The Good, the Bad and the State – Rom 13.1–7 and the Dynamics of Love

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This article investigates the relationship of 'good' and 'bad' in the letter to the Romans. God is presented as the guarantor of a moral structure, who judges people in symmetrical fashion. However, in Christ God goes beyond the commonsensical in a counter-intuitive initiative to overcome 'bad' through 'good'. The Christ believers are admonished to imitate this approach (12.21). Still, the authorities are respected as divine agents, who imitate God's abiding concern for symmetrical judgement. Paul's major concern in Romans 13.1–7 is reassurance: the believers' higher paradigm of love is compatible with the demands of political authority, which is unambiguously 'good' for them (13.4).

1. Introduction

Romans 13.1–7 has puzzled exegetes for a long time and scholarly literature on this text abounds.[1] The Western world has experienced a long and slow but ultimately successful history developing towards democratic institutions. This process, and even more the ghastly setbacks and distortions thereof, most prominently the Nazi regime, make Paul's admonition look at least awkward and naive, at most dangerous and problematic to the majority of modern readers.[2] Modern scholarly efforts have long sought to relativise the text by seeking to contextualise it in its original historical setting.[3] More recently, many

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1 For an extensive overview, cf. V. Riekkinen, *Römer 13 – Aufzeichnung und Weiterführung der exegetischen Diskussion* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1980).

2 Link sums up the problem well by saying: 'Die Problematik der politischen Gewalt rückt überhaupt nicht ins Blickfeld. Das ist das eigentliche Problem des Textes und für uns seine Aporie' (Ch. Link, 'Anfragen an Paulus: Bemerkungen zu Römer 13:1–7', *Reformatio* 36 (1987) 438–49, at 439).

3 Dunn sees Paul's advice as a strategy of prudence for a vulnerable minority group (J. D. G. Dunn, 'Romans 13.1–7: A Charter for Political Quietism?', *ExAud* 2 (1986) 55–68, at 64); Neil Elliott assumes the historical threat of a new expulsion for the Jewish minority in

scholars have claimed that Paul's message in Romans 13.1–7 has been misunderstood all along and needs to be read against the grain in the light of Paul's overarching message.[4] Such a reconnecting of Paul's political admonition with his wider gospel message, not exclusively but particularly with the one he unfolds so elaborately in Romans, seems to be a promising way towards literary and theological contextualisation in addition to the historical reconstructions.[5] However, this is not an easy endeavor: the self-contained character of Romans 13.1–7 has often been noted.[6] In particular the complete lack of both Christology and eschatology in these few verses has been registered with some concern.[7] The most famous attempts to import Christology and eschatology into the text, the

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Rome, should there be riots (N. Elliott, 'Romans 13:1–7 in the Context of Imperial Propaganda', *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. R. A. Horsley; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997) 184–204 (esp. 184–5); Borg and Wright see Paul reacting against the Zealot movement inspiring the Christ believers to embrace violence (M. Borg, 'A New Context for Romans XIII', *NTS* 19 (1973) 205–18; N. T. Wright, 'The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections', *Acts, Introduction to Epistolary Literature, Romans, 1 Corinthians* (The New Interpreter's Bible 10; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002) 395–770 (esp. 719)). Robert Jewett assumes that Paul needs to win the favour of the Imperial 'bureaucrats' in order to get funding for his mission to Spain (R. Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia Commentaries; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 780–803).

4 For Wright Paul's political admonition is proof that Paul's Gospel was understood correctly in anti-imperial terms, but wrongly assumed to be connected with violence (Wright, 'Romans', esp. 719), for Jewett the assuring words for the slaves working in the imperial administration are at the same time an 'audacious act of co-option' (Jewett, *Romans*, 800). Schottroff suggests that the persecuted Christians must patiently submit to unjust and oppressive powers, knowing that their power is borrowed and limited (L. Schottroff, '"Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God": A Theological Response of the Early Christian Church to its Social and Political Environment', *Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament* (ed. and trans. G. Reimer and Willard M. Swartley; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1992) 223–57.

5 Though no consensus has been reached on a concrete historical scenario, which might have triggered Paul's admonition, knowledge about the political background of the time is of course indispensable for our attempts to assess the meaning and the 'tone' of Paul's words. An important contribution in recent years is S. Krauter, *Studien zu Röm 13, 1–7: Paulus und der politische Diskurs in neronischer Zeit* (WUNT 243; Tübingen: Mohr, 2009), who is sceptical of precise scenarios and anti-imperial readings, but carefully interacts with relevant historical sources.

6 The flow of Paul's argument seems abruptly interrupted by an emphatic call for submission, strangely given in the third person and in the most generalised form (πᾶσα ψυχή). This has famously led to theories of interpolation (e.g. J. Kallas, 'Romans XIII.1–7: An Interpolation', *NTS* 11 (1964–5) 365–74), which have been mostly abandoned again.

7 The (state) authorities are called twice θεοῦ διάκονος (Rom 13.4) and once λειτουργοὶ θεοῦ (13.6), but very tellingly not διάκονος/λειτουργοὶ Χριστοῦ.

'principalities and powers' proposals, unfortunately rely very heavily on passages from Colossians and Ephesians and thus disputed Pauline letters.[8]

Other attempts seem to rely too much on an assumption won prior to the investigation of this text that an apocalyptic and anti-imperial Paul could utter these verses only ironically or at best as a strategic concession, with a knowing glance cast upon the cruelty and injustice of the existing rulers.[9] However, this understandable anxiety to distinguish Paul from an enthusiastic supporter of authoritarian political figures should not prevent us from taking note of the on the whole strikingly positive overtones in Romans 13.1–7. The authorities are after all said to be εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν (Rom 13.4).

In this paper I want to explore yet another route, which seems less travelled as far as I can see. I suggest that the term τὸ ἀγαθόν in v. 4 and more broadly the vocabulary of 'good' and 'bad' could help us to locate the passage more precisely on Paul's eschatological and Christological map. In what way does the 'good' of the authorities participate in or frustrate the 'good' of God? By investigating the broad discourse of the letter to the Romans with a view to 'good' and 'bad' language I will suggest that Paul unfolds two key paradigms or strategies, which spell out how God relates to moral good and bad and the resulting 'higher' goods or evils, such as life and death. I will argue that these two paradigms will help us to assess in what way the 'good' spoken of in Romans 13.1–7 connects or fails to connect with God's Christological outreach. This essay therefore offers a proposal of an inner-Pauline or even inner-Roman discourse. While the reconstruction of this discourse is conducted in close discussion with biblical scholarship, my proposal has no ambition at this point to enter into discussion with the wider field of morality in antiquity.

The expression τὸ ἀγαθόν in Romans 13.4 has certainly provoked various exegetes' interest. Taken by itself it is of course a broad category that lacks precision.[10] 'ἀγαθόν ("good") is' simply 'the generic term for the highest moral quality in the Hebrew wisdom tradition and rabbinic ethics, in Hellenistic Judaism, in classical and later Greek philosophy, and in the Roman value system, with definitions that fluctuate according to those intellectual contexts.'[11]

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8 Cf. e.g. C. D. Morrison, *The Powers that Be* (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1960).

9 Wright assures us that Paul did not have a rosy view of Roman government but knew that even a bad system can still display a 'certain level of divine authorization' (Wright, 'Romans', 718). 'Paulus redet höchst profan von situativ erfahrener und mitunter höchst repressiv erfahrener Macht' (Link, 'Anfragen', 441). 'Paul does not idealize the situation he is addressing. He does not pretend the authorities of whom he speaks are models of the good ruler' (Dunn, 'Charter', 67).

10 'Eine inhaltliche Qualifizierung des ἀγαθόν oder Kriterien dafür werden nicht genannt' (H. Merklein, 'Sinn und Zweck von Röm 13,1–7: Zur semantischen und pragmatischen Struktur eines umstrittenen Textes', *Neues Testament und Ethik* 261 (1989) 238–70, at 260).

11 Jewett, *Romans*, 734.

I would like to distinguish broadly three readings: one is the *maximum reading* which sees 'the good' as an all-embracing, most comprehensive category, containing everything good from eternal salvation to social welfare. This maximum reading opens the door for a (possibly nuanced or differentiated) theocracy or Christocracy in which the civic good must not and cannot be separated from the spiritual good, and where the authorities have to care both for their subjects' physical well-being and their eternal salvation.[12] At the other end of the spectrum we have the *minimal reading*, which is emphatic that the 'good' here must be understood as some strictly limited good, some bourgeois decency perhaps, or some civic justice, but certainly far removed from the eschatological good the church hopes for and already partly enjoys.[13] *In between* we have scholars who wish to intertwine and connect what they see as the Christian or 'eschatological good' with 'the good' in Romans 13.1–7, what God has revealed in Christ as 'good' and what is perceived by the general public as civic good. This scholarly group wants to allow for some overlap and fusion between civic and Christian good without advocating a theocracy.[14]

As ἀγάπη makes an appearance immediately after the passage some scholars take this as their key to Romans 13.1–7. Wilckens for instance argues that love is 'die christliche Definition des Guten', and the state its guarantor and protector.[15] Or love is the gold standard of good the church holds in front of the state, which has to be held accountable.

In order to probe these suggestions in somewhat more depth I will first give an overview of the dynamics of 'good' and 'bad' language in Romans and secondly

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12 This route is not taken very often in contemporary scholarship, for obvious reasons. It made however perfect sense to many reformers who did not want to abandon but transform and renew a vision of the *Corpus Christianum*. The Strasbourg reformer Martin Bucer and his 'De regno Christi' is an impressive example, assigning differentiated but almost equally weighty roles to spiritual and temporal authorities in bringing about the Kingdom of Christ (Martin Bucer, 'De regno Christi', *Melanchthon and Bucer* (ed. W. Pauck; LCC 19; London: SCM Press, 1969) 174–394).

13 Strobel states that 'the good' denotes 'in diesem Fall keine theologisch-ethische Qualifikation, sondern allgemeine bürgerliche Ordentlichkeit' (A. Strobel, 'Zum Verständnis von Rm 13', *ZNW* 47 (1956) 67–93). Similarly Käsemann: 'Das Gute ist auch hier nicht auf das Gottesverhältnis … bezogen, sondern auf die allgemeine Ehrbarkeit' (E. Käsemann, *An die Römer* (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 8a; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1974[3]) 345. Against this view, cf. Link, 'Anfragen', 445.

14 This 'middle perspective' ranges from picturing Paul as breaking down the barriers between cult and civic life (Dunn, 'Charter', 66–7) to perceiving God in Christ as co-opting the state for his eschatological goals (Jewett, *Romans*, 800), a move the Christians have to include in their own missional strategy (P. Towner, 'Romans 13:1–7 and Paul's missiological Perspective: A Call to Political Quietism or Transformation?', *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* (ed. S. K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 149–69).

15 U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer: Römer 12–16* (EKKNT VI/3; Zürich: Benziger, 1982) 20.

examine how Paul uses 'good' and 'bad' language in chapters 12 and 13. Though there is quite a lot of explicit 'good' and 'bad' vocabulary in Romans, rendered as ἀγαθός, κακός, χρήστος, καλός, πονηρός and φαῦλος,[16] I will not merely trace the places where this vocabulary is present. Instead, as mentioned above, I will point to wider patterns of 'good' and 'bad' in Romans, even if it appears in a different vocabulary.[17] Needless to say, I have to leave to one side a lot of huge debates especially concerning the law, Jews and Gentiles, justification etc.

2. Good and Bad in Romans

2.1 *God's Commonsensical or Symmetrical Approach to Good and Bad*

Paul's opening section in Romans 1.18–32 mentions God as *the source of good*; whoever properly knows and acknowledges God, knows and does what is good. Paul admittedly speaks about this connection in the negative: the failure to worship God in correspondence to God's revelation leads to immoral actions.[18] Both knowing God and knowing good are perfectly possible for Jews and Greeks thanks to the Torah but also nature (1.19-20) and, as Paul will add later on, conscience (2.15).[19] The first chapters of Romans make it quite clear that not knowing good and evil is not the problem that Christ is about to solve. Good and bad, understood as primarily moral categories though with a salvific edge (leading either to life or death, 1.32), are accessible to Jews and Greeks alike.[20]

God is however not only source but also guarantor of the moral universe, as Paul further unfolds in Romans. In this function God clearly marks human deeds for what they are and responds accordingly, by giving either praise or punishment. Paul opens his treatise referring to the ὀργή of God. This wrath is at

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16 We find 'good' and 'bad' as a pair in Romans 2.9–10; 9.11; 12.9, 17, 21; 13.3a; 13.3b and 4b; 14.20 (with καθαρά); 16.19; and in especially high frequency in Romans 7.12-21. Language of 'good' and 'goodness' only can be found in 5.7; 8.28; 10.15; 12.2; 13.4a; 14.16, 21; 15.14 and 13.10 ('nothing bad'). Badness on its own is mentioned in 13.4b and 3.12 ('nothing good').

17 Examples would be the contrast between ἀκαθαρσία/ἀνομία and ἁγιασμός in Romans 6.19.

18 Paul's notorious intertwining and criticism of idolatry and homosexual practices may not be shared by everybody in a Greco-Roman audience but would gain a lot of approval from a Jewish audience (for a list of parallels in *Wisdom of Solomon* and other Jewish-Hellenistic writings cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC 38b; Dallas: Word Books, 1988) 61.

19 Horrell sees three ways in which according to Paul the good and evil of the Torah reach humankind without the Torah: the law is written in people's hearts, they have the witness of the συνείδησις and their λογισμοί (2.15) defend or accuse (D. G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (London: T&T Clark, 2005) 250.

20 Concerning Romans 1.21 Käsemann states: 'Zum vierten Male wird in unseren Versen nicht eine Möglichkeit, sondern die Tatsächlichkeit der Gotteskenntnis konstatiert. Darauf ruht die gesamte Argumentation' (Käsemann, *Römer*, 38). Similarly Horrell: 'people can be judged guilty *precisely and only* because they *knew* God's just decree (τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιγνόντες)' (Horrell, *Solidarity*, 249, and similarly 251, emphasis original).

present revealed over against sinful humanity (1.18). While 1.23–32 probably targets Gentile sinners as we have seen, Paul seems to address a Jewish interlocutor in 2.1, accusing him of the very same things (2.21–4).[21] Paul already seems to hint at his thesis that Jews and Gentiles are united in their sad propensity to do what is bad, which triggers the divine wrath (1.18; 3.19). However, Paul in 2.6–11 elaborates further the concept of God as the judge who measures out praise and punishment in perfectly symmetrical and fitting fashion, allowing for a positive outcome for Jewish as well as Gentile participants in this judgement.[22] I would like to call this approach towards good and bad the symmetrical or 'commonsensical' approach.[23]

Despite Paul's contemplating of a positive outcome within the commonsensical paradigm, he paints an ever-darkening picture of human behaviour (cf. the florilegium from mostly Psalm quotations in 3.10–18), which is summed up in his cry in 3.12: οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ποιῶν χρηστότητα. The law, whether the law which is written on the Gentiles' hearts (2.15) or the revealed law of Torah, does not keep people from evil and prompt them towards the good, as one might expect, but mostly serves to rob people of any excuses (3.19) and to mark out evil as evil: διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας (3.20b).[24]

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21 This point is of course subject to considerable debate. Without being able to give a detailed presentation of the discussion I am inclined to side with the more traditional view – which has recently been supported with some modifications by Gathercole (S. J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002)) – of Paul addressing a non-Christian Jew as his fictional discussion partner in 2.1 and 2.17, building up a polemical indictment of Jews throughout the chapter. This is disputed and countered among others by Thorsteinsson, who claims an exclusively Gentile audience for Romans and sees the interlocutor in chapter 2 as a Judaising Gentile (R. M. Thorsteinsson, *Paul's Interlocutor in Romans 2: Function and Identity in the Context of Ancient Epistolography* (ConBNT 40; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003) and Elliott, who claims different interlocutors for 2.1 and 2.17 and sees Paul's major target as the Gentiles, who are warned that they are accountable to God and subject to God's righteous wrath if they fail to keep the law, just like the Jews (N. Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism* (JSNTSupp 45; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), esp. ch. 2: 'Paul's Use of Topics on the Law in Rom. 1.13–4.25', 105–65).

22 Concerning the widely debated function of the seeming digression in chapter 2, Bassler wisely remarks that 1.18–2.29 does not yet contain a universal indictment of sinfulness, but rather prepares the way towards that verdict inasmuch as 'the fact of God's impartial justice over both Jews and Greeks is a necessary presupposition for the charge that all are under sin and accountable to God' (J. M. Bassler, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982) 155).

23 I wish to use this term with its everyday, non-pejorative, connotations, though it refers to what Campbell polemically calls 'the principle of desert' (D. A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 551).

24 3.19 has puzzled exegetes because, while its primary target seems to be the Jews (τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ), the whole κόσμος is held accountable before God. Elliott offers an intriguing attempt to shift the comma and to read the sentence as: 'We know that whatever the Law says to those

This thesis is unfolded at greater length in 7.7–25, where 'good' and 'bad' language is frequent.[25] God's command, which is holy, just and good (7.12), is hijacked by sin and twisted into something which leads to death, rather than life (7.10). The human being, though knowing the law and assenting with his/her mind to its judgements, nevertheless does not do the good which she/he wills, but the bad which he/she hates (7.19).[26]

There is no space here and no need to resolve all the difficult issues surrounding Romans 7.[27] Wilckens rightly stresses that the chapter's theme is the law, '… genauer: das Verhältnis zwischen Gesetz und Sünde, Gesetzeserkenntnis und Gesetzesbruch, und sein Skopos: die "Schwäche" des Gesetzes (8,3), Sündern das Leben zu vermitteln und die entsprechende Unfähigkeit des Sünders, aus dem Gesetz gerecht zu werden. Das Thema als solches heisst nicht: "Ich" und der Skopos nicht: "Der Mensch im Widerspruch".'[28]

Summing up this section we can say that the law under the condition of sin and flesh brings death. It still communicates God's righteous judgement, but it misses God's goal to bring life. The conclusion becomes inevitable that if God follows through his commonsensical approach to 'good' and 'bad' the result will likely be universal *condemnation* under the rule of sin.

2.2 *God's Counter-intuitive or Asymmetric Approach to Good and Bad*

Already in Romans 3 Paul hints at the possibility of an alternative approach, which I would like to call 'asymmetric' or 'counter-intuitive': human (or at this point Jewish) faithlessness must not erode God's faithfulness

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in the Law, it speaks in order that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world be brought to account before God' (Elliott, *Rhetoric*, 145).

No matter whether the accent in 1.18–3.20 is seen as being on broadening Gentile sinfulness to cover Jews or on broadening Jewish accountability to cover Gentiles, the overall movement (triggered no doubt by Christological considerations) of bringing Jews and Gentiles on a par in (1) standing a fair chance before God, (2) being equally accountable and (c) being under sin and exposed to God's wrath seems to be undeniable. This broad feature is what matters for the present inquiry.

25 We find αγαθ- vocabulary five times, the term καλός three times and κακός twice. Despite this positive statistic, the lament of this chapter emphasises of course the urges of the flesh to follow the lead of sin.

26 Wilckens rightly insists (contra Bultmann) that the chapter is about de facto moral deeds or failures, not about alternative modes of existence either in dependence of God or in self-reliance (U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer: Römer 6–11* (EKKNT VI/2; Zürich: Benziger, 1980) 88, 114–15).

27 For the discussion of the 'I', see a list of possibilities in J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (Anchor Bible Commentary 33; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1993) 463–4 and C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975–9) 342–4 I. For a discussion of the tradition-historical background of anthropological categories, cf. Jewett, *Romans,* 470.

28 Wilckens, *Römer 6–11*, 100.

(3.3).[29] God may well choose to respond to badness with a kind of meta-goodness that cannot be toppled by human actions. This 'larger than life' goodness of God can take the form of patient overlooking of bad actions (3.25, 26), but ultimately in Christ takes the form of God reaching out and journeying into the heartland of badness, in order to deal with it at a most fundamental level (ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκός, 8.3). In 3.21–6 Paul gives a concentrated summary of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ: God puts Jesus forth as a ἱλαστήριον and justifies those who believe freely through his grace and the redemption which is in Jesus Christ (3.24). God's righteousness or integrity is again an important issue, which is affirmed and preserved (3.25, 26 (2x)). God's patience is mentioned in 3.25–6 (ἀνοχή in 3.26 echoes 2.4), most likely as his previous strategy until the eschatological νῦν. It already pointed to God's goodness before Christ but is clearly outshone by God's new outreach in Christ.[30] Similarly the theme of God's faithfulness, which preserved God's righteousness and glory in the face of human faithlessness, already prepared the theme of 3.21–6 though not the theme of justification in the sense that the godless are covered by this divine righteousness.[31] Something genuinely new happens ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ (3.26) as Christ enters the scene. The cross as the first climax of this journey no doubt has a judging and even condemnatory aspect (κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, 8.3), but it is clear that God's goal goes far beyond the exposing and condemning of sin. God seeks to win back bad people for goodness, not to condemn them.[32] This approach is 'asymmetric' because in it God's response to evil is goodness.

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29 The thought in 3.3 is triggered by Paul's reflections on the abiding prerogatives of Jews (3.1–3), a theme Paul will unfold at length in chapters 9–11. Paul 'weist … Einwände gegen diese Gleichstellung von Juden und Heiden im Gericht im Blick auf die Gütlichkeit der Erwählung Gottes zurück (3:1–8), auf die er ausführlich erst später eingehen wird (Röm 6f und 9–11)' (U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer: Röm 1–5* (EKKNT VI/1; Zürich: Benziger, 1978) 93).

30 Cranfield points out that an infinite 'holding back' of God's judgement would be sensed as wanting in Jewish thinking – something final is needed (Cranfield, *Romans*, I.211–12).

31 Contra Käsemann: 'Der zweite Einwand [3.5] wendet sich gegen die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre' (Käsemann, *Römer*, 73).

32 I take Romans 11.32 to be the powerful summary of the meta-perspective of Romans: the 'locking up into disobedience' is triggered by the salvific purpose ('so that he may have mercy upon all'). If this is correct, God's gracious intervention in Christ stands in a dialectical relationship to God's wrath but with a clear inner dynamic that strives towards salvation. 'Even the destructive effect of the law, to bring wrath down upon them [the Jews], cannot escape the will of God to give salvation (4:16a). This is a theme which returns frequently in chapters 9–11 and reaches its paradoxical climax in 11:32…' (H. Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict: Studies of Paul's Understanding of God in Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 1980) 267). Similarly Wilckens: 'In der Tat wird Paulus seine Rechtfertigungs-Erörterung so zusammenfassen, dass die heilsgeschichtliche "Absicht" der Sünde aller die Offenbarung der Gerechtigkeit Gottes (3,21) als Herrschaftsantritt seiner Gnade (5,20f) und seines Erbarmens über alle Gottlosen ist (11,28–32)' (Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 165).

There is something deeply counter-intuitive and even morally repulsive because an unworthy recipient is linked with God's favour (4.5).[33]

In addition, this alternative approach is characterised by super-abundant extravagance as becomes especially clear in chapter 5, where περισσ- vocabulary is strong (5.15, 17, 20): 'Far from merely counteracting Adam's action with a saving act that restores the disrupted status quo, the divine grace enacted in Jesus Christ is characterized by prodigality, extravagance, and excess. It goes far beyond what is needful and proper; it lacks economy and restraint.'[34] If evil has taken hold of all things good and strangulated them in its grip, God undermines and embraces evil at its worst point and opens the way to the most extravagant hope, by captivating even what is bad for God's good intentions: πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν (8.28). Here Paul obviously moves from a moral perception of good and bad to a far broader horizon.

While God's reaction to all-pervasive sinfulness is God's present and future *wrath*, denoting God's passionate and deeply involved stance towards evil, the emotional force behind God's salvific action is *love*. Paul uses the term sparsely but very effectively in 5.5, 8 and 8.35, 37, 39. Love is what motivated God and what becomes part of the innermost existence of the believers through the Spirit. (5.5). God's love precedes human response by reaching out to weak and hostile people (5.6, 8).

2.3 *The Abiding Right of the Commonsensical Concern: Fulfilling What is Good*

From what has been said so far, it might look as if God according to Paul has changed his strategy from a wrathful and symmetrical judging and punishment of evil to an extravagant and assymetric love, which aims at winning back those who do what is bad. However, Paul is adamant at various points of his letter that God's counter-intuitive outreach has not made obsolete the categories of (moral) good and bad. If God's glory is not affected by human sin (cf. 3.3–5), this must never lead to presumptuous moral indifference or even seduce human beings to try in a cynical and calculating fashion to bring out good from (morally) bad (cf. 3.8; 6.1). God, though seemingly undermining the categories of good and bad in his outreach, will not abandon these categories altogether.

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33 Linebaugh calls this phenomenon 'diagonal Δικαιοσυνή', the 'diagonal tangent of grace (χάρις, Rom 3:24), linking as it does the ungodly with justification' (J. A. Linebaugh, 'Debating Diagonal Δικαιοσύνη', *Early Christianity* 1 (2010) 107–28, at 128). Contrasted with this is the 'straight line of justice ... which links the wicked and curses' (ibid., 128), the eschatological "reestablishment of a balanced, judicious correspondence between, on the one hand, righteousness and blessing (mercy), and on the other hand, wickedness and punishment (judgment)' (ibid., 117).

34 F. B. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007 (rev. and exp. edition)) 274.

How else is God going to judge the world? (3.6) Paul spends considerable time in Romans 6 spelling out the ethical consequences of being in Christ. Even if the Christians approach and fulfil their ethical obligations from a very distinctive angle or within a different paradigm, the content of ethics seemingly does not change all that much. Not to be under the law is not the same as ἀνομία, which Paul contrasts with ἁγιασμός (6.19, 22). Nor does Paul drop the expectation and call to fulfil what is good.[35] He sums up both aspects in 8.4: the righteous commands of the law shall be fulfilled by those who walk according to the Spirit.[36] Perhaps it could be argued that the counter-intuitive paradigm contains within itself the ethical concerns of the commonsensical one: at the very least God's salvific outreach, which goes beyond symmetrical judgement (or punishment under the conditions of all-pervasive sinfulness), aims at making the fulfilment of what is good possible.

3. 'Good' and 'Bad' in Romans 12 and 13

With these two strategies of dealing with 'good' and 'bad' in mind – the commonsensical and the counter-intuitive approach – we turn to Romans 13.1–7 again.

Many exegetes have argued convincingly for various thematic and linguistic links between Romans 13.1–7 and its present literary context.[37] In fact, Romans 13.1–7 can be seen as one bead in a chain of apostolic admonishments, which vary from simple commands to more elaborate exhortations (e.g. 12.19), among which Romans 13.1–7 is the most developed example.[38] Finally, some key

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35 Paul is confident that he will find the Roman Christians μεστοὶ ἀγαθωσύνης (15.14). Even in his final admonitions Paul wants the believers to be 'wise towards the good and innocent towards the bad' (16.19).

36 Paul's obvious expectation that Christ believers fulfil God's good will in the power of the Spirit is a strong argument against a strand in Augustinian and Reformation theology, which attributes the agony of the 'I' in chapter 7 to a believer (cf. e.g. J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38b; Dallas: World Books, 1988) 407). Jewett rightly states: 'Honesty about the dilemmas of current Christian ethics should not be allowed to override the evidence in Paul's own letters of an expectation of ethical transformation' (Jewett, *Romans*, 466).

37 E.g. Jewett, *Romans*, 783; Cranfield, *Romans*, ii.652; Wilckens, *Römer 12–16*, 30–1.Wright takes 12.14-13.7 together under the heading 'the church facing the outside world' (Wright, 'Romans', 712). Similarly Friedrich, Pöhlmann and Stuhlmacher see section 12.16b–13.7 as a second main part, 'als dessen Thema man das Leben der Christen in den weltlichen Bindungen bestimmen kann' (J. Friedrich, W. Pöhlmann, P. Stuhlmacher, 'Zur historischen Situation und Intention von Römer 13, 1–7', *ZThK* 73.2 (1976) 131–66, at 150).

38 Friedrich, Pöhlmann, Stuhlmacher, 'Historische Situation', 153 suggest that Paul changes from a catalogue-like style of admonition to a more argumentative and reflexive one. 'Begründungen gibt Paulus auch in 12, 19 sowie 13,9 und ein Beispiel führt er auch schon in 12,4f an, ohne damit der Geschlossenheit seiner Paränese zu schaden' (ibid., 153).

vocabulary from chapter 12, such as κακός and ἀγαθός (12.2, 9, 17, 21), or ἐκδικοῦντες/ὀργή (12.19), are repeated in 13.3, 4, 5. The ὀφειλαί in 13.7 are echoed in the next verse by the corresponding verb ὀφείλετε. I will therefore take Romans 12 and Romans 13.8–10 into account when describing 'good' and 'bad' language in our passage.

3.1 *Romans 12*

God's will is characterised as what is ἀγαθός, εὐάρεστος and τέλειος (12.2b). Though it is seemingly only the renewed minds which are explicitly not conformed τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ (2a) that are able to discern the good properly, it is again presupposed that there is considerable overlap between 'the good' as seen from inside the church and what is good 'in the sight of all people' (12.17).[39] ἀγάπη makes a brief appearance in the summary maxim of v. 9, demanding ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος and admonishing the Christians to detest evil (πονηρόν) and cling to what is good (τῷ ἀγαθῷ). There has been some debate concerning to what extent ἀγάπη dominates chapter 12.[40] It seems that ἀγάπη is on a different level from 'good' and 'bad', though closely connected to the latter categories.[41] Following Paul's remarks in Romans so far it seems to be as much or more an empowering divine presence than a single virtue (5.8). As such it reaches the believers from outside (ἀγάπη is only used of God or Christ before 12.9), yet becomes part of them at the deepest existential level (5.5). Because of that, their relationships will be marked by love, including the one to God (8.28). But love is not the new super-virtue that either replaces or contains all other commands and definitions of 'good' and 'bad'.[42] Rather, love as the driving force of Christian deeds and the overall horizon of hope still needs concretisation in individual commands. It is certainly intriguing that the call to ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος is immediately followed by the exhortation ἀποστυγοῦντες τὸ πονηρόν, κολλώμενοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ, 'detest evil, cling to what is good' (12.9). In our previously established terminology we could argue that

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39 The latter translation of ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων (Romans 12.17) is supported by e.g. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 748 and Horrell, *Solidarity*, 266–7.

40 Käsemann has some serious misgivings about taking 'love' as the all-pervasive subject of Romans 12, though he later on almost withdraws his critique (Käsemann, *Römer*, 331, 337). By contrast Black finds the question misguided and claims that 'there is no real distinction between love and good works' and that love is indeed the theme of chapter 12 (D. A. Black, 'The Pauline Love Command: Structure, Style, and Ethics in Romans 12:9–21', *EFN* 2.1 (1989) 3–22, at 20).

41 For a helpful brief discussion of the tension between concrete commands and the one principle of love cf. Horrell, *Solidarity*, 12–14.

42 Summed up by Lyonnet as 'pour Paul, l'amour n'est pas seulement le "sommet" de la loi, le premier des commandements, leur "tête", mais … il les contient tous' (S. Lyonnet, 'La Charité plénitude de la Loi', *Dimensions de la Vie Chrétienne (Rm 12–13)* (ed. C. K. Barrett *et al.*; Rome: Abbaye de S. Paul, 1979), 151–78, at 156.

'love' is closely related to *commonsensical* thinking here: What is morally good and bad can and should still be clearly distinguished by those who love, not just on a cognitive but also on a practical and emotional level.

In v. 19 the believers are addressed as the ἀγαπητοί and admonished not to take revenge for themselves, a command that has been prepared for and is followed by other remarks about how to deal with outsiders and in particular with hostile people. These attitudes of non-retaliation and of kindness to enemies are summed up in v. 21: μὴ νικῶ ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ ἀλλὰ νίκα ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ κακόν ('Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'). There is something much more *counter-intuitive* in this second maxim, which does not rule out but reframes the commonsensical maxim in v. 9. After all, 'hate what is evil' could easily develop into 'detest the evil-doer'. There is however no word about enemy love here and Paul does not make an appeal to God's love in Christ for enemies (5.8), which might be in keeping with his general reluctance to use ἀγάπη for relations with people outside the church.[43] Even with this caveat, there are clear echoes of God's outreach in Christ, which also overcame evil through good.[44] We could perhaps say that Christian ἀγάπη is firmly located in God's outreach in Christ and unlocked in its fullest mutual potential within the church, but that it has an inherent tendency to 'spill over' or 'seep through' to the outside world.

3.2 *Romans 13*

We turn now at last to Romans 13.1–7 and see the authorities portrayed as those who are no terror to the good work but to the bad (v. 3), who praise those who do good but menacingly bare their sword to those who do the bad (v. 4). Though Paul knows that the (*nota bene*) pagan authorities will of course not punish things such as idolatry, which provokes divine wrath (1.18–25), the shared notion of good and bad seems to be still broad enough to inspire confidence in their task. 'Paul … implies here that God and the Roman authorities have corresponding views of what counts as "good", τὸ ἀγαθόν, and what counts as "bad", τὸ κακόν.'[45] The seriously wicked acts of violence, of immorality, of damaging one's fellow citizens' possessions or health, or breeching his/her

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43 Thorsteinsson insists that 'there is no "love of enemies" witnessed in this verse' (R. M. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 193). Cf. also ibid., 166–75 ('Non-Retaliation and Love of Enemy'). However, he does not pay enough attention to the tendency of Christian ἀγάπη to spill over its ecclesial boundaries.

44 Cf. Wilckens, *Römer 12–16*, 27 n. 131). The address ἀγαπητοί (12.19) together with the νικ-vocabulary in 12.21 may well be reminiscent of Rom 8.37, where Paul says about the believers (including himself): ὑπερνικῶμεν διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος ἡμᾶς.

45 Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity*, 98. Similarly Horrell: 'in so acting as God's representative, the ruling power is presumed to share God's sense of good and evil' (Horrell, *Solidarity*, 256).

trust, may come to mind as listed by Paul in 2.21–4. The authorities are busy with the very *commonsensical* task of marking out good and evil and dealing with it in a strictly symmetrical way. The state authority is an ἔκδικος (13.4). The Christ believers on the other hand have just been admonished not to be ἐκδικοῦντες (12.19) themselves. We wonder whether that makes the authorities look wanting or even suspicious in the eyes of the Christ believers.[46]

When Paul admonishes the Roman believers not to take revenge themselves he urges them in the same sentence to give room, not to the *love* of God, but to the *wrath* of God (12.19). This wrath is obviously not overcome and done away with, as 5.8 (cf. also 14.10, where the βῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ is mentioned) suggests.[47] What matters at this point is that the mention of God's avenging wrath in 12.19 is an important point of contact with the activities of the authorities in 13.4.[48] The authorities embody and imitate God's commonsensical approach to good and evil.[49] They may not reflect the counter-intuitive approach that the Christians are taught to embody, but they are not against God for that reason. On the contrary, they are God's servants precisely by judging evil and condemning it and to a lesser degree through praising good.[50] This seems to be completely unproblematic for Paul and I think it now becomes clear why: even after God's deeply *counter-intuitive* and asymmetrical approach to good and evil in Christ the moral structure of the universe stays firmly in place and judgement is to be expected. While in the case of personal opponents the Christians were admonished to overcome the bad through the good, in Romans 13.1–7 they are now called to cooperate with 'the good' through 'the good'.

The following figure illustrates what has been said so far.[51]

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46 This is an important point exegetes from a pacifist background will raise. Cf. e.g. Schottroff, '"Give to Caesar"'.

47 Cf. 1 Thess 1.10. Campbell very tellingly avoids associating the ὀργή in 5.8 directly with God and instead talks about the 'eschatological wrath and its associated apocalyptic forces' (Campbell, *Deliverance*, 606). While it is true that Paul somewhat depersonalizes the wrath here, it is equally clear from previous chapters that this must be the wrath of God.

48 This should be read in very broad terms as respecting the state as a force that brings about 'law and order'. It does not necessarily mean that Paul calls upon the Christ believers to make an appeal to state justice in their personal grievances instead of indulging in lynch justice (*pace* Wright, 'Romans', 719), as the institutions of civic justice may not have been readily available for everybody (Cf. P. Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii: Paul's Letter at Ground Level* (London: SPCK, 2009, 123–6). It is also an open question whether dragging an opponent to court would still qualify as 'overcoming bad with good' for Paul (cf. Paul's warnings in 1 Cor 6.1–8).

49 Link speaks of the *Gleichnisfähigkeit* of the state (Link, 'Anfragen', 445).

50 Despite the phrases ἕξεις ἔπαινον (13.3) and σοὶ εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν (13.4) the emphasis is on fear and punishment in vv. 3–4, even when expressed in a negation (οὐκ εἰσὶν φόβος, 13.3; μὴ φοβεῖσθαι, 13.3; φοβοῦ, 13.4; τὴν μάχαιραν, 13.4; ἔκδικος εἰς ὀργήν, 13.4).

51 Many thanks go to Mr Ed Kaneen for designing this diagram.
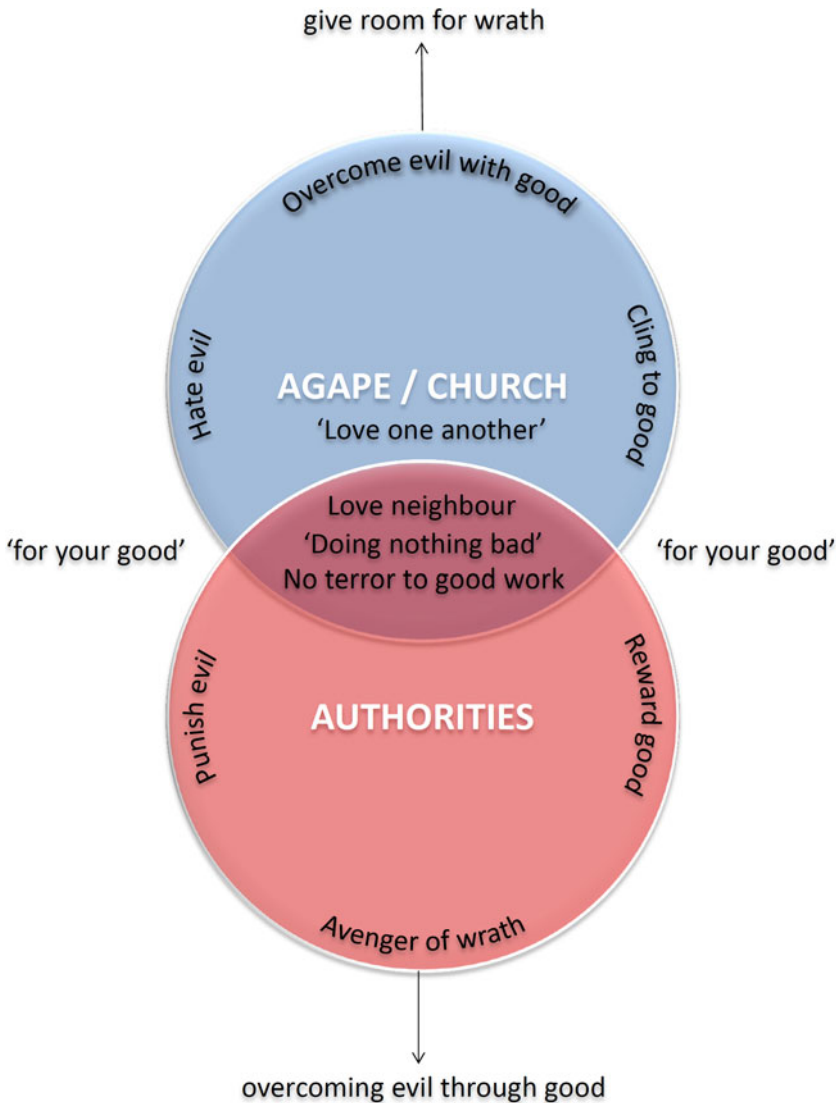
give room for wrath

Figure 1. The overlap between the church's and the authorities' paradigm

The lower circle symbolises the symmetrical activities of the authorities, punishing evil and rewarding good. They are (like God) an avenger of wrath, which conflicts with the Christian pattern of 'overcoming evil through good'.

The upper circle symbolises the activities of the Christ believers, motivated by ἀγάπη. Though they 'hate evil' and 'cling to good', they most importantly overcome evil with good, which conflicts with the encouragement to give room for wrath.

The two circles overlap and create a realm where the loving behaviour of Christians, understood as 'doing nothing bad', is translated into 'no terror to the good work' on the authorities' side. This overlap or compatibility makes the authorities unambiguously good ('for your good') for the believers.

But what then is the 'good work' of the Christians? It may be seen on the one hand as consisting concretely in the payment of taxes and other dues. In that case the statements about the 'good work' (v. 3) or the evil-doer (v. 4) would specifically talk about the problem of paying or withholding taxes and the related punishment.[52] This is a possibility, which has of course concrete examples going for it. I think however that the expressions 'good' and 'bad' seem to be rather too general to be used with such a narrow application only.[53]

Instead, they may well point to the morally proper conduct of the believers. The immediately following verses 8–10 confirm this, I think. In v. 8 Paul sums up his previous command by demanding that nobody should fail to give their due to anybody. The immediately following clause εἰ μὴ τὸ ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν is slightly enigmatic. It probably does not mean that the Roman Christians should fail to perform their duty of loving each other. Rather love is introduced as something which does not fit the 'due' category altogether.[54] Love like grace belongs on the side of the superabundant and asymmetric, which cannot neatly be given back as one's duty. The ἀλλήλους indicates that Paul wants to return to inner-Christian matters after his excursus about the political authorities. The half-verse could then be read as Paul's moving on to higher ethical grounds again, spelling out the pattern of love in the church. Paul rounds off his command with a supporting reflection: the one who loves τὸν ἕτερον has fulfilled the law. The mentioning of the law is somewhat surprising at this stage and seems to pick up discussions much earlier in the letter. The examples from the Decalogue in v. 9a and the Leviticus quotation in 9c indicate that Paul has the Torah in mind rather than Roman law, which would of course be in keeping with his earlier use of the term. Paul affirms again that the new Christian existence in the Spirit fulfils the law (cf. Rom 8.4) because it is an existence lived in love. The new spiritual reality the Christian believers find themselves in cannot be grasped in categories of law or duty but is nevertheless not opposed to what the (Jewish) law and duty command. In our new language: the *counter-intuitive* lifestyle

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52 This is advocated by Friedrich *et al.*, based on their meticulous study of vocabulary (Friedrich, Pöhlmann, Stuhlmacher, 'Historische Situation', 144, 157–9).

53 Cf. W. C. van Unnik, 'Lob und Strafe durch die Obrigkeit: Hellenistisches zu Römer 13, 3–4', *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. E. Earle Ellis and E. Grässer; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975) 334–43.

54 '... the point ... will be that the debt of love, unlike those debts which we can pay up fully and be done with, is an unlimited debt which we can never be done with discharging' (Cranfield, *Romans*, II.674). 'Die Agape ... ist ... ein debitum immortale (Bengel), mit welchem man anders als bei rechtlichen Auflagen niemals fertig wird' (Käsemann, *Römer*, 348).

encapsules the legitimate demand of the *commonsensical* pattern. I think with the majority of scholars that we can read the terms ἕτερος and πλήσιος (v. 8/9) in a broader sense than just as a reference to the fellow believer.[55] What is striking is Paul's description and presentation of love in this context: ἡ ἀγάπη τῷ πλησίον κακὸν οὐκ ἐργάζεται ('love does no wrong to a neighbour', v. 10a). Love seems to be portrayed here as a mere principle of doing no harm.[56] The 'goodness' of the Christian lifestyle is given the shape of 'doing nothing bad'. This seems to be a pale reflection of what Paul says about love elsewhere in Romans.[57] Once again, the example of Christ's self-sacrifice, love's demonstration *par excellence,* does not enter the picture. I suggest that Paul's use of love is complex here: while he clearly starts off using it as the insider term and marking it off from an altogether different ethical key of 'giving one's due', he may well glance back over his shoulder as he proceeds and affirm love as the attitude and ethical stance that fulfils both the Torah and civic obligations. This oscillating between insider and outsider language is in keeping with the overall tone of Romans 12 and 13, especially 12.9–21.[58] Again we notice a certain quality of 'seeping through' or 'spilling over' which is inherent in love. Those who are beloved and love each other in the church will love their neighbours, too, at the very least in the sense that they do not harm them. 'Love does nothing bad

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55 'Die Liebe gilt grundsätzlich jedem Nächsten wie 13, 8–10 zeigt. Doch innerhalb der Gemeinde hat sie als Bruderliebe (φιλαδέλφια) ihren zentralen Ort in der Welt' (Wilckens, *Römer 12–16*, 20). 'Perhaps it would be best to say that Paul has fellow believers particularly in view but not in any exclusive way' (Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 776). Similarly Horrell, *Solidarity*, 253 n. 26. Cranfield furthermore suggests that "[t]he definite article before 'other' is important – it has a generalizing effect" (Cranfield, *Romans* vol. II, 676). Thorsteinsson on the other hand disputes the use of ἀγάπη language for outsiders (cf. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity,* 194–8).

56 Martin Bucer's unease with this peculiar formulation can be sensed in his emphatic comment that 'per non malum facere, intelligit [Paul] benefacere' (Martin Bucer, *Metaphrasis et Enarratio In Epist. D. Pauli Apostoli ad Romanos* (Basel: Petrus Perna, 1562) 577. Spicq wonders if '[a]imer son prochain se limite-t-il à s'abstenir de lui nuire?' (C. Spicq, *Agape dans le Nouveau Testament,* vol. I (Paris: Gabalda, 1985) 264). Lyonnet thinks that this can be explained by the negative form of the commandments or that Paul follows Rabbinic custom of summing up the law in a sort of negative Golden Rule (Lyonnet, 'Charité', 156). Dunn rightly points out that the negative statement in 10a is preceded by a positive one in 9c (Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 780).

57 Sincere love drives the believers to reach out actively to each other and compete in doing good to each other (12.10, 13).

58 Romans 12.15 is a case in point. It sits between a clear 'outsider verse' (14b) and a clear 'insider verse' (16). Should the believers weep with all those who weep or just with Christian mourners? It could well be that Paul has primarily Christians in mind but it would be absurd to claim that a wider application of this verse is to misinterpret Paul (similarly Wilckens, *Römer 12–16*, 23). Even Thorsteinsson admits that 'Paul's discourse in 12.14–21 is somewhat entangled by his rather unsystematic procedure of speaking interchangeably of in-group and out-group relations' (Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity*, 97).

to its neighbour' in that sense may well echo and positively rephrase Paul's warning in 13.4: 'If you do what is bad, be afraid.'[59] I think it is not far fetched, then, to read Romans 13.8–10 as Paul's reassuring affirmation that those who love will fulfil basic human rules of living together peacefully just as they fulfil the righteous commandments of the law.

Does this mean that love is seen as the defining criterion for 'the good' even in the world of politics, as Wilckens and Dunn want it?[60] I think that Paul's proposal is more modest at this stage. Love takes its cue from somewhere other than civil obligations and is played out in a different key altogether, often going far beyond the demands of civic decency.[61] But at the same time love does nothing bad to anybody and is therefore compatible with a broad and basic notion of civic good. More importantly, it renders the ambiguous political authorities unambiguously good for the believers, because believers who are doing no harm to anybody will not clash with them.

The Christian paradigm of love, then, is the greater reality which encloses almost as a 'by-product' good and generally approved behaviour in the civic and political world. In other words, the 'good' and 'bad' as perceived by the political authorities are subsets of the Christian good, which is lived out in love.[62] Paul creates and emphasises a shared space between the eschatological people of God on the one hand and the present structures of the world on the other. This is the big *achievement* of this text. All this is said very much from the perspective of the believers: they are to submit and to do the good in order that the authorities may be truly experienced 'for your good'. This ecclesial focus closes the door to theocratic experiments very firmly.

Paul has carefully chosen the designation of θεοῦ διάκονος for the state representative and not Χριστοῦ διάκονος.[63] After our inquiry I think it likely that θεός does not point subversively to the God and Father of the crucified and

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59 It is in the sense that the κακὸν οὐκ ἐργάζεται reaches back to 13.3 and 4 that I speak of love fulfilling civic obligations. I do not suggest that νόμος refers to Roman law.

60 The model for 'good' is love of neighbour (Dunn, 'Charter', 67): love as 'die christliche Definition des Guten' (Wilckens, *Römer 12–16*, 20).

61 Wilckens sums up this different key beautifully by describing love as '[das] … Tun, in dem alles Böse nicht nur vermieden, sondern überwunden wird (12, 21)' (Wilckens, *Römer 12–16*, 71). But the relationship cannot be inverted: love aims at doing the good, but doing the good is not co-extensive with love and forbidding evil does not necessarily aim at encouraging love. The authorities do not love or protect love. The Christians do not love the authorities (contra Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 781).

62 It is not that easy to bring the Christian group life on the side of the eschaton and keep the authorities on the plane of penultimate realities. Thus, rather than suggesting a bifocal strategy (X – and *also* not-X, but Y) (T. Engberg-Pedersen, 'Paul's Stoicizing Politics in Romans 12–13: The Role of 13.1–10 in the Argument', *JSNT* 29 (2006) 163–172, at 170), Paul seems to call for Y (the group ethos), which includes X (the requirements of the state).

63 But cf. Romans 15.16 (λειτουργὸς Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ) in contrast to 13.6.

risen Lord[64] but to God's abiding activity of charging, judging and condemning what is evil, before and beyond his merciful deeds in Christ.

Whether it could be in the interest of love to support suitable political institutions or resist them for that matter is not in the picture. Even less is there an attempt to let such institutions reflect to some degree the love of God shown in Christ.[65] This on the other hand brings into sharp focus the *limitations* of our passage.

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64 Contra Jewett, *Romans*, 790.

65 For instance, by tempering judgement with mercy or by translating Christian solidarity into a welfare state.