., 2002, *The voices of Scripture and Paul's rhetorical strategy of hope in Romans 15:7–13*, *Theoforum* 33, 187–211

a, Paul quoted Deuteronomy 32:43 and not Psalm 67:3,4 as Calvin suggested, because Moses intended to strike terror into Israel's enemies. Like Rahab Gentile believers rejoice in Israel's victories over their enemies (http://www.godrules.net/library/haldane/31haldane21.htm 2014/09/20.

Romans 15:7 – 13 (RECIPROCAL AND MUTUAL RELATION)

A. Each of you should please his neighbour for his good, to build him up	v.2-command to Gentiles specifically
B. For Christ did not please Himself..Ps.69:9 (scriptural motivation)	v.3-5-motivation for or behind v.2
C. So that **with one heart and mouth you may glorify God**	**v.6 Goal or Purpose of v.2, 3-5**
A..Accept one another	v.7a Command to Jews & Gentiles
B. just as Christ accepts you.....	v.7b. Motivation for or behind v.7a
C. In order to bring praise to God	**v.7c goal or purpose of v.7a & 7b**
B. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of (both Jews & Gentiles-Wagner, 1997:482f)	v.8a. further elaboration of v.7b
B^1.the Jews (*on behalf or as a proof of God's truth or faithfulness–1st prepositional phrase)* .....*to confirm (reaffirm or realise) the promises made to the patriarchs (Abraham.cf.4:13-25 & 15:9b-12)*	v.8b. In opposition with v.9a v.8c goal or purpose of v.8b
.....**[**.....that Christ has become a servant of (as ellipsis supplied by immediate context-Wagner, 1997:482)	v.8d further elaboration of v.7b]
B^2.the Gentiles (*on behalf or as a proof of God's mercy or kindness –2nd prepositional phrase)*	v.9a^1 ellipsis Wagner,1997:482
C. So that (both the Jews and) the Gentiles may glorify God	**v.9a^2 goal or purpose of 8a,8d,9a^1**
D.as it is written.....	v.9bScriptural motivation.v.9a2**.**

Chiasm: 2 outer indicatives (about David's seed in the past & future) supports 2 inner imperatives (about Gentiles in the present) Hafemann (2000:187)

Therefore **I will praise** you *among* the Gentiles (Rom.15:9b)	- **(INDICATIVE)**.....	v.9b^{1}Christ sings *among* Gentiles
and to your name **I will sing** (Rom.15:9c)	- **(INDICATIVE)**.....	v.9b^{2}Sings Hymns to God's name

And again, it says,"**Rejoice,** O Gentiles, *with* his people."(Rom.15:10)	**(IMPERATIVE)**..v.10	All are urged to sing *in union.*
And again, "**Praise** the Lord, all you Gentiles, (Rom.15:11a)	**(IMPERATIVE)**..v.11^1	All Gentiles are to praise God
and **sing praises** to him, all you peoples." (Rom.15:11b)	**(IMPERATIVE)**.v.11^2	**All sing Hymns in unison**

And again, Isaiah says, "There **shall come** the Root of Jesse,	**(INDICATIVE)**.....	v.12^1 Jesse's root-Christ's coming
in Him **shall** the Gentiles **hope**."	**(INDICATIVE)**.....	v.12^{2}Gentiles' hope is In Christ

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him,.....	v.13^{1}Prayer to God (of hope)
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.....	v.13^{2}Prayer for overflowing hope

Source: Adapted from Hafemann (2000:177), Wagner, J.R., 1997, 'The Christ, servant of Jew and Gentile: A fresh approach to Romans 15:8–9', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116(3), 473–485 and Heil, J.P., 2002, *The voices of Scripture and Paul's rhetorical strategy of hope in Romans 15:7–13*, *Theoforum* 33, 187–211

FIGURE 5: The Chiastic structure of Romans 15:7–13.

of God which was prophesied in the past and fulfilled in Christ will continue to serve or minister to the Jews and Gentiles (ἔθνη). The unified or joint praise of all God's people is implied, anticipated and expected from both the believers (Rm 3: 30; 4:9, 12; 9:24ff.) and those who are not yet to believe in Christ (8:3; 14:6, 15; 15:3); from both the Jews and the Gentiles. Βεβαιόω [confirms or guarantees] is a legal term denoting certainty that these promises will be fulfilled (Hafemann 2000:170). Three things are confirmed or guaranteed by Christ: firstly, an ultimate purpose of his whole ministry or service, which is to glorify God as illustrated in Figure 6. Secondly, (which will require some explanation), a continuous service or ministering to both the Jews and the Gentiles so as to confirm or guarantee God's past plans and promises to redeem all humankind (Gn 3:15, 12:3; Ex 19:5–6; Is 2:2–4; 56:7; 66:18–24), the purpose of which has been always to unite Jew and Gentile through Christ (Eph 2:11–3:13). Christ's great mission was firstly to fulfil to Israel her promised hope, and secondly, to open the door to the Gentiles (Rm 3:29–30; 9:30; 10:11–12,16–20; 11:25, 32; 16:25; Eph 2:11–3:21). Paul cited from the Old Testament's major divisions with the Jewish heroes in their last days, examining their songs of praise, which have references to their immediate context of deliverance, yet point to Christ as the fulfiller of their respective prophecies or promises (as illustrated in Figure 5). By these citations Paul points to both Jews and Gentiles as main subjects and their joint or unified praises as central themes and focuses. Unification was God's eternal purpose in the past and will remain a certainty in future, yet is also an ideal, which should be realised in the church today!

As Israel failed in her evangelistic mission to reveal God and to attract the Gentiles to faith, Jesus empowered a new spiritual Israel (Rm 9:6; Gl 6:16) to accomplish this universal task (Mt 28:19–20; Lk 24:47; Jn 3:16; Ac 1:8). Deffinbaugh (2009) said:

> If unity and harmony between Jews and Gentiles is God's purpose, God's will, a certainty in and for eternity, the standard and ideal for the church today, then walking in love is a necessity. Specifically, we dare not accept others in order to judge them

Line	Verb-unit				
1.	Rom.15:9b	Διὰ τοῦτον.8-9	ἐξομολογήσομαι	σοι	ἐν ἔθνεσιν
2.		Because of this (Therefore)	I CHRIST will praise SONG	You GOD	AMONG (the) Gentiles GGGG
3.		καὶ	τῷ ὀνόματί σου	ψαλῶ	
4.		and	to your name GOD	I will sing SONG	
5.	Rom.15:10	καὶ πάλιν λέγει	εὐφράνθητε	ἔθνη	λαοῦ
6.		and again It says	Rejoice SONG	(the) Gentiles GGGG	WITH His people PPPP
7.	Rom.15:11	καὶ	πάλιν Αἰνεῖτε	πάντα τὰ ἔθνη	τὸν κύριον
8.		and	again Praise SONG	all the Gentiles GGGG	the Lord CHRIST
9.		καὶ	ἐπαινεσάτωσαν αὐτὸν	πάντες οἱ λαοί	
10.		and	Praise Him SONG GOD	all the peoples PPPP	
11.	Rom.15:12	καὶ πάλιν Ἠσαΐας λέγει	Ἔσται ἡ ῥίζα τοῦ Ἰεσσαί	καὶ ὁ ἀνιστάμενος ἄρχειν	ἐθνῶν
12.		and again Isaiah says	there will be the root of Jesse CHRIST	and he that arises to rule RULES	the Gentiles GGGG
13.			ἐπ' αὐτῷ	ἔθνη	ἐλπιοῦσιν
14.			In Him CHRIST	(the) Gentiles GGGG	will hope HOPE

Source: Adapted from Hafemann (2000:177), Wagner, J.R., 1997, 'The Christ, servant of Jew and Gentile: A fresh approach to Romans 15:8–9', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116(3), 473–485 and Heil, J.P., 2002, *The voices of Scripture and Paul's rhetorical strategy of hope in Romans 15:7–13*, *Theoforum* 33, 187–211

FIGURE 6: The Chiastic structure of Romans 15:9b – 12.

> or in order to cause them to stumble; we must accept others in order to build them up so that we may all, in unity and harmony, praise God according to His purpose and for His glory.

Christ continues to serve both the Jews and the Gentiles so as to guarantee the present realisation of joint or unified worship in the present. In Figure 5, in a chiastic pattern, Paul made a progressive argument with two outer indicatives regarding the promised Davidic seed with past and future references and emphasis, and then two inner imperatives with the present references and emphasis (Hafemann 2000:187). What has been written in Romans 15:9b–12 is one long progressive argument in support of the unified praises of God's people guaranteed by Christ's ongoing ministry. The unified worship expected in the present day church (Rm 15:10–11) is motivated by the past and the future indications (15:9b, 12). It is also motivated by God's mission as the main goals of Paul's letter and even his appeal to the Romans to become his co-labourers through their prayer of dependence (Rm 15:13) and intercession (15:30–31). The Holy Spirit enables and guides the church to reflect, express and promote Christianity through our attitudes, words and deeds to the world; the fruit of the Spirit: righteousness, peace and joy (Rm 14:17) as the characteristics of God's Kingdom and/or his work. These are not human constructs, but are what is given to his people in Christ (Constantineanu 2008:24). Their present fulfilment becomes the basis of eschatological hope for both Jews and Gentiles (Heil 2002:8).

Doxology as an ultimate goal for God's mission (Rm 15:6, 7c-8)

The triune and sovereign God chose to reveal, reflect and display his glory in and through all of creation. In all its own unique, beautiful, harmonious, myriad and 'natural' ways, in all its colours, movements, diversities, richness and splendour it is to praise and witness Yahweh (Begbie 1991:178; Edgar 1986:27–28). God called all of creation by his creation rights (Ps 19:1; 24:1), including all people from all nations (117:1; 104:10, 21; 148; 150:6) with this one ultimate goal (67; 148:11–13; 86:9), which he expected and predicted from the beginning (22:27–28; 46:10; 66:4; 56:9): that he alone will be glorified (worshipped, admired, marvelled at, exalted, praised, enjoyed, etc.) through the mission of God's people. To glorify God and enjoy him forever is the first and ultimate goal of God's mission and hence the missions of God's people (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 1, Question 1; Is 43:3, 6–7; Eph 1:4ff.; cf. also Piper 2010:232). Even the Great Commission is framed so as to worship or glorify God (Mt 28:17; Lk 24:52; Jn 20:28; Wright 2010:286–287). As voice and priests of creation, human beings are secretaries of praise for the rest of creation, for in humanity an inarticulate, yet never silent creation becomes articulate (Begbie 1991:177–178). Hence, his church exists to glorify the triune God amongst the nations. This glorifying of God includes the doxological songs of all God's people who are caught up in his salvation and should (by redemption right) declare his glory to the rest of creation and in particular amongst the nations (Ps 19:1; 96:3; 105:1) by commission right, for God deserves and desires it (96:10–13; 98:7–9). The root of the Hebrew word for 'proclaim' is *basar* – an Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament *euangelizomai* [to bring good news]. Declare (*exangello*) in the LXX version of Psalm 9:14 is related to public declaration of God's deed – an act of praise and rejoicing with the intention of drawing other people to do the same (Is 42:8, 12; 43:21; 63:7; Ps 71:15; 73:28; 79:13; 107:22; Wright 2010:250).

In Figure 6, it is clear that: *God's* mission was and is still in and through *Christ* and is to gather his *People* from amongst every tribe and tongue and *Gentile* nation (not only the Israelite nation), and the act of worship including prayers, praises and *Song* will be part of an ultimate eternal relationship and fellowship of God and his people where *Christ* after-all *Rules* all the *Gentiles* as part of his *People*. This uncovered future vision provides *Hope*, motivation and energy, not only to worship God in unison despite diversities, but also to deal with or handle the disputable matters in liturgical music and worship.

The significance of the six key principles

As criteria and/or parameters to give Godly direction

Witvliet (2003:231–232) pointed out that the proclamation of the Word, fellowship, common prayer and praise, baptism, and the Lord's Supper (Ac 2:42, 46–47) are called the 'immovable', 'non-negotiable', universal or common factors in the Christian tradition (cf. the row of universal or global elements illustrated in Table 3). Some of the disputable worship matters, which confront the church anywhere at any given time and are also illustrated in Table 3, are culturally conditioned and hence the approval or rejection of them in a particular local worship community is determined mostly by personal taste and cultural preferences. These six key principles, namely the kingdom as a guide (or tour guide); love as a gear (or cog wheel); prayer as a gate (which is wide open); Scripture (or ground foundation); Christ (as guarantee); and glory (or goal), can serve as important criteria and/or parameters to give both vertical (God-ward) direction and horizontal (human-to-human) direction as far as disputable matters are concerned.

As a unique underlying unity, which holds all diverse groups together

Conservatives and liberals should be inspired to see and seek the underlying unity in their apparent fragmented relationship with regard to their diverse church music style. In an article, of De Klerk, De Wet and Letšosa (2011), the concept fragmentation (the root word *fragmentum* from Latin) is explained in two senses: a negative and a positive sense. In the negative sense, fragmentation was defined as an act of dividing the integral parts of a given object up until the point of the disintegration and shattering of its underlying unity. In the positive sense, fragmentation was referred to as diversity of the given object with the element of its underlying unity remaining intact. An attempt should be made to see factions in a positive sense.

As the vehicles leading to the unified praises of all diverse groups

In this article is became clear that, as the attention and focus of the travellers or tourists is and should be on who and what unite them, namely, the tour guide, his professional expertise and authoritative codes of conduct (Ezzat 2008:16, 82), the focus, direction and perspective of diverse Christians is and should be on who and what unites, namely Christ, his authoritative word and his sovereign rule (Constantineanu 2008:23, 25; Stott 1994:366). A firm conviction (faith) of diverse Christians that they are serving the same King and the same kingdom, enable them to handle disputable matters. Spurgeon (2011), said: 'We shall be like-minded with one another when we become like-minded with Christ, but not till then.' This is where and how blend worship and/or converged worship should start. Although the debate about the convergence and blended worship (Cherry 2010; Hayton 2011; Webber 1996) is not the focus in this article, the common denominator is and should be the fact that unity at heart level (one accord in Christ) enables outwards God-glorifying worship (one voice).

As the common ground to which all diverse groups strive to reach

Identifying common ground is advocated as an important starting point in problem-solving strategies by many scholars working on conflict managements (Anstey 1999; Barbara & Landau 2001; Crawley 1995), and by psychologists. Paul uncovered common ground whereby both diverse Christian groups, conservatives and liberals were stated as committed, sincere and godly Christians who thanked and praised the Lord with what they were doing (cf. Table 1). Seemingly their convictions or faith (Rm 14:6, 22), without which they could not please the Lord (Heb 11:6), and their lifestyles or conduct came from and was guided by hearing and obeying God's word (Rm 10:14). In Figure 2, it is illustrated that diverse Christian groups have so much in common that the disputable matter should not obscure God's mission of unified praises.

TABLE 3: The examples of disputable matter.

Local	Global						
	Praying	Singing	Music	Preaching	Baptism	Lord's Supper	Culture
1.	Lifting hands	Clap/wave hands	old/contemporary	Lay/elder: Preacher	By Sprinkling	One/many cups	Greeting styles
2.	Stand/kneel/sit	Hymns/or Chorus	Organ/piano/drum	Women as preachers	By immersion	Wine/juice type	Dressing codes
3.	Aloud/in silence	Psalms/bible only	Keyboard/Bands	In Robe/Suit/T-shirt	Ritual type(s)	Type(s) of bread	Dancing styles
4.	Praying at once	Repeating Lyrics	Guitars/trumpets	Movie/video sermon	With/ by Fire	How regular?	Make-up styles
5.	Fast/or meditate	Solo/Choir/Choral	Folk Instruments	Say amen/hallelujah	By Holy Spirit	Who qualifies?	Women guilds
6.	The tone of voice	Origin of music?	Music Association	Expository/topic etc.	Who participate	Intinction or not?	Time/space etc?

Source: Authors own construction

An application of the six key principles to a specific disputable matter: worship music/songs

Viewing worship music as a disputable matter synecdochically and/or analogically

In this article, worship music is studied both synecdochically, whereby the part is indicated, but the whole is intended (De Bruyn 2000:15), and analogically as a microcosm representative of the whole. The Bible cannot address all disputable matters, but specific disputable matters such as food, drink and holidays as addressed by Paul are just a few (parts) or disputes, which represent disputes as a whole that were and are still are uncovered throughout the ages up to now. Terry Ewell (1997) and Barry Liesch (1996:205) and others made an analogy of the disputable matters (of food, drink and holy days) with music style. In this article, it is made clear that the essence of the Kingdom of God or the fruit of the Spirit (righteousness, love, peace, joy, patience, hope, et cetera) as discussed above is and should remain primary criteria, which keep diverse Christians from being divided more and more by disputable maters (cf. Table 3), but kept focused on the King Jesus Christ and his kingdom. Such a focus, direction and perspective is helpful, because it keep diverse Christians, liberal and conservative alike, united (like-minded) around the same Lord and his authoritative word (Scriptures) that called all of them to worship and glorify God with one voice or mouth as discussed in above.

Making a clear distinction regarding essential and non-essential matters (cf. Table 3)

In Patton's article (2008), he created an illustration of a circle of importance, which, in some ways, helps to make distinctions between important and minor disputes regarding worship music (songs). He illustrated how essential and non-essential matters or doctrines are viewed by diverse church traditions. According to his illustrations (such as the circle of importance), the fundamentals or essential matters are central and are thus concentrated in the centre of the circle. The evangelicals distinguish essentials from non-essentials. The emerging groups push the essential matters outwards from the inner circle of importance and is left with few or no essential matters in the inner circle of importance. In this article, it is made clear that the issues are still debatable, because they are neither prescribed nor forbidden in the Bible. It should be kept secondary, for if they are not kept in their place, as it is attested in history of the church, they have power to derail, divert, divide and destroy the church. The focus away from the Lord and his authoritative word and sovereign rule, keep diverse Christians, liberal and conservative alike, divided and hence unnecessary suspicion, judgemental and contempt attitude prevails.

In this article the essential matters, or the matter of essence, are indicated and discussed above. They characterise or manifest the kingdom of God. They are the fruit of the Spirit. They include righteousness, love, peace, joy, patience, hope, et cetera. They are and should remain primary. Issues, which are neither prescribed nor forbidden in the Bible, are and should remain secondary or non-essential. The concept *non-essential* or *secondary issue* is and should be viewed in the sense that they are issues which are still debatable. Their essential nature is mostly, if not entirely, culturally conditioned as discussed by Witvliet (2003:114–123). The point in this article is that they are called 'non-essential' issues, not because they are not culturally important elements in worship, but because they are neither prescribed nor forbidden in the Bible.

Because 'what Scripture does not prescribe it does not necessarily forbid'

Keddie (2011) answered no to the question, 'Were the hymn writers all wrong?', for, to him, the argument should be whether hymns or songs are prescribed in the Bible or not, or whether it is right or wrong to compose hymns and religious songs, because:

> It is not disputed that there are many hymns of quite exceptional quality, soundness and real devotional flavour. It is not disputed that hymns have been greatly blessed to many souls over the years. What is questioned is the warrant to use such hymns and songs of merely human composition in the formal and public worship of the church.

Romans 14:1–15:13 challenges the principle, 'what Scripture does not prescribe, it forbids' – a basic principle of the psalm-singing advocates[1] (who maintain that only psalms are prescribed for the church to sing (and songs composed by humans, no matter how well-composed, should not be sung), because they are canonical and divinely inspired (Heb 1:1; 2 Pt 1:21; 2 Tm 3:16).

Because it is still debatable as to whether all 150 psalms are prescribed to be sung or not

More than 37 psalms (including Ps 95 and 105) as well as 1 Chronicles 16 and Nehemiah 12 encourage the singing of psalms to the Lord. Yet, whether that can be translated into prescription of all 150 psalms as a hymn book with their multi-faceted functions is still debatable. It is also debatable as to whether the interchangeable use of the terms *psalm*, *hymn* and *spiritual song* can be explained due to the distinctive nature of each term or the fact that the three terms actually mean one thing. It is also debatable whether the frequent citing of psalms by New Testament authors including Jesus himself as well as the theology and experience they derived from Psalms, is enough to prescribe the 150 psalms as the song book of the church. Did the Israelites in the Old Testament times sing psalms only, and if so, why?

Because the psalm titles and/or poetic forms alone cannot prescribe the 150

Psalms as the only permissible Church songs

More than 55 psalms are addressed 'to the Chief Musician', which indicates the purpose of it. Whether 34 psalms in the

1.Reformed/Presbyterian Churches of the French, Dutch, British/Scottish, American Geneva and Puritan Psalter tradition (Keddie 2011).

Hebrew Bible or only two psalms in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT, which was completed about 180 BC) do not have titles, it is still debatable as to whether the titles themselves are to be considered part of the original inspired text. It is also still debatable whether or not the translation of the psalms into a metrical form is prescribed or not, because an underlying musical form or design (especially the parallelism and rhythm of sense and imagery that characterises the greater part of the poetry of the psalms, which survived any transplanting of the psalms to any soil) can still reproduce its chief effects incidentally on senses rather than on sound.

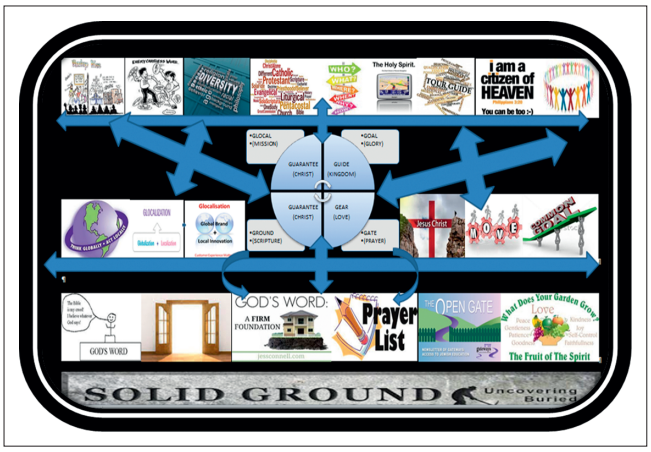
Conclusion

Paul gave key principles in handling disputable matters (Rm 14:1–15:13). In this article it is made clear that the essence of God' kingdom or the fruit of the Spirit (righteousness, love, peace, joy, patience, hope, et cetera), as discussed above, is and should remain primary criteria, which keep diverse Christians from being divided more and more by disputable maters (cf. Table 3), but kept focused on the King Jesus Christ and his kingdom. Such a focus, direction and perspective is helpful, because it keep diverse Christians, liberal and conservative alike, united (like-minded) around the same Lord and his authoritative word (Scriptures) who called all of them to worship and glorify God with one voice or mouth as discussed above.

To save the church time, energy and money and to preserve unity, those who are in dispute should make an agreement that certain matters are non-essential, because they are neither directly commanded nor forbidden by God. To pave the way for such a move, there should be respect and acceptance of diversity. Each group on either side of the dispute should acknowledge the common confessions that bind them together, but at the same time they should acknowledge each other's God-given potentials.

Such preliminary initiatives need a guide: God's kingdom for vertical and horizontal directions! God's kingdom is compared to some extent with a tour guide who directs and/or guides the tourists to the right direction (in the jungle). So many diverse Christians and churches, struggling with disputable matters, need the biblical clues so as to give the vertical (God-ward) direction, which influences their horizontal (human-to-human) direction regarding the handling of disputable matters. Such biblical clues are the foretaste, the first fruit (Rm 8:23), and/or fruit of the Holy Spirit, namely love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (cf. Gl 5:22–23 NIV).

Such preliminary initiatives need a gear: love. The strong should love the weak for who they are! Love is compared to some extent with a gear: a machine, which connects different parts for the sake of movement. It took the apostle Paul a whole chapter (1 Cor 13) to define love and its significance in connecting many diverse Christians and churches struggling with disputable matters. Our Lord Jesus Christ pointed it out that loving God (in a vertical direction) and loving others



Source: Authors own construction

FIGURE 7: The summary of the Key principles in handling disputable matters.

(in a horizontal direction) is the essence of the teaching of the Bible (Mt 22:34–40). Love connects Christian groups in disputes and hence preliminary initiatives should be taken whereby the strong (liberals) initiate the first move towards the weak (conservatives) in love and/or vice versa.

Paul continued to address disputable matters by giving concluding motivations for accepting unified doxology of worship (including prayers and praises or songs) as last and lasting solution to the disputable matters.

Prayer remains a gate, wide open for unified doxology (or worship) to be realised (Rm 15:6, 13); Scripture is used as a ground or authoritative foundation for unified doxology (or worship); In Christ an establishment and maintenance of the unified praises is guaranteed (Rm 14:3, 9, 15; 15:3a); This establishment exists in Christ so that a unified doxology as an ultimate goal can be realised from now to eternity (Rm 15:6, 7c–8, 13).

From these six key principles Christians and churches should and could therefore handle disputable music matters anywhere in any time through:

1. Prayer as a gate (which is wide open).
2. Love as a gear (or cog wheel).
3. The kingdom as the guide (or tour guide).
4. Scripture as the ground (or the foundation).
5. Christ as the guarantee (or the confirmation).
6. Glory as the goal (or ultimate purpose; cf. the arrows in Figure 7).

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Competing interests

We declare that, 'Uncovering key biblical principles in handling disputable music matters in *missio Dei* perspective – a basic theoretical study' is my work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

The authors worked together sending the article back and forth, editing, adding points and relevant resources.

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