

SHORT STUDY

## The Greetings of Romans 16 and the Audience of Romans

Peter M. Head 

Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK  
Email: [peter.head@wycliffe.ox.ac.uk](mailto:peter.head@wycliffe.ox.ac.uk)

### Abstract

This short paper considers and critiques the view that the named people greeted in Romans 16.3–16 are not also among the recipients of the letter to ‘all God’s beloved in Rome’ (Rom 1.7). Variants of this view spring from the work of Mullins (1968): that the second-person greeting involves the greeting of ‘a third party who is not intended to be among the immediate readership of the letter’ (Mullins, 1968: 420) and are found in Thorsteinsson (2003), Stowers (2015) and Campbell (2023). A series of arguments are made against this view. In particular, the plural form of the imperative (ἀσπάσασθε) and the open nature of the addressees mean that Mullins’ simple principle does not apply. In addition, Paul’s usage elsewhere (including in Romans 16.16) contradicts Mullins’ principle.

**Keywords:** Greetings; Audience of Romans; Romans 16; Mullins

In recent years, scholars have largely accepted the textual argument that Romans 16 should be regarded as part of the letter sent to Rome, and thus that the people greeted there (in Romans 16.3–16) are thought to be present in Rome and connected to the Christ-believing groups in the city.<sup>1</sup> More recently still, however, the further question has been raised as to whether these people are to be thought of as part of the intended or encoded audience of the letter. Among those scholars who have argued against this general view, in agreement that the people named in Romans 16 are not those addressed in the letter, there is nevertheless some diversity in addressing the question, ‘Who then is the audience of Romans?’ From different angles, however, they have insisted that the form of the greetings in Romans 16.3–15 preclude the identification of the people greeted with the audience of the letter.<sup>2</sup> Here in Romans 16.3–16, we have a sixteen-fold repetition of

<sup>1</sup> Particularly under the influence of Gamble’s assessment of the textual problems in H. Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans: A Study in Textual and Literary Criticism* (S&D 42; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) and Lampe’s analysis of the personal names in Romans 16 in P. Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte* (WUNT 2.18; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987) 124–53, summarised in ‘The Roman Christians of Romans 16’ in *The Romans Debate. Revised and Expanded Edition* (ed. Karl P. Donfried; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991) 216–30; and then translated in full in *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (ET M. Steinhauser; London: Continuum, 2003) 153–83. The integrity of Romans 16 as part of the letter addressed to Rome is apparently accepted by the participants in the argument addressed in this paper, reflecting the modern consensus, and will not be discussed further here.

<sup>2</sup> I will not here be able to interact with the internal exegetical arguments concerning especially Romans 2, 9–11, 14–15. For orientation see M. Thiessen & R. Rodríguez (eds), *The So-called Jew in Paul’s Letter to the Romans*

the second-person plural aorist imperative form ἀσπᾶσαθε – ‘you [plural] greet Mary’ (etc.). In ancient Greek letters, the second-person singular imperative type of greeting is often used as ‘an indirect salutation’, as Mullins outlines:

‘The *second-person* type of greeting is more complicated than it first seems. It is an indirect salutation. The writer of the letter indicates that the addressee is to greet someone for him. In this way, the writer of the letter becomes the principal and the addressee becomes his agent in establishing a communication with a third party who is not intended to be among the immediate readership of the letter.’<sup>3</sup>

A number of scholars, including Thorsteinsson, Stowers, and Campbell have taken Mullins’ comment as a decisive statement in relation to the audience of Romans, and one which, they claim, has been overlooked or ignored by interpreters:<sup>4</sup>

Thorsteinsson: ‘If Paul’s choice of salutatory form is to be taken seriously it must be concluded that, instead of being descriptive of the letter’s audience, these greetings suggest that the persons meant to be greeted should *not* be counted among those to whom Paul wrote the letter.’<sup>5</sup>

Stowers: ‘Paul’s words in Romans 16:1–16 make it clear that those named to be greeted are *not* among the audience toward whom the letter was aimed.’<sup>6</sup>

Campbell: ‘Thorsteinsson’s insights on the passing on of greetings have been ignored, sometimes undervalued, but not invalidated. In fact, with this second-person type of greeting Paul is actually instructing the addressees of the letter to greet other parties who are *not* part of the congregations addressed.’<sup>7</sup>

---

(Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2016) and the literature mentioned there; e.g. P. Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagan’s Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017) 155–64. The view that in Romans, Paul addresses only gentile believers was also held by some in an early generation of scholars who did not regard Romans 16 as an integral part of the letter to Rome, e.g. J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (ET; London: SCM, 1959) 196–207.

<sup>3</sup> T.Y. Mullins, ‘Greeting as a New Testament Form’, *JBL* 87 (1968) 418–26, from p. 420 (cited in R.M. Thorsteinsson, *Paul’s Interlocutor in Romans 2: Function and Identity in the Context of Ancient Epistolography* (CB 40; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2015 reprint) 63 and again on p. 98 n. 42; also cited in S.K. Stowers, ‘The Social Formations of Paul and His Romans: Synagogues, Churches, and Ockham’s Razor’ in *A Most Reliable Witness: Essays in Honor of Ross Shepard Kraemer* (eds. S.A. Harvy et al.; BJC 358; Providence: Brown University, 2015) 77–88, at p. 81). Mullins is also cited by other scholars as one aspect of a broader argument for Romans as addressed solely to gentiles, e.g. A.A. Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 102; M. Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 46.

<sup>4</sup> Thorsteinsson, *Paul’s Interlocutor in Romans 2*, 63–5, 98–9; Stowers, ‘The Social Formations of Paul and His Romans: Synagogues’, 81–2 (partly following Thorsteinsson), both dependent on and citing Mullins, ‘Greeting as a New Testament Form’, 420.

<sup>5</sup> Thorsteinsson, *Paul’s Interlocutor in Romans 2*, 98–9 (italics original). Thorsteinsson stated that ‘this aspect of Paul’s greetings in Romans 16:3–15 has been entirely overlooked by interpreters of the letter’. (p. 98)

<sup>6</sup> Stowers, ‘The Social Formations of Paul and His Romans: Synagogues’, 81 (my italics). Stowers added quite baldly that ‘commentators on Romans have misunderstood the nature of greetings in letters ... scholars have consistently ignored what those specializing in epistolography have said’. (p. 81)

<sup>7</sup> W.S. Campbell, *Romans: A Social Identity Commentary* (London: T & T Clark, 2023) 414–15 (my italics). Campbell has changed his view, apparently under the influence of Mullins, since his earlier discussion in W.S. Campbell, ‘The Addressees of Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Assemblies of God in House Churches and Synagogues?’ in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (eds F. Wilk, J.R. Wagner & F. Schleritt; WUNT 1.257; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 171–95.

In this paper, we are going to argue that Thorsteinsson, Stowers and Campbell are wrong to conclude from the specific form of imperative used so frequently in Romans 16.3–16 (ἀσπάσασθε) that those named are *definitely not* among those addressed in and by the letter. We have five points. The first two will concern the form of greetings in ancient Greek letters (and the important work of Mullins); the third and fourth points will concern Paul's actual usage of this form of greeting elsewhere; the fifth point probes some general problems in the viewpoint here critiqued. Although our intention is primarily destructive of a bad argument, we will offer enough to point to the conclusion that those named in the greetings of Romans 16 are within the encoded addressees of the letter.

First, it is fair to say that Mullins, to some degree, invited the conclusions which have been drawn by the aforementioned scholars on the basis of his work. Mullins did think that, in relation to Romans, 'the use of the second-person type greeting means that the persons greeted might not be among those who read the letter' and therefore that 'something in our usual interpretation of Romans is wrong'.<sup>8</sup> However, in absolutising a comment from Mullins, these scholars have overlooked the crucial difference between the greetings discussed by Mullins and those in Romans 16, as well as the more cautious nuance with which Mullins himself discussed the problem.<sup>9</sup> Mullins' discussion concerned ancient Greek letters addressed to a single individual (as in fact most ancient letters were), hence they have a single named addressee and other people named in the greetings. In the second-person imperative form found in such letters—generally in Mullins' article, the present form ἀσπάζου—the single addressee is instructed to greet various other people.<sup>10</sup> In the typical example offered by Mullins, Sattos wrote to his sister, Euphrosyne, a brief letter about cloaks, money and cakes, and towards the end he writes: ἀσπάζου Στράτ[ο]ν καὶ Στρατονεινκή καὶ τὰ πεδ[ία] αὐτῶν – 'greet Stratus and Stratonice and their children' (P. Oxy 1489, from the late third century).<sup>11</sup> In this particular situation, it is no doubt the case that Mullins is right to think that 'the writer of the letter [i.e. Sattos] becomes the principal and the addressee [i.e. Euphrosyne] becomes his agent in establishing a communication with a third party [i.e. the family of Stratus and Stratonice] who is not intended to be among the immediate readership of the letter'.<sup>12</sup> We would probably be right to think that there is no implication that Stratus and Stratonice and their children would need to be informed about the problem that Sattos had forgotten his cloak again, the fact that he had paid a debt on behalf of Euphrosyne or that he would love to receive a batch of Euphrosyne's delicious cakes. But the situation in Romans is different, not only because the plural form of the

<sup>8</sup> Mullins, 'Greeting as a New Testament Form', 426.

<sup>9</sup> Note Mullins' 'might not' (cited above). Mullins was interested in extrapolating from the greetings an understanding of the different relationships (between sender, recipient, and those greeted) but also acknowledged that relations suggested in epistolary greetings 'do not necessarily reflect the true degrees of relationship' ... 'we cannot be sure of determining relative degrees of closeness between those writing or reading the letter and others merely mentioned in the greeting', Mullins, 'Greeting as a New Testament Form', 421.

<sup>10</sup> A recent study of greetings in seventy-four letters in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri suggests that the aorist form (also noted elsewhere by Mullins) was more common: 'the aorist form ἄσπασαι is used 30 times in these letters, while the present form ἀσπάζου occurs 19 times (there is no obvious distinction between the two, and one letter, P. Oxy 530, uses both forms)', P.M. Head, 'Epistolary Greetings in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri', *Tyndale Bulletin* 70 (2019) 269–90, from p. 272.

<sup>11</sup> Mullins, 'Greeting as a New Testament Form', 420. B.P. Grenfell & A.S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri. Part XII* (London: EEF, 1916) 246–7.

<sup>12</sup> Mullins, 'Greeting as a New Testament Form', 420 (with my additional clarifications to connect with the specific example).

imperative (ἀσπάσασθε) is consistently used, but even more because this plural imperative is addressed to an open group and not a closed one – πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις ('to all God's beloved in Rome, called to be saints', Rom 1.7). The specific form used and the wider epistolary contexts are both quite different. In this connection, it does not make sense to invoke a rule based on simple individual letters and apply it to complex community letters, especially when it involves excluding as potential addressees a large and particular group of people who in other respects are clearly identified as 'called to belong to Jesus Christ' (ὕμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, 1.6 cf. 16.3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13), 'beloved' (ἀγαπητοί, 1.7; cf. 16.5, 8, 9, 12) and 'saints' (κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, 1.7; cf. 16.15).

Secondly, even within the parameters of Mullins' work, it is possible to over-interpret the word 'immediate' in his argument that imperatival greetings in letters among the documentary papyri are used to refer to 'a third party who is not intended to be among the immediate readership of the letter' (so Mullins as cited earlier). Mullins himself said, 'the second-person type of greeting is often used for greeting members of the addressee's family'.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the earlier cited example of an instruction to 'greet Stratus and Stratonice and their children' may be less than representative, in that we do not know what relationship they had with either Sattos or his sister Euphrosyne. A recent survey of greetings in Greek letters among the Oxyrhynchus papyri showed that when named people are further identified in greetings, they are overwhelmingly people in close familial relationships to the 'immediate' reader (i.e. the specifically addressed individual). They are identified as παῖδια 'children' (15 times), ἀδελφός 'brother' (13 times), μήτηρ 'mother' (11 times), πατήρ 'father' (10 times), υἱός 'son' (7 times), θυγάτηρ 'daughter' (7 times), ἀδελφή 'sister' (6 times), τέκνα 'children' (5 times), γυνή 'wife' (3 times), κυρία 'lady' (3 times), σύμβιος 'spouse' (2 times), κοράσια 'girls' (1 time), and κύριος 'master' (1 time).<sup>14</sup> This list of additional descriptors suggests that those to be greeted are regarded as closely adjacent to the signified 'immediate reader' in the sense of very often members of the family, whether an extended family, or a fictive one.<sup>15</sup> There would seem to be a basis for thinking of greeted family members as within the extended readership of the letter (and not excluded).<sup>16</sup> This has a resonance with Romans in the sense that throughout Romans the recipients are addressed using the repeated familial or fictive kinship term, ἀδελφοί - 'brothers and sisters' (so Rom 1.13; 7.1, 4; 8.12; 10.1; 11.25; 12.1; 15.14, [30] 16.14).<sup>17</sup> The ultimate basis for this within Romans is the inclusion of believers into the family of God the Father by the Spirit of adoption (Rom 8.14-17), with 'the Father as the initiator of adoption, the Spirit as witness, and the Son as their elder brother and co-heir' – since Christ is 'the first born among many brothers and sisters' (πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς, 8.29).<sup>18</sup> Since at least some of those greeted in chapter sixteen are explicitly labelled as ἀδελφοί (16.14: ἀσπάσασθε ... καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀδελφούς), it would seem preferable,

<sup>13</sup> Mullins, 'Greeting as a New Testament Form', 421.

<sup>14</sup> From Head, 'Epistolary Greetings in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri', 274-5 (occurrences from the 74 letters in which greetings occur that were studied by Head).

<sup>15</sup> For a helpful discussion see E. Dickey, 'Literal and Extended use of Kinship Terms in Documentary Papyri', *Mnemosyne* 57 (2004) 131-76.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Mullins, 'Greeting as a New Testament Form', 421.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. also 8.29; 16.14 (τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀδελφούς); and cf. 9.3 where the unusual sense is indicated by the clarification τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα.

<sup>18</sup> E.M. Heim, *Adoption in Galatians and Romans: Contemporary Metaphor Theories and the Pauline Huiothesia Metaphors* (Biblical Interpretation 153; Leiden: Brill, 2017) 249.

if Paul's usage allows, to regard them as within the familial ἀδελφοί addressed in the letter, rather than definitively outside of that address.

Thirdly, Paul's usage of ἀσπάσασθε elsewhere does not support the view that this form was used for people *not* addressed in and by the letter. Indeed, considering the material outside of Romans, on four of the five other occasions, it clearly is used with direct reference to those addressed (Phil 4.21; 1 Thess 5.26; 1 Cor 16.20; 2 Cor 13.12). Taking this evidence in turn, the second-person plural imperative in Phil 4.21 – ἀσπάσασθε πάντα ἅγιον ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – is clearly addressed to the same 'you' as are addressed in the letter as a whole (cf. the following 'you' in ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ ἀδελφοί). Considering the letter is addressed 'to all the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi' (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλιππίοις, Phil 1.1), which seems to be echoed in the closing at 4.21, it seems clear that the imperative is 'directed to all and every Philippian Christian'.<sup>19</sup> The same form is also used in 1 Thess 5.26: ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἀδελφούς πάντας ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ. This is an imperative for those addressed in the letter to greet 'all the brothers', which strikingly enough, is exactly the predominant term used for 'those addressed in the letter' (ἀδελφοί as vocative: 1 Thess 1.4; 2.1, 9, 14, 17; 3.7; 4.1, 10, 13; 5.1, 4, 12, 14, 25!), and is precisely those to whom Paul insists the letter is to be read (1 Thess 5.27).<sup>20</sup> Two other examples are exactly parallel in wording: ἀσπάσασθε ἀλλήλους ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ (1 Cor 16.20 & 2 Cor 13.12), in these passages the imperative is applied directly, using the reciprocal pronoun, to those addressed. This is also true on the two other occasions it is used in other NT epistolary contexts (Heb 13.24; 1 Pet 5.14).<sup>21</sup> On only one occasion in Pauline usage is ἀσπάσασθε used in such a way to indicate another group beyond that directly and immediately addressed in the letter (Col 4.15), where the geographical differentiation is specifically introduced (ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἐν Λαοδικεῖα ἀδελφούς), and in any case this imperative is immediately followed by an instruction that they should also read the letter – making the brethren in Laodicea part of the extended addressees.<sup>22</sup>

Fourthly, Romans 16.16a (ἀσπάσασθε ἀλλήλους ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ) confirms that Paul uses the same second-person imperative form ἀσπάσασθε in such a way as to include those addressed by the letter (as in the similar wording used in 1 Cor 16.20 & 2 Cor 13.12). The long list of second-person plural imperatives in Romans 16 concludes with the general imperative 'greet one another with a holy kiss': ἀσπάσασθε ἀλλήλους ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ (Rom 16.16a). Given the importance of 'one another' throughout the paraenetical portion of Romans (Rom 12.5, 10, 16; 13.8; 14.13, 19; 15.5, 7, 14), this is clearly an instruction that the 'you' addressed in the letter should 'greet one another' – the people also addressed in the letter! Just as the 'you' greeted by 'all the churches' in the following phrase – ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς αἱ ἐκκλησίαι πάσαι τοῦ Χριστοῦ (16.16b) – is also the 'you' addressed by the letter.<sup>23</sup> It seems more likely that 'greet one another

<sup>19</sup> D. Peterlin, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians in Light of Disunity in the Church* (NovTSup 79; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 226.

<sup>20</sup> J.A.D. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014) 426–8; T. Holtz, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher* (EKK 13; Zurich: Benziger & Neukirchener, 1986) 271. A.J. Malherbe sees it slightly differently (*Thessalonians*, 341), except to the extent that he thinks Paul 'wanted his letter to be read to all the Christians in the environs of Thessalonica', *The Letters to the Thessalonians. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 345.

<sup>21</sup> Heb 13.24: Ἀσπάσασθε πάντας τοὺς ἠγουμένους ὑμῶν καὶ πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους. Ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας; 1 Pet 5.14: ἀσπάσασθε ἀλλήλους ἐν φιλήματι ἁγάπης. Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971) 174–5; D.J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Nottingham: Apollon, 2008) 348–51.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. also Gamble, *Textual History*, 92–3 & notes 162, 163 (also against Mullins). It is disappointing to find that neither Thorsteinsson nor Stowers deal with this usage. Campbell manages not to comment at all on 16.16a.

with a holy kiss' (Rom 16.16a) is a kind of summarising final instruction which encapsulates all the preceding individual and personal instructions.<sup>24</sup>

Fifthly, although the Pauline usage would seem to be decisive on this question, one might also probe some of the difficulties inherent in the view that Romans is not at all addressed to those named in Romans 16.3–15, especially in thinking that Romans was meant for a solely gentile readership. Romans 16 suggests both a variety of different groupings among the Christ-believers in Rome (e.g. v. 5: the *ekklēsia* in Prisca and Aquila's house; v. 10: 'those from those of Aristobulus'; v. 11: 'those from those of Narcissus'; v. 14: the brethren with Asyncritus *et al.*'; v. 15: 'the saints with Philologus *et al.*') and an apparent diversity of ethnic and religious background (some are particularly mentioned as kinsfolk of Paul: Andronicus, Junia and Herodion [vv. 7, 11], others are likely to be Jewish: Aquila, Prisca, Mary, Rufus and his mother [vv. 3, 6, 13]; the rest of the names are more likely gentile, usually quite common among slaves, freedmen and women). How exactly the letter was going to be presented only to the gentile Christ-believers within the ethnically diverse sub-groups of Roman believers, and why, in a letter celebrating the participation of the risen Messiah in the joint worship of Jews and gentiles (Rom 15.7–13), Paul thought this was a good idea, is not often addressed in this literature.<sup>25</sup> Also not often addressed is the problem that not all of those named in Romans 16.3–15 would appear to be ethnically Jewish – how are the ethnically gentile believers among those named in 16.3–15 supposed to be regarded – as included among the addressees or as excluded?<sup>26</sup> It would seem preferable that in a letter addressed 'to all God's beloved in Rome' (πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, Rom 1.7a), it is presumed that the whole believing community in Rome is addressed. That the whole community is commanded to personally embody the welcome, which the letter also commands (Rom 15.7), in extending greetings to those named here.<sup>27</sup> The verb ἀσπᾶσασθε thus retains an imperatival force – urging the Roman believers to greet one another, and is not to be regarded as simply 'a surrogate for the first-person indicative form, and so represents a direct personal greeting of the writer himself to the addressees'.<sup>28</sup>

Our argument thus suggests that there is no reason to exclude those named in Romans 16 from being among those addressed in the letter, and that the recipients of Romans are

<sup>24</sup> Cf. C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975, 1979; 2 vols) 795; H. Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (HThKNT VI; Freiburg: Herder, 1977) 446; M. Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKK VI/1-2; Ostfildern: Patmos & Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, vol. 1: 2014; vol. 2: 2019), vol. 2, p. 481 (cf. also 465).

<sup>25</sup> To be fair, Campbell recognises the theological difficulties, although not the practical ones, in his struggle to conceptualise Paul's approach—the very practice of addressing only gentiles presumes and reproduces the outcome which Paul did not desire, that the gentiles might conceive of 'themselves as distinct from other Christ-following groups including, or perhaps even especially, Jews' (*Romans*, 18–19).

<sup>26</sup> Campbell suggests that those named in Romans 16.3–15 should be regarded as 'mainly of Jewish origin'. He admits that the theory is driving the data when he also notes: 'We have no clear proof that they are Jewish, but we need otherwise to explain why they are greeted separately.' (Campbell, *Romans*, 415)

<sup>27</sup> Cf. especially F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective. Revised and Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 186–7; Schlier, *Der Römerbrief*, 442–3; Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 156–7; S. Mathew, *Women in the Greetings of Romans 16.1–16: A Study of Mutuality and Women's Ministry in the Letter to the Romans* (LNTS 471; London: Bloomsbury, 2013) 33.

<sup>28</sup> Against, for example, Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, 93; cf. also D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996; *Second Edition* 2018) 919; J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans* (2 vols; WBC 38 A&B; Dallas: Word, 1988) 891.

best regarded as ethnically mixed, including among its addressees and recipients, believers from both a Jewish and a gentile background.<sup>29</sup>

**Competing interests.** The author declares none.

---

<sup>29</sup> So, e.g. most of the commentaries, including most recently Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer*, vol. 2, p. 465, as well as Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*; R.B. Hays, 'The Gospel Is the Power of God for Salvation to Gentiles Only? A Critique of Stanley Stowers's *Rereading of Romans*' *CRBR* 9 (1996) 27–44, at p. 37; E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (London: SCM, 1983) 183–184; A.J. Guerra, *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter* (SNTSMS 81; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 166–9. For an entirely different view, that those to be greeted are members of an extended team of visitors who arrive with Phoebe, see P.G. Bolt, 'Untangling the Pauline Handshakes: Who is Greeting Whom in Romans 16', *Romans and the Legacy of St. Paul: Historical, Theological, and Social Perspectives* (eds P.G. Bolt & J.R. Harrison; Sydney: SCD Press, 2019) 391–427. This ingenious argument suffers from multiple problems: a) there seems to be no parallel to this use of 'greetings' in epistolary antiquity; b) the church in the home of Prisca and Aquila (16.5) does not fit in this scenario; c) the Roman pattern to the names noted by Lampe is discounted by Bolt; d) other groups are noted generally rather than named individually (16.10, 11, 15); e) the logic of the scenario painted by Bolt would suggest multiple commendations rather than greetings; f) the singular forms used in introducing the planned trip to Spain (Rom 15.24 & 28) would seem to be in tension with the sending of such a large mission-group.

**Cite this article:** Head PM (2024). The Greetings of Romans 16 and the Audience of Romans. *New Testament Studies* 70, 275–281. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688523000413>