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ROMANS 12:17-13:10 & QUAKERS' RELATION TO THE STATE

CHERICE BOCK

The passages of Romans 12:17-21 and Romans 13:1-7, although located side by side, have been used by historical and contemporary Christians to support opposite conclusions regarding Christians' participation in war and violence with a pivotal focus on the Christian's relation to the state. On one side of the debate, Romans 13:1-7 is cited as a clear statement that Christians should obey their governments in everything, because governments are instituted by God, furthering a doctrine of the divine right of kings. Therefore governmental authority should be questioned no more than the authority of God. Alternatively, Christian pacifists cite Romans 12:17-21 as a clear statement that God calls Christians to a life of nonviolence, "living peaceably with all," never taking revenge, and overcoming evil with good. Peaceable, loving action is the surest way to transforming even one's enemies.

Although these passages are situated back to back, most people who use one of them to prove their beliefs ignore the other passage. This article will look at the two passages in context, noting important details of each section. It will then seek to discover how the two passages inform each other, clarifying what Paul was saying to do by interpreting these instructions together. The overall message of Romans 12-13 is the theme of love: how Christians express that love within and outside the Christian community. In considering how these two passages develop different aspects of Christian love, and how they fit together to describe a community where all are loved and respected, it will become apparent that the thrust of this overall passage is to call believers to remain firmly grounded in God's goodness while interacting with the world around them in peace and love.

THE TEXTS, THEMSELVES

Our passages fall within the second main section of the book of Romans. Chapters 1-11 explain the gospel message with attention to the particular situation of first-century Roman Christians, and

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Romans 12-15 goes on to discuss how to live out the message of Christ in the world.¹ The overall message of this second section is that “it is supremely in our *relationships* that our transformed life will be seen. They will be relationships of love.”²

Within this theme of love, our passages form the center of what many scholars see as a “chiastic structure” from Romans 12:1-13:14.³ In literature at the time of the writing of Romans, it was common for authors to use the literary technique of the “chiasm,” which made use of an A-B-C-B'-A' format. The central piece (C) of a chiasm is the author's main point. Scholars see a chiasm at work in Romans 12-13 that is generally depicted thus:

- A. Romans 12:1-2: introduction of the theme of transformation
- B. Romans 12:3-21: practice love for all people
- C. Romans 13:1-7: example of how to practice love—relation to the state
- B'. Romans 13:8-10: greatest command is to love all people
- A'. Romans 13:11-14: transformation⁴

Most scholars also agree that Romans 12:10-16 mainly addresses relationships within the church, while 12:17-21 speaks of relationships to outsiders.⁵

I agree that there is a chiastic structure at work here, but I organize it differently:

- A. Romans 12:1-2: Transformation: process of renewal of our minds through sacrifice of our living bodies
- B. Romans 12:3-16: Love as an integral part of being transformed communally into the Body of Christ
 - i. 12:3: explanation of the body of Christ
 - ii. 12:4-8: a list of gifts
 - iii. 12:9: genuine love is the mark of the Christian community
 - ii'. 12:10-13: a list of aspects of genuine love
 - i'. 12:14-16: concluding remarks about the treatment of other members of the body of Christ, transitioning to the discussion of external relationships.
- C. Romans 12:17-13:7: Transformative love for those outside the Body of Christ overcomes evil with good

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- i. Romans 12:17-18: live at peace with everyone
 - ii. Romans 12:19: leave vengeance to God
 - iii. Romans 12:20: the role of the Christian is to do good deeds in submission to God's prerogative
 - iv. Romans 12:21: overcome evil with good
 - iii'. Romans 13:1-2: the role of the Christian is submission to God's ordering
 - ii'. Romans 13:3-5: God uses authorities as instruments of vengeance
 - i'. Romans 13:6-7: live at peace through payment of taxes, fear and respect to those to whom it is due
- B.' Romans 13:8-10: Love as fulfillment of the law, not only between members of the community but all "neighbors" (small summary chiasm of 12:3-16 with triple reiteration of the love command)
- i. 13:8: love as fulfillment of the law
 - ii. 13:9: a list of negative commands summed up by the positive law of love
 - i'. 13:10: love as fulfillment of the law
- A.' Romans 13:11-14: Transformation: living as members of "the day" through rejection of bodily lusts, waiting for and living in the hope of Christ⁶

In my analysis, Romans 12:21 becomes the center of the chiastic structure: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by staying firmly fixed in the good."⁷ This makes better sense with the surrounding chapters than an isolated focus on 13:1-7, which definitely does not seem like the central thrust of these chapters. Does it make sense to hear Paul talking about transformation into a new communal body, distinguished by genuine love, and for his central point in the midst of this discussion to be an endorsement of government-sponsored violence: "Follow your government—right or wrong—even if commanded to do violence, against the way of Christ"? From the structure of the passage, as well as what we know of Paul elsewhere, this does not seem likely. Paul willingly went to prison for sharing about the hope he had found in Christ.⁸ He cooperated with authorities in love, but he did not blindly follow their laws, and

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he elsewhere referred to governmental authorities with disdain as worldly powers of “this age.”⁹

Light is shed on this passage if we see it in its thematic context: God’s transformative love allows Christians to let go of the desire for revenge or the desire to set things right on our own. Christians will give back love and goodness when persecuted, will meet the needs of those on whom they might otherwise take revenge, and will live in submission even to the ruling powers of this age (Rom. 12:14, 17-21; 13:7-10). Christians can and should live at peace with all people through enacting this love and goodness, trusting that God’s revenge will come in its own way and time (12:19; 13:4). All can recognize God’s goodness (12:17; 13:5), and one’s enactment of this will fulfills the intention behind any just law (13:8-10).¹⁰

Although Paul uses a chiasm in these two chapters, he does not simply reiterate in the second half what he stated before. Instead, with each level of the chiasm he extends the scope of what is under consideration wider. Romans 12:1-2 addresses the relationship between God and an individual: “offer your bodies.” 12:3-8 regards the immediate worshiping community, while verses 9-16 subtly expands out to members of the Christian community that are not in one’s immediate circle. In 12:17-21, the relationship expands to include personal enemies. As a result, 13:1-7 can be seen as an expansion of the “enemy” theme, or simply as a reference to the broader network of relationships outside the Christian community in which we find ourselves. 13:8-10 goes back to talking about love, but this love cannot be limited only to the Christian community: to fulfill the law, one must act in loving ways toward all neighbors. “Owe no one anything, except to love.” Christians are thus counseled to encompass the entire human race in their practice of love. Paul broadens the scope once more in 13:11-14, providing eschatological reasons for living out this Christian ethic. This focus on the eschaton (the end times) simultaneously brings his exhortations back to the individual: each person can participate now in the eschatological hope, donning the “armor of light,” living “as in the day,” and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.

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A CLOSE READING OF ROMANS 12:17-13:7

Romans 12:17-21¹¹

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written,

‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’

20 No, ‘if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.’

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:17-21 most explicitly points to the idea that Christians are to act in a peaceable manner, and several important things should be noted in this passage. One of the most obvious things is the connection between this passage and the Sermon on the Mount. Paul here uses a similar form to that used by Jesus in Matthew 5, where Jesus articulates a common sense belief and then takes it a step further: “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer” (Mt 5:38). Similarly, in our passage, Paul states commonly held views: “do not repay evil for evil,” “never avenge yourselves,” and “do not be overcome by evil,” and just as Jesus did, he affirms the familiar statement but then takes it further. Instead of repaying evil for evil, “take thought for what is right.” Rather than taking your own revenge, allow God to mete out vengeance in God’s own time. Instead of trying to overcome evil and being overcome yourself, stay grounded in God’s goodness and in this way overcome evil.

These pairs feature a negative prohibition followed by a call to a positive action. Not only are we to follow the negative command, but the positive one as well: we should not repay evil for evil, but we are to think about and then enact goodness toward all people. Instead of taking revenge, we are to actively work to meet the physical needs of our enemies.

Verse 18 contains a strong command: “If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” If this verse said, “If it is possible, live peaceably with all,” it would be meaningless; it is

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not possible to live peaceably with all. But this verse says, “so far as it depends on you.” Some commentators take this to be a double qualifier, softening the tone of the command.¹² I interpret it, however, with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who says, “Notice that there is no room here for exceptions.”¹³ Christians are required to *live peaceably with all*, no matter how the other responds. Christians cannot control others’ actions, but they can control their own, and these actions are to be peaceful.

Paul quotes the Greek Old Testament (LXX) rendering of Leviticus 19:18 in verse 19 to say, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” The Greek words we here translate “I” are the same words used for God’s name, “I am who I am,” revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. The use of this phrase not only conjures up the idea of God’s sovereignty, but also of God’s singularity. Paul reminds Christians that God has said, “Vengeance is mine, I and *I alone* will repay.” The phrase brokers no excuses; revenge is the sole prerogative of God.

An interesting shift occurs, then, in verse 20. Previously in the passage Paul has been using second person plural pronouns, giving instructions to “you all” as a group of Christians, but now he switches to second person singular, “you.” It is as if he is saying everyone generally should not repay evil for evil, should live peaceably, and should not take revenge—but if *your* enemy is hungry, *you* personally have the responsibility of feeding that person. This is not a communal action that one can pass off on someone else. This is a personal duty to enact loving compassion toward one’s personal enemies. This verse also says, “If your enemy *might be* hungry, you *must* feed your enemy.” If there is even a possibility that your enemy is hungry, you are personally commanded to feed and give drink to the person. Action is necessary even if there is only the possibility of need.¹⁴

The last verse of this chapter, and, according to the chiasm under discussion here, the most important verse of the passage, holds a very important preposition: *en* (translated “in”). The NRSV does not convey the importance of this little word, but my translation would be: “Do not be overcome by evil, but instead overcome evil by staying firmly fixed *in* the good.” The Greek word *en* has the connotation of staying firmly grounded or fixed in one position.¹⁵ Paul implies that only through remaining firmly *in* God’s goodness can we overcome evil. There is no way to overcome evil with evil, because it instead will overcome us. The way to overcome evil is through firm and sole

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participation in the transformative love discussed throughout the larger passage.

Overall, this passage reminds us of Christ's injunction to love our enemies. It comes in the context of instructions in chapters 12 and 13 regarding how to live out the gospel message. There is no indication that Paul is expounding an ideal he does not expect us to meet.¹⁶ Bonhoeffer reminds us that "we must show God's way to all persons, including our enemies. This is the way which scripture itself calls foolish, but it is the way in which God loves [God's] enemies and is led to the cross for them."¹⁷ If we act any other way toward our enemies, we are implying that God loves us more than those people. Instead, we who have received mercy from God undeservingly are asked to extend that same gracious love to others, even (and especially) our enemies.

Romans 13:1-7

1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; 4 for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. 6 For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is due to them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

Paul abruptly switches from the topic of relation to enemies to the topic of how Christians are to relate to the state. This is a major switch in some ways: he has been discussing persecutors outside the church, and he then switches to state officials.¹⁸ The switch makes sense, however, in that he continues to talk about relations with those outside the church. From our knowledge of Paul gleaned elsewhere in the biblical record, we know that he did indeed suffer persecution from state authorities, so it might not be the major topic change it seems at first glance.¹⁹

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Set here, though, in the midst of a section on love relationships, we can deduce that this passage must have something to do with the overall love theme of these chapters, although love is not specifically mentioned. When we recall that this section is part of a smaller and a larger chiasm, the meaning becomes somewhat clarified: 12:17-13:7 is the center of the chiasm that makes up Romans 12-13, and within this section there is also a smaller chiasm at work:

- i. Romans 12:17-18: live at peace with everyone
- ii. Romans 12:19: leave vengeance to God
- iii. Romans 12:20: role of the Christian is to do good deeds in submission to God's prerogative
- iv. Romans 12:21: overcome evil with good
- iii'. Romans 13:1-2: role of the Christian is submission to God's ordering
- ii'. Romans 13:3-5: God uses authorities as instruments of vengeance
- i'. Romans 13:6-7: live at peace through payment of taxes, fear and respect to those to whom it is due

With this structure in mind, actions toward those in authority are part of living peaceably with all. Ernst Käsemann calls this "a special instance of love."²⁰ The problem is, "these verses have 'caused more unhappiness and misery in the Christian East and West than any other seven verses in the New Testament by the license they have given to tyrants,' as they have been 'used to justify a host of horrendous abuses of individual human rights.'"²¹

Although we cannot fully detail the problematic interpretations of this difficult passage here, we will emphasize a few important points. First, we must carefully note that the term "be subject to" appears nowhere else in Christian scripture with the meaning "obey," as it is sometimes translated in v. 1.²² Instead, it means, "be subordinate to," or "participate in the order of."²³

Second, the Jewish understanding of relation to governing authorities included the knowledge that God placed rulers in power and that those rulers enacted God's will in some instances, but that they were not always to be obeyed. This can be seen most clearly in the stories from the Babylonian exile. Babylon carried out God's will against Israel,²⁴ but Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to comply when the Babylonian government asked them to

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pray to idols or do other things against God's laws, including eating non-Kosher food.²⁵ Paul follows this traditional Jewish thought in his statement, "there is no authority except from God."

Third, civil authorities are described as "servants of God" in verse 6. This is a priestly term, which opposes the idea that they are god-like and should be worshipped or obeyed on a par with God. Paul here draws a sharp distinction between the Roman and Greek conception of rulers as gods and their actual position as *servants* of God.²⁶ While these individuals are not gods, their office of creating and sustaining order in the civil realm is something which has been instituted by God, and as far as they fulfill this office they should be obeyed. Rather than strengthening earthly authority, this "limits and relativizes it," because it is always subject to God.²⁷

Fourth, what Paul is saying here is less an emphasis on non-thinking compliance with government than it first appears. He skillfully steers the conversation away from the law of fear and coercion, and into the realm of conscience (v 5). As Franz Jehan Leenhardt puts it, "if obedience is a matter of conscience, then it is no longer servile; when conscience is introduced as the motive of obedience, the latter can no longer be counted on!"²⁸ Although we follow the laws "because of conscience," it is because we are obeying the law of love and goodness Paul speaks of throughout this passage. As proud as Rome was of its achievement in putting the known world under rule of law, its law required subjection "because of wrath." And yet, even Rome's law and order is subject to God's true authority, which we know and can follow through attending to our conscience. This is subversive because the Christian's allegiance is to God prior to Rome.²⁹

Unfortunately, Paul does not specify how far we are to go in obedience to authorities. He does not say, as we might wish, "Be obedient until your government asks you to do something against God's commands." This is why there has been so much debate about the meaning of the passage. Can we assume that since Paul himself did not always obey the authorities, he cannot have meant for other disciples to do so? Or shall we, as many scholars do, take this passage as a call for Christians to always obey their governments no matter what?

A common interpretation of this passage can be seen in Calvin, who says that governments carry out God's wrath in God's place.³⁰ This perspective sees government as equal with God, effectively creating a religion of the state where order (as opposed to chaos) is the highest

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value. A more helpful perspective is that Paul holds up the system of law and order above that of chaos and anarchy, a system God created and that is good, but this is not due to any supernatural ability of the rulers themselves.³¹ Order is not the highest good. God's truth and goodness are an even higher priority than an earthly understanding of "order," and sometimes, when we follow God, we will be required to act in ways that do not follow an earthly law. The problem is that, since Paul, interpreters have attempted to create a law out of the brief statement in Romans 13:1-7, replacing the spirit behind Paul's words.³²

John Howard Yoder points out that the grammar of the phrase in verse 6, translated as "for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing," would be more accurately translated, "they are God's servants *only to the extent that* they are busy with this very thing," i.e. punishing evildoers and doing good to those who are good. Paul is therefore suggesting Christians give the authorities the respect and honor they are due, *only to the extent that* they are acting in ways appropriate for a government to act.³³

Romans 13:1-7 continues Paul's instructions regarding how to live out love in the world around us, specifically pertaining to our dealings with civil authorities: we are to remain *in* the good by respecting and honoring those put in authority over us (to the extent that they are due), and we are to cooperate with the government as long as it is providing order and punishing only evildoers. To act obediently in situations where our government asks us to do things contrary to our conscience and the specific commands of God would go against the Spirit of all we know to be Christ-like, especially Christ's own death at the hands of an unjust empire and Paul's repeated jail sentences for his profession of faith. Just as Christ and Paul remained firmly *in* the good while disobeying their government's orders and still treating those in authority with respect, we are to love those in authority and cooperate with them so far as they maintain law and order (such as the collection of taxes), but not be willing to go along with them when they practice things that go against our faith.

As the other verses within the chiasm of Romans 12:1-13:14 suggest, Christians are to live transformed lives characterized by love and unity, remaining firmly in the good and living peaceably with all, fulfilling the law through living out the law of love (see especially 13:8-10). The Christian community's love makes no compromises but continues to be led by Christ in the process of transformation.

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Christians cooperate with authorities and show love and respect—actively loving all—but they do not give anyone the honor reserved only for God. They remain firmly *in* the good, leaving vengeance to God, and instead personally offering food and drink to their enemies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR QUAKERS' RELATION TO THE STATE

The Quaker movement grew out of a community of people who prophetically spoke out against injustices in the political and religious climate of their day. From the beginning, Quakers refused to cooperate with unjust laws pertaining to both religious and social practices, and they suffered the penalties for such actions.³⁴ Unlike some other peace-church movements, Friends never withdrew from participation in government for the safety of an insular community. Instead, Friends historically have participated in encouraging changes in unjust laws and creating better systems of government.³⁵

In our best moments as a movement, Friends have traditionally lived out both Romans 12 *and* 13 by creating a community of individuals who seek to worship with our entire lives (12:1-2), doing our part within the Body of Christ (12:3-8), living out loving relationships within our communities (12:9-16) and outside of them, extending love even those who persecute us (12:17-21), respecting those in authority as far as respect is due (13:1-7)—that is, to the extent our conscience will allow as we live out God's law of love (13:8-10), and living as Children of Light in the Kingdom of God that is so near that it is at hand now (13:11-14). Friends have a lot to be proud of as we look back over our history; we can be grateful for the women and men who have risked their lives and taken a strong stand for just treatment of all and against the use of violence to resolve conflicts. We can also point to Friends' influence and participation in the many movements within the last century that used nonviolent direct action to resist unjust laws.³⁶

As heirs of this wonderful history, however, we cannot simply rest on our past laurels. We must continue to listen to God as a community for ways we are to live out God's gracious love in our world today, remaining firmly fixed in the good and refusing to compromise. How are we called to speak prophetically to our own governments within the present generation?

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In what ways is God calling us to witness to conscience, to remain fixed in the good and refuse to cooperate with evil? Shall we stand together against unjust immigration policies? Shall we oppose uses of oil that cause violent conflict the world over as well as destruction of the earth? Can we stand idly by when our tax monies pay for an obscenely high military budget in the United States? Do we simply support a consumeristic culture where too many things, and people, are disposable? Can Christian conscience tolerate child labor, sex trafficking and other unjust labor practices in our own country and around the world? Should we not be disturbed by de facto economic and racial segregation in our neighborhoods, communities, and meetings? What does the Lord require of Friends today, but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8)?

Let us respond with the same courage and truth-seeking as our spiritual ancestors, and may those who follow still be talking about the way God's Light shone through our generation in years to come. Perhaps a more authentic understanding of Romans 12-13 will help us in our faith and in our faithfulness as we seek to reevaluate our relation to one another, the state, and the world. Given that these chapters emphasize embracing and expressing the transforming love of God, rather than bolstering the divine right of kings, they call for the loving and redemptive witness of believers as an effective means of changing the world.

ENDNOTES

- 1 R.L. Jeske, "Peace in the New Testament" in *The Church's Peace Witness*, Martin E. Miller & Barbara Nelson Gingerich, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994) 152. W. J. Harrelson, ed., *New Interpreter's Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version, CD-ROM Edition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998). (From here on named NISB-NRSV.)
- 2 John R.W. Stott, "Christian Responses to Good and Evil: A Study of Romans 12:9-13:10" in *Perspectives on Peacemaking: Biblical Options in the Nuclear Age*. John A. Bernbaum, ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984) 44.
- 3 Some commentators see the chiasm extending through Romans 12-15, such as J.D.G. Dunn. In his view, the chiasm across chapters 12-15 is, as he himself states, "rough and unbalanced." In my opinion, it is so unbalanced that it points to the need for a new interpretation of the structure of these chapters. Dunn lays out the chiasm by grouping vv. 12:1-2, 12:3-8, 12:9-21, 13:1-7, 13:8-10, 13:11-14, 14:1-15:9 (Dunn, 705). This places nearly the entire content of chapters 14-15 in one section that mirrors two verses, 12:1-2. I agree that these chapters exposit more specific implications of 12:1-2, but seeing a section this long in a chiasmic arrangement with the other two verses does not make sense. His explanation of the way the other pieces of the chiasm reflect one another is also strained. It makes much better sense if one understands the chiasm to end at 13:14.

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- J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, *Word Biblical Commentary* series, Vol. 38, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Inc., 1988).
- 4 NISB-NRSV. T.L. Carter, "The Irony of Romans 13," *Novum Testamentum* 46:3 (2004): 218-219.
- 5 Carter, 218-219. There is, of course, the issue of 12:14, which states that we should bless persecutors. Some commentators choose to include vv. 14-16 with the following section. I think it is easier to understand v. 14 as foreshadowing the direction Paul will be moving, than to try to explain vv. 15-16 as relating to outsiders, especially since Paul says to contribute to the needs of the "saints." He may be referring in v. 14 to persecutors within the community, or others from the Romans' ethnic communities who persecute their new beliefs. At any rate, he is moving toward discussion of relationships outside the Christian community, although he makes the transition over the course of the next three verses. This is against Kent Yinger, who thinks the entire chapter 12 speaks of relations within the community, so that we understand the injunctions against revenge, etc. ending with the edges of our Christian communities. Yinger does not take into account chap. 13, however, which is obviously about relations with those outside the community. The shift at 13:1 is even more abrupt if Yinger is correct; cf. K. Yinger, "Romans 12:14-21 and Nonretaliation in Second Temple Judaism: Addressing Persecution within the Community," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 60:1 (January 1998): 74-96.
- 6 I owe much to Walter L. Wilson's structural analysis in *Love without Pretense; Romans 12:9-21 and Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Literature* WUNT 2.46 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck 1991), but he only addresses chap. 12. He and D.A. Black note the lists in chap. 12 which I highlight here (Black quoted in Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress 2006, 756-757; Douglas J. Moo, *Epistle to the Romans* NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1996, 771, 773). Wilson does not analyze chap. 13, however, or its connection with chap. 12. The material in 13:8-14 makes it clear, in my opinion, that these two chapters are meant to be read together, so it is unfortunate that Wilson limits his work to only chap. 12. At any rate, he sees v. 9 as a thematic statement, followed by the basic point of the passage in v. 14. He posits that vv. 14-21 encompass the smaller chiasm of vv. 17-19, so that the command in v. 18 to live at peace with all people is at the center of the structure. I appreciate his comparison of this chapter with Hellenistic Jewish sapiential discourse, which goes a long way in explaining the way Paul chose to structure this section, but I regret that Wilson did not address chap. 13 in his analysis (Wilson, 128-145, 176-187).
- 7 My translation.
- 8 Ac. 16; 21:27-28:16; 2 Cor. 11:23. (See in 2 Cor. 11:23-33 a list of Paul's hardships, including having to escape from the governor of Damascus by being lowered down the wall in a basket through a window.)
- 9 E.g., 1 Cor. 2:6-8; c.f. Eph. 6:12.
- 10 C.f. Gal. 5:21, "against such things there is no law."
- 11 All scripture quotations are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.
- 12 E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. & ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 248. J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. & ed., John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom38.html> (accessed September 25, 2008), 473.
- 13 D. Bonhoeffer, "Loving Our Enemies" in *Reformed Journal*, 35-4 (1985): 19. See also Wilson, 189.
- 14 This passage's most curious statement is that one will "heap burning coals" on the head of one's enemy by acting with love in response to evil. Although this is a much-debated

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- phrase in scholarly literature, there is little consensus on its meaning. For the scope of this article I have decided to ignore this phrase in order to focus on the overall meaning which can be easily taken from the passage. The best hypothesis comes from Wilson (189), who notes that this is a gnomic saying, but that Paul has changed the ending for emphasis. The gnomic saying states, “for this will cause burning coals to heap up on your enemy’s head, and the Lord will reward you.” Paul also ends the phrase with reference to a good reward, but only if evil is resisted entirely.
- 15 F.W. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, Third Edition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 327-328.
 - 16 Jewett, 808-809.
 - 17 Bonhoeffer, 19.
 - 18 This change in topic and wording is so drastic, however, that some make the case for 13:1-7 as an interpolation by a later redactor. A less drastic approach is that Paul copied it wholesale from some other source (also used by the authors of 1 Pet. 2:13-17 and/or 1 Clement 61). The major problem with these interpolation theories is the fact that said other document is as elusive as “Q,” and 13:1-7 is preserved intact in all extant mss. (Jewett, 783-784; Käsemann 351; Moo, 791, 807). E. Bammel, “Romans 13” in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, eds., E. Bammel & C.F.D. Moule (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 366, 374.
 - 19 Carter suggests that this does not actually represent a switch of topic, but that Paul is hinting that the authorities are more enemies to Christians than friends (Carter, 218).
 - 20 Käsemann, 352.
 - 21 Elliott, “Romans 13:1-7,” 184.
 - 22 E.g., New Living Translation, Contemporary English Version, Good News Translation, New Life Bible. Even if the translation does not actually say “obey,” that is often how it is understood and preached. This word is never used in Christian scripture to mean “obey” (Meyer, 1068-1069).
 - 23 Meyer, 1068-1069.
 - 24 E.g., Isa. 39:5-7; Jer. 20:4-6; 21:1-10. Jer. 25:9 calls King Nebuchadnezzar “my servant.” In Dan. 4:17, Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that it is God who put him (and all authorities) in power. Meyer, 1069; Moo, 798. C.f., 1 Pet. 2:14; *Letter of Aristaeas*.
 - 25 Dan. 1, 3.
 - 26 Jeske, 155
 - 27 Meyer, 1069.
 - 28 Quoted in Carter, 222-223 and Dunn, 765.
 - 29 Dunn, 765.
 - 30 Calvin, 480-481.
 - 31 Käsemann, 356-357.
 - 32 Käsemann, 359.
 - 33 J.H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972) 207-208, 211.
 - 34 Friends refused to doff their hats to those of a “higher” station, continued to meet together even when the law said they could not and refused to take oaths in court, and as a result spent time in miserable conditions in jails.

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- 35 E.g., visits and letters by Margaret Fell and many early, prominent Friends to the monarchs, demanding better treatment of Friends and explaining Friends' beliefs; William Penn's "Holy Experiment" with the government of Pennsylvania, on which much of the governmental system of the United States was based; Friends involvement in changing the deplorable conditions in state-run mental health and penal institutions; Quakers in the anti-slavery movement and the Underground Railroad; Friends' work to gain women's suffrage and conscientious objection as an option other than military service, to name a few.
- 36 Especially the Civil Rights Movement in the United States led by Martin Luther King, Jr. and the movement for freedom from British rule in India led by Gandhi. There were many other, smaller actions around the world throughout the twentieth century that used nonviolence as a tactic. See G. Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, Inc., 2005).