

ROMANS 13 AND THE MARKET ECONOMY  
SUBJECTION, REFLECTION, RESISTANCE: A THREE-DIMENSIONAL PROCESS  
OF EMPOWERMENT

By

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Personal Point of Departure:**

I had reasoned it out in my mind, there was one or two things I had a right to – freedom or death. If I could not have the one, I would have the other, but no man would take me alive. I would fight for my freedom as long as my breath lasted, and when the time come for me to go, the Lord would let them take me. (Harriet Tubman)

Life is replete with revelatory moments. We experience events, meet people, or encounter ideas that transform or clarify our purpose in the world. Lerone Bennet's discussion on Harriet Tubman's life (1820-1913) gave me such an occasion.<sup>1</sup> When asked why she returned to the South some nineteen times, helping more than 300 slaves escape to freedom, Tubman responded with the above quotation. Her words have long intrigued me.

The statement reveals three important aspects of her character that now serve as a paradigm, framing how I comprehend and engage not only the world, but also how I understand the biblical interpretive process. Tubman understood herself and those she rescued as subject to a governing authority, namely the institution of slavery. To “fight” for freedom, first she had to recognize that she was subject. Second, Tubman valued the process of careful examination that leads to a conviction. She “reasoned it out in her mind” that the institution of slavery denied her the dignity warranted by her humanness. After carefully reflecting on the condition she shared with her enslaved cohorts, Tubman became convinced that slavery stood outside the will of God. Third, and finally, as a response to her recognizing her subjection and reflecting upon it, Tubman resisted the

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<sup>1</sup>.Bennett, Lerone Jr. *They Came Before the Mayflower*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984. p. 166.

subjection. She seized her own freedom by escaping from the slave South and then returned repeatedly, leading other slaves to the metaphoric “promised land.”

Tubman’s statement therefore reflects a three-dimensional process of empowerment I define Subjection-Reflection-Resistance. Although the institution of chattel slavery did not end by Tubman’s resistance alone, her subjection-reflection-resistance did prove that slavery was not absolute for either the enslaved or the slave owners. Ultimately, through this process, Tubman envisioned and created a faith reality beyond her slave experience.

### **The Question of Romans 13:1-7**

Let every person be subject to governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God (Romans 13:1-7, NRSV)

Tubman’s three-dimensional response to her slave experience speaks to the interpretive problem of subjection in Romans 13:1-7. Historically, this text, as translated above, has often been employed to advance the social superiority of one group of people over another and (often) to cause the passive acceptance of social inferiority by the disenfranchised group.<sup>2</sup> The current state of historical scholarship on these verses in general and on the question of “governing authorities”<sup>3</sup> in particular varies.

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<sup>2</sup>.See Neil Elliot, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994, 13-19.

<sup>3</sup>.The phrase “governing authorities” is understood by most scholars as the local Roman political authorities or magistrates - see Dunn, 759). However, not all readings of Romans 13:1-7 presume that the “governing authorities” refer to the Roman political authorities or magistrates. For instance, Mark Nanos writes: . . . “Paul’s instructions in 13:1-7 are not concerned with the state, empire, or any other such organization of secular government. His concern is rather to address the obligation of Christians, particularly Christian *Gentiles* associating with the synagogues of Rome for the practice of their new ‘faith,’ to subordinate themselves to the leaders of the synagogues and to the customary ‘rules of behavior’ that had been developed in Diaspora synagogues for defining the appropriate behavior of

For instance, one group of scholars argues that Romans 13:1-7 is best read against the anti-Jewish attitudes in Rome. Mass discontent arose because of hikes in taxation during the reign of Nero (Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.50-51). Rome had recently expelled Jews from the city because of riots at the “instigation of Chrestus” (*Annals*, 15.44); and more threatening, Jews in Rome who were sympathetic with the revolutionary cause in Judea had supposedly expressed anti-Roman sentiments.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Romans 13:1-7 is read as a warning not to participate in Jewish anti-Roman zealotism.

A second group of scholars, best represented by Leander Keck, rejects Romans 13:1-7 as a non-Pauline interpolation into the letter.<sup>5</sup> These verses stand in stark contradiction to Paul’s thought elsewhere in the text and the entire Pauline corpus. Absent here is any sense of estrangement of the world from God (cf. 1:18-23). Also, this passage lacks any sense of the imminent expectation of the end of the age (cf. 13:11-13). Moreover, these verses do not pit “the authorities” against God as are the rulers of 1 Cor. 2:6-8. James Kallas writes, “Paul could not have ascribed such an exalted status to Rome without being not only hypocritical and servile, but untrue to his whole theological position.”<sup>6</sup> Finally, even those scholars who consider the passage authentic often view it

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‘righteous gentiles’ seeking association with Jews and their God. (Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996, 291).

<sup>4</sup>.See David M. Hay and Elizabeth Johnson, eds. *Pauline Theology III: Romans*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. N. T. Wright, “Romans and the Theology of Paul,” 62; W. S. Campbell, “The Rule of Faith in Romans 12:1-15:13,” 281; Mark Reasoner, “The Theology of Romans in 12:1-15:13,” 296.

<sup>5</sup>.See Leander Keck “What Makes Romans Tick?” in *Pauline Theology*, 3-29.

<sup>6</sup>.James Kallas, “Romans XIII,” in NTS 11 (1964-65): 365-74.

as an “alien body in Paul’s exhortation,”<sup>7</sup> too uncertain to support a reconstruction of Paul’s political views.

Still, another set of scholars makes sense of the seeming discrepancies in Paul’s logic by examining the rhetorical effects of the argument. These readings argue that Romans 13:1-7 “has a view toward the universally valid realities . . . a long train of tradition . . . dominated by the idea of divinely established authorities.”<sup>8</sup> However, the rhetoric does not fit the reality. Authorities do not seek to be God’s servants. Paul’s argument is exaggerated and lacks persuasiveness. Therefore, Paul’s statement on subjection and the authorities is viewed as “mere rhetorical commonplaces, meant only to focus the audience’s attention on the discernment of ‘the good,’” and thereby “to keep members of the *ekklesia* from making trouble in the streets.”<sup>9</sup>

While each of these groups avoids reading the passage as an “authoritarian” text, the general problematic nature of the interpretation and application of Paul’s teaching in the modern world remains. Jan Botha raises a series of questions regarding the interpretation of Romans 13:1-7 that historical scholarship fails to address and that are especially relevant to this project:

Does it [Romans 13:1-7] call for obedience to the government on the part of Christians under all circumstances, or does it not? Can it be interpreted in such a way as to leave the door open for Christians to disobey and actively resist the state with a clear conscience? Stated differently, is the intended effect of Romans 13:1-7 conformity or confrontation on the part of its readers in their conduct regarding the authorities?<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>.See Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, Grand Rapids: Eerdsman, 1973, 352. Also see Ernst Bammel, “Romans 13,” in Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule, eds. *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 381.

<sup>8</sup>.Käsemann, *Commentary*, 354-355.

<sup>9</sup>.Elliot, *Liberating Paul*, 223.

<sup>10</sup>.Jan Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*. Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1994, 2.



Botha leaves these questions largely open. However, my dissertation addresses the first two questions directly, arguing that Romans 13:1-7, if read in light of its surrounding verses (12:1-13:14), reads less like a prescriptive demand and more like a call for Roman Christians to acknowledge their social reality in relation to the Roman state that is part of the existence of life in the Christian community. Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) is not necessarily destructive to people overwhelmed by “governing authorities.” Rather, this broader text shifts the emphasis from subjection as a single hermeneutical frame and expands the frame to include subjection-reflection-resistance. Subjection serves as one step of a three-dimensional process which moves between the categories of subjection-reflection- resistance, and empowers those who feel powerless in their relationship to governing authorities.

The phrasing of Botha’s third question: “is **the intended effect** (emphasis mine) of Romans 13:1-7 conformity or confrontation on the part of its readers in their conduct regarding the authorities?” suggests a type of positivistic reading of the text that I reject in my methodological approach. Therefore, it is not my claim that the interpretation I offer of Paul and Romans 13:1-7 is the only plausible reading. In fact, I want to affirm that the interpretive options listed above are legitimate and plausible readings, in the sense that they are based on particular analytical and hermeneutical choices that in each case is a possible way of reading Romans 13:1-7 resulting from selecting certain textual features as most significant and bracketing out other textual features as less significant. As such they still are both interesting and relevant. My reading does not seek to confront or deny the legitimacy and plausibility of these interpretive choices, but to show that there is another legitimate and plausible way of reading this text, which I see as more

helpful for people who are “subjected.” For me the most significant feature of Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) is its resistance literary character – a feature that most other readings overlook -- that moves between the categories of subjection-reflection-resistance. Therefore the analysis I offer centers around a different set of interpretive questions. The classical or traditional questions are only indirectly relevant to my discussion. Yet, as any other interpretation (whether or not it acknowledges it), my study looks to the past and to the present, with a view of Scripture as relevant to the contemporary world. My distinctive interpretive choice reflects my starting point: following Harriet Tubman, I read this text from the perspective of the subjected.

In this light, this dissertation relates Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) to life by using the category of the market economy and accompanying issues of poverty and human development as a contextual bridge. Hence, a second and interrelated thesis of this project argues that Paul’s understanding of **indebtedness** helps Christian believers better assess issues of poverty and human development. Paul’s concept of indebtedness gives contemporary believers access to the historical realities that often shape current realities of economic injustice. Indebtedness language challenges Christian believers, when examining issues of poverty and human development within market economies, to look beyond the charitable dimensions of our actions. Rather, as will be further explained below, Paul’s concept of indebtedness calls us to examine the historical and systematic factors that often generate conditions of poverty and economic injustice and therefore forces each of us to acknowledge our indebtedness to those who are subjected by these indignities (this is Paul’s key concept of “indebted love” as I will discuss at

length). Ultimately, as Christian believers, this is the weight that presses upon our faith and compels us to action.

### **Making Sense of the Text**

In order to demonstrate my theses I read Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) on two intersecting levels. My fundamental approach to reading Romans is Scriptural Criticism, as advanced by Daniel Patte and Cristina Grenholm. On a second level I examine the text as resistance literature through an ideological critical lens.

As recognized by Grenholm and Patte's reading paradigm, Scriptural Criticism,<sup>11</sup> we biblical scholars must assume responsibility for our interpretations by explicitly identifying through critical studies the frames and categories we employ to make sense of the text. Such a task requires that interpreters make clear not only the analytical frame used to ground a reading in textual evidence (that is, their methodology), but also two other frames that critical interpretations usually fail to elucidate: the hermeneutical frame, through which one dialogues with the text -- often explicit in theological commentaries; and the contextual frame, through which one relates life and text -- commonly emphasized by believers and readers in their interpretations and sermons as well as by advocacy interpretations (feminist, womanist, post-colonial, etc.). Scriptural Criticism argues that every biblical interpretation bears these three frames, and biblical interpreters can make them explicit in her or his critical study by comparing their interpretation with those of other interpreters.

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<sup>11</sup>.See Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, eds., *Reading Israel in Romans*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2000, 1-54.

Within this fundamental approach, James C. Scott's model of resistance literature functions as the key to the analytical framework. Scott's study, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*,<sup>12</sup> suggests that in any given political situation where an elite class dominates segments of the population, there exists a public transcript of events managed by the ruling elites and hidden transcripts of the same events produced secretly by the oppressed. Scott defines "public transcript" as a "shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate."<sup>13</sup> Hidden transcript, on the other hand, characterizes "discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders"<sup>14</sup> Produced by the dominant class, public transcript presents "the self-portrait of the elite as they would have themselves seen."<sup>15</sup> Although each group has both a public and hidden transcript, the public transcript produced by the elites serves as the social/cultural ideological norm that conforms to the "flattering self-image of the elite."<sup>16</sup> The oppressed group's survival usually depends on their seeming compliance and obedience to the "onstage" script and political play of the elite, seeking recourse for their interest within the "prevailing ideology without appearing the least seditious."<sup>17</sup> Of course, the hidden transcript of the oppressed offers another form of political discourse, but it is relegated to the "offstage," beyond the purview of the powerholders. Therefore, the oppressed actions "onstage" seems consistently to affirm

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<sup>12</sup>.James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990.

<sup>13</sup>.Scott, *Domination and Arts of Resistance*, 2.

<sup>14</sup>.Scott, *Domination and Arts of Resistance*, 4.

<sup>15</sup>.Scott, *Domination and Arts of Resistance*, 18.

<sup>16</sup>.Scott, *Domination and Arts of Resistance*, 18.

<sup>17</sup>.Scott, *Domination and Arts of Resistance*, 18.

the ideological norm, limiting the hidden transcript of the oppressed to little more than a private venting mechanism. The power of the hidden transcript of the oppressed group, however, is that it is not limited to the “offstage.” Rather the oppressed hidden transcript functions as a “politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors.”<sup>18</sup>

According to Scott, resistance is about acting and speaking in such a way that reflects commitment against conformity to a given subjection. Resistance literature as a framework for reading Romans, especially as presented by Scott’s “hidden transcripts,” allows me to explore in Romans the textual features Paul employs to challenge pockets of social and/or religious authority as absolute. Through Scott’s analysis one sees three characteristics of resistance literature which I call subjection-reflection-resistance. First, Scott suggests that a given historical and contextual reality and a normative social ideology inform the pattern of relating between the elite and oppressed group. In other words, human relationships are, in Louis Althusser’s understanding of ideology, “always already subject” to normative ideas or values which lie at the roots of particular societies. So, the first step in the three-dimensional process of resistance is one’s acknowledgment of her or his subjection (Romans 13:1-7; 1:18-23). The second characteristic of resistance literature found in Scott’s analysis is reflection. Scott argues that resistance texts (created by the oppressed group) discern differently and draw different conclusions of the same events experienced by both them and the elite. Therefore, the goal of reflection is not to end the subjection. Instead, reflection prevents the oppressed from viewing the governing elite (and their interpretation of reality) as an absolute authority by

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<sup>18</sup>.Scott, *Domination and Arts of Resistance*, 18-19.

perceiving the differences between the views of reality held by the elite and the oppressed (Romans 12:2). The final characteristic of resistance literature is resistance. Resistance represents the state of transformation: represents those acts (in words or gestures) that a person or community makes, based on reflection, which place both their minds and bodies beyond the given subjection (Romans 12:1; 13:8-10).

In light of Scriptural Criticism's insistence on examining the pragmatic aspects of the text on readers in their concrete life situations, this project asks what reality today best represents our governing authority, best represents the power(s) to which we are subject? The Roman Empire, under the veil of the *Pax Romana*, represented the "governing authorities" to which Paul referred. However, today, living at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in a situation where the power(s) that govern our lives are arguably more economic than political, this project relates Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) to life by using the category of the market economy as a contextual bridge. Economics, including the way in which money influences the human condition concerned both Paul and the Christian community at Rome. For instance, Romans 12:13 reminds the community to support the needs (*χρεία*) of each other. Romans 13:6 speaks of the Christians' duty to pay taxes (*φόρος*). Romans 13:7 refers to the Christians' responsibility to discharge all debts (*ὀφειλή*), including taxes and other types of revenue (*τέλος*) owed (*ὀφειλω*) to the state or to an individual. Therefore, considering the importance of economics (including finances) to the first-century world of the text, it is reasonable to employ the market economy (in this current age of globalization) as a contextual frame. This contextual frame helps me to recognize as particularly significant the way in which the text integrates economic, political, and social power structures as an ideological construct and

their implications for human relationships. Although Paul raises the issue of finances or economics in his letter to the Romans, the ideological construct under which he lived, his “governing authority,” was represented by the presence and power of the Roman Empire, and its elaborate system of local officials in Rome and the provinces.

### **Always Already Subject: The Flow of the Argument**

Louis Althusser argues that people are “always already subject” to the normative values and ideas that shape and/or lay at the roots of particular societies. In other words, he maintains that people are always already subject to an ideology. For Althusser, ideology is that which is self-evident. But, since it is a “representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence,”<sup>19</sup> that which is self-evident is a construct; it is created through the imagination.

During Paul’s missionary activities, the Roman Empire functioned as the ideology to which he and the communities he sought to proselytize were subject. The ideological construct however, (following Althusser), is not the fact that the Roman Empire possessed power. Rather, the ideological construct is the manner in which the Empire influenced people’s perception of their relationship to the Roman Empire, to Caesar, to other individuals and to groups. The construct is the “imaginary relationship” of domination-subjection which became a real condition of existence of people in the Mediterranean world at that time. The imaginary became reality as people accepted the ideology as a natural ordering of human relations: the imaginary equals the obvious.

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<sup>19</sup>.Louis Althusser. *Essays on Ideology*. London: Verso, 1984, p. 16.

In this light, as I explore Paul's supposed call for Christian "subjection" to civil and state authorities in Romans 13:1-7, I need first to provide a general description both of the world (its ideological underpinnings) which shaped Paul's writings and the contemporary context which shapes my reading of Paul's writings (especially Romans 13:1-7). The first and second chapters of this project offer these respective analyses. The first chapter of this project focuses on the *Pax Romana* as the ideology which shapes the Roman Empire. Framed by Hardt and Negri's understanding of Empire, these discussions offer a general description of the military, religious and social-economic aspects of the Roman Empire and a general description of the logic and values of the market economy. At this juncture, the analysis is not interested in examining the "hidden transcript" or pockets of resistance to how Rome imagined itself in relationship to others. Instead, this chapter seeks to present a view of the Roman Empire as "public transcript," that is, as Rome presented itself to others and therefore the perception to which others necessarily reacted. Similarly, the second chapter examines the market economy as "public transcript" and describes how this ideology shapes how contemporary world citizens perceive our relationship with it and each other.

Chapter three explains the methodological approach used to frame and measure the arguments presented throughout the dissertation. In order to read Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as a text that empowers those who feel overwhelmed and powerless in their relationship to governing authorities, I explore how biblical scholars might imagine this task as a counter-practice to the establishment of an authoritative, comprehensive and universally acceptable understanding of the past. Using the hermeneutical analyses of Hans-Georg Gadamer and James C. Scott, I develop a critique of the traditional ways in



which Romans 13 is and has been studied. Moreover, I construct a methodological approach through which to study the issue of subjection (reflection-resistance) in terms of Paul's text so as to provide a critique of both the historical and contemporary situations as described in the previous two chapters.

In light of the theoretical framework discussed in chapter three, chapter four focuses on examining the question in Romans (particularly Romans 13:1-7): what is Paul's understanding of **subjection** as it relates to how the Christian community at Rome imagine themselves in relationship to the "governing authorities" which are represented by the *Pax Romana*? In addressing Paul's position on **subjection**, especially regarding Romans 13:1-7, both for its historical and textual significance and its current significance for those who may feel overwhelmed in their relationship with "governing authorities," this chapter presents three interrelated claims. First, Romans 13:1-7 must not be understood as merely or primarily a prescriptive demand for how Christians ought to situate themselves in relation to the "governing authorities." Rather, Romans 13:1-7 should primarily be understood as a type of descriptive signal that symbolizes the existing reality impacting on the lives of Christians in Rome – the reality in which the Christians in Rome always already exist. As such, Romans 13:1-7 can be understood as a call for Roman Christians to become *aware*, thus acknowledging their social reality in relation to the Roman state that is part of the existence of life in the Christian community.

This is to say then, as a second claim, that Romans 13:1-7 must not be left in the realm of narrative, but one must also examine its ideological dimensions. The power of ideology is that it appears obvious and is therefore accepted as the norm and the only "interpretive grid" through which persons envision the world. In describing the

worldview and existing reality in which the Christian community at Rome lived, Romans 13:1-7 presents, in Althusser's understanding of the term, an ideological ordering of society where the masses of people: 1) imagine themselves as "subject" to (and by) the governing authorities and 2) accept their subjection to and control by the governing authorities as both natural and absolute. Therefore, the challenge Paul faces in his letter to the Romans, and in Romans 13:1-7 in particular, is one of idolatry where the dominant ideology under which the Christian community at Rome exists has become unrecognizable as a construct because it has been internalized as the natural order of society. Considering this view, the rhetorical significance of Romans 13:1-7 as a descriptive signal is to awaken the Christian community from its ideological sleep so that it is capable of envisioning and living a life different from that advanced by the dominant ideology, which appears natural but is in fact idolatrous.

Finally, Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) and its supposed call for Christian subjection to governing authorities can be read as a type of resistance literature. To understand Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as a type of resistance literature that empowers those who feel powerless in their relationship with governing authorities is to recognize and examine the passage as paraenesis. Paraenesis can be used both to maintain a particular social order as well as to disturb or undermine a particular social order. In the same way James C. Scott argues that a single event, interpreted by different groups of people can be either a public transcript (used to maintain the status quo) or a hidden transcript (used to challenge and critique the status quo), so too can a piece of paraenetic literature be used either to substantiate the ideological claims of the dominant class or to undermine these claims. A careful analysis supports the position that Romans

13:1-7 is paraenetic literature in the order of a hidden transcript whose rhetorical significance is to disturb and undermine the ideological position advanced by the *Pax Romana*.

Chapter five presents the view that Paul goes beyond jolting readers out of an ideological sleep (Romans 13:1-7) and challenges the Christians at Rome to **reflect** upon the situation in which they live. He challenges them to engage in the process of careful examination that leads to the conviction that God dwells both in and beyond their subjection to and by governing authorities. Using Romans 12:1-2 (with other texts focused on Paul's use of the term "discern" (*dokima, zw*), I argue that to discern God's will and therefore manifest the kingdom of God, the community must necessarily envision a reality beyond that defined by a domination-subjection pattern of human relating. Paul's call to reflection on one's subjection is ultimately a call to resist one's subjection as an absolute perspective for imagining how one should appropriately relate to God and others. Ultimately, when read in light of this call **to discern**, Romans 13:1-7 can no longer be understood as a simple command to submit to the order of "this world," to the order of the "governing authorities." Instead, Romans 13:1-7 becomes an invitation to **reflection** — an invitation for people to reflect on their absolute subjection to the normative values of "this world" and the way these values shape how we imagine ourselves in relationship with God, nature and one another.

Finally, framed by Scott's understanding of resistance literature, chapter six argues that Paul offers in Romans 13:8-14 resistance language that denies the absolute authority of the Roman system of authority and (re) defines love as "debt of love" or the voluntary commitment one makes to addressing the physical and spiritual needs of both

self and others. In closing, the chapter analyzes the market economy in light of Paul's call to resist governing authorities as absolute. Using Amartya Sen's understanding of freedom and human development in relation to the market economy, the analysis offers a way of processing poverty and imagining patterns of human relating that moves both within and beyond the popular market analysis models. The chapter offers Paul's "love of neighbor" as a type of indebted love (13:9) for envisioning and creating a reality within and **beyond** our subjection by and to the market economy and the normative consumeristic logic it espouses. Just as Paul's conception of "discernment" allows us to read Romans 13:1-7 as an invitation to reflect on our subjection, Paul's understanding of "debt" and "love," allows us to understand Romans 13:1-7 as an invitation to **resistance** — an invitation to offer acts of resistance (in words, gestures or deeds) against absolute submission to the normative values of "this world" and the way these values shape how we imagine ourselves in relationship with God, nature and one another. Read through the interpretive lens of "subjection-reflection-resistance," Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) is indeed an unsettling text. It presses its weight on us as contemporary readers and forces each of us to acknowledge our indebtedness [to the whole of God's creation] and respond in ways that create an environment where people are enabled to live lives they have reason to value.

## CHAPTER I

### THE CONTEXTUAL FRAME: PAUL'S CONTEXTUAL WORLD – THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND THE *PAX ROMANA*

#### Introduction

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's recent work *Empire*<sup>20</sup> understands and employs the term "empire" as a concept rather than a metaphor. Their focus on the empire as concept helps me to clarify that my analysis is limited in two ways. First, my analysis is comparative. This project seeks to examine the Roman Empire as an ancient "governing authority" in comparison with the market economy as the contemporary "governing authority." Second, the comparison will take place on the level of ideology or concept rather than on the level of metaphor. As such, I do not need to demonstrate the particular resemblances between the market economy and the Roman Empire. In fact, many aspects of the Roman Empire are of no interest to this project because they distract from its objectives. Comparing the Roman Empire and the market economy on an ideological or conceptual level, however, requires a more theoretical approach.

Hardt and Negri's explication of the term empire as a concept characterizes Empire by a lack of boundaries with four characteristics. 1) On a first level, the concept of Empire "posits a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire 'civilized' world . . ." <sup>21</sup> 2) On a second level, Empire presents itself as transcending historical realities, ignoring the historical reality of conquest and the

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<sup>20</sup>.Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. *Empire*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass. 2001.

<sup>21</sup>.Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, xiv.

human dynamics involved in this reality. It is an “order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity. From the perspective of Empire, this is the way things will always be and the way they were always meant to be.”<sup>22</sup> Empire perceives itself as beyond the bounds of history and in a sense always already at the end of history. 3) On a third level, Empire operates at every level of the social world. It not only “manages a territory and a population but also creates the very world it inhabits. It not only regulates human interactions but also seeks directly to rule over human nature. The object of its rule is social life in its entirety. . . .”<sup>23</sup> 4) Finally, Empire always masks itself in peace (perpetual and universal peace outside of history) as it continually solidifies its domination through various forms of violence. Hardt and Negri’s theoretical framing of Empire highlights its ideological nature. Empire equals ideology (following Althusser). The question before us then is: what tools did the Roman Empire employ to create and sustain the domination-subjection relationship between itself and its subjects?

Using Hardt and Negri’s criterion for the concept of Empire, this chapter briefly examines the *Pax Romana* as the overarching “public transcript” of the Roman Empire. Often when one thinks of the Roman Empire, one envisions its vast military force. However, the concept of Empire (even the Roman Empire) as an ideology is not limited to conquest by military might, although this is a real condition of life in this time. The fullness of the power of the Empire as ideology rests in a “pattern of social relations

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<sup>22</sup>.Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, xv.

<sup>23</sup>.Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, xv.

articulated most visibly in political-religious-economic forms.”<sup>24</sup> The works of Klaus Wengst, S. R. F. Price and Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller help us see more clearly how three interrelated features -- Rome’s military might, its imperial cult and the Empire’s patron-client system -- influenced the way people imagined themselves in relationship with each other.

Hardt and Negri’s theoretical framing of Empire invites us to explore in the Roman Empire what James C. Scott would call the “self-portrait of the elite as they would have themselves seen,” the *Pax Romana*. During Paul’s missionary activities, the peace of Rome represented the most decisive and important sign of the time. Peace in the Empire and security on the frontiers defined the overall mental disposition and governing policy emanating from Rome to its subjects. The *Pax Romana* represented the political peace produced and guaranteed by Roman power to territories which expanded from Spain to Syria (the known civilized world in their minds). Klaus Wengst’s work *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*<sup>25</sup> explains the scope of the *Pax Romana*’s influence on the lives of both the people of Rome and its subjects.<sup>26</sup> Wengst, however, is most helpful in illustrating the military aspect of the *Pax Romana* as presented from what he calls, the perspective “from above” – the way in which Rome perceived reality and therefore the reality to which its subjects had to orientate their lives.

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<sup>24</sup>.Richard Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*. (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity International Press, 1997), 12.

<sup>25</sup>. Klaus Wengst. *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*. SCM Press: London. 1987.

<sup>26</sup>. Wengst understands the *Pax Romana* to encompass six interrelated aspects: 1) the military aspect of the *Pax Romana*, 2) the political aspect of the *Pax Romana*, 3) the economic aspect of the *Pax Romana*, 4) the legal aspect of the *Pax Romana*, 5) culture and civilization under the *Pax Romana*, and 6) the religious aspects of the *Pax Romana*.

## **Beyond the Bounds of History: The Absolute Nature of Rome's Military Might**

In line with Hardt and Negri's first, second and fourth characteristics of Empire as a concept, Wengst reviews Rome's presentation of itself as the bringer of peace. This view began to manifest itself most fully during the rule of Augustus (Octavian, 31 BCE-CE 14) whose leadership brought to an end the turmoil of civil war throughout the Empire. In this light, the *Pax Romana* is an extension of the *Pax Augusta* which, according to the emperor himself, was instituted as a result of his successful military operations: "When I returned from Spain and Gaul. . . after successful operations in those provinces, the senate voted in honour of my return the consecration of an altar to '*Pax Augusta*.'"<sup>27</sup> Moreover, according to Wengst, Rome's view of itself as an agent of peace is best presented in the work of Aelius Aristides (CE 117- 185). Aristides maintained that before the rule of the Romans:

"the dregs came to the surface and everything happened through blind chance; but since your appearance confusion and revolt have come to an end. Order has returned everywhere and in everyday life and in the state there is clear light of day. Laws have come into being, and faith has been found at the altars of the gods . . . Cities now gleam in splendour and beauty, and the whole earth is arrayed like a paradise."<sup>28</sup>

Not only did Roman citizens or the Roman elite possess this perspective of Rome as the bringer of peace, but, quoting from two inscriptions, Wengst notes that this perspective was also shared in the provinces:

1) . . . "In the calendrical inscription of Priene, . . . dated 9 BC, Augustus is celebrated as the ruler given by providence 'who brought war to an end and has ordained peace': thus 'for the world, the birthday of the god (viz. The emperor Augustus)' means 'the beginning of his tidings of peace.' 2) In an inscription from Halicarnassus, also in Asia Minor, which among other things celebrates Augustus

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<sup>27</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 8. Wengst is quoting Augustus. *Res Gestae*.

<sup>28</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 8.



as ‘saviour of the whole human race,’ the reason for this is said to be that ‘Land and sea have peace, the cities flourish under a good legal system, in harmony and with an abundance of food, there is an abundance of all good things, people are filled with happy hopes for the future and with delight at the present. . . .’<sup>29</sup>

Although these inscriptions are found in the provinces, Wengst recognizes that they were also commissioned by the elite. They represent a view of Rome necessarily tied with the “authority which goes forth from Rome.” This authority is not grounded in a particular emperor, although the rule of Augustus (Octavian) served as a turning point in solidifying the empire. Rome grounds its authority in the peace it brings; and it is able to bring and sustain peace because of the institution of the principate. Seneca (4- 65) writes about the authority of the emperor, the peace of Rome and the subjection of the people:

For he is the bond by which the commonwealth is united, the breath of life which these many thousands draw, who in their own strength would only be a burden to themselves and the prey of others if the great mind of the empire should be withdrawn. If safe their king, one mind to all, bereft of him, their trust must fall. Such a calamity would be the destruction of the Roman peace, such a calamity would force the fortune of a mighty people to its downfall. Just so long will this people be free from the danger as it shall know how to submit to the rein; but if ever it shall tear away the rein, or shall not suffer it to be replaced if shaken loose by some mishap, then this unity and this fabric of mightiest empire will fly into many parts, and the seed of this city’s rule will be one with the end of her obedience.<sup>30</sup>

Seneca makes clear that it is not a particular emperor that brings peace and prosperity to the empire. Instead, peace and prosperity are secured by a particular type of relationship – one of domination-subjection, where the people willingly submit themselves to the rule of the emperor as an institution.

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<sup>29</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 9.

<sup>30</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 9-10. Wengst is quoting Seneca, *De Clementia*.

The Romans understood this sort of submission as *fides* or faith. *Fides* represented a particular type of moral commitment where the conquered enemy, by entering in a faith relationship with Rome, committed both themselves and the Romans to a definite type of behavior. The Romans, by *fides*, were expected to exhibit a certain level of responsibility and moderation or justice toward the conquered, but only insofar as the conquered peoples, by *fides* recognized the inherent superiority of the Romans. *Fides*, then, implies, an implicit moral obligation to help others, but the obligation presupposes the inferiority of one side. “Fides is always a relation between nonequals. . . being a word of basic inequality, it defined the program of Roman imperialism in international relations.”<sup>31</sup>

### **Peace and Violence: The Paradox of the Pax Romana**

While the *Pax Romana* presents Rome as the bringer of peace, the concept of Empire described above maintains that peace only comes through war or violence. Wengst presents this view in his section on the military aspect of the *Pax Romana*. His thesis warns investigators of the *Pax Romana* that it is a peace “which is the political goal of the Roman emperor and his most senior officials and is brought about and secured by military action through the success of his legions.”<sup>32</sup> He supports this position by first highlighting the symbolic significance of the building of the “altar of the peace of Augustus” on the “Campus of Martius or the field of Mars.” Wengst interprets the building of this altar to represent the dawning of a golden age of peace where wars and

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<sup>31</sup>.Arnaldo Momigliano. *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1987, pp. 74-79. Momigliano also points out that the Romans also worshiped *Fides* in a cold and legalistic manner. *Fides* referred to the restoration of commercial credit and was connected with commercial obligations.

<sup>32</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 11.

distress find their meaning and the goddess *Pax* reigns. At the same time however, Wengst notes that the “significance of the history of violence here lies in the success of the victor . . . The altar of the peace of Augustus was an altar of burnt offering; the fact that it was built on the field of Mars shows that this peace had been won on the battlefield.”<sup>33</sup>

To further establish the ideological connection between war, victory and peace, Wengst examines Roman coinage. Based on evidence from various coins throughout the history of the Roman Empire, Wengst concludes that coins served the ideological purpose of maintaining the domination-subjection relationship between Rome and those it conquered. That is, the coins suggest that the “peace which Rome brings is a victory-peace for the Romans, while for the vanquished it is a peace of subjection.”<sup>34</sup> For instance, on a sestertius of Nero, the connection between war, victory and peace is clearly presented: the emperor is depicted on a triumphal arch facing forward; Victory is standing on the right beside him with a garland and a palm branch, and on the left is *Pax* with cornucopia and staff of peace, somewhat lower down on the ambulatory of the arch on both sides is a legionary soldier, and Mars is in the left niche that can be seen.<sup>35</sup> On coins from the reign of emperor Commodus (180-192) the imagery presents Commodus on a horse with Victoria behind him, crowning him with a garland, a sign of victory in front of him, and below him sitting on the ground a fettered prisoner on whose head the emperor’s horse is putting its left front hoof. Significant here, however, is not simply the way the coins portray the victor, but also the manner in which they portray the defeated.

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<sup>33</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 11.

<sup>34</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 12.

<sup>35</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 12.

For instance, in the above example, the defeated is presented clearly in a subordinate position. The sestertius of Titus (79-81) portrays a mourning Jewish woman sitting with her back against a palm tree. To the right of the woman, a Jewish man stands as a prisoner of war, his hands tied behind his back as he stares at the mourning woman.<sup>36</sup> In this light, coins served as more than tools for common exchange; they also influenced the people's perception of their relationship with the Roman Empire by functioning as a constant reminder and advocate of the domination-subjection relationship advanced by the *Pax Romana* gained through war and violence.<sup>37</sup>

The final point Wengst makes in his analysis regarding the military aspect of the *Pax Romana* concerns the Roman citizen's self-awareness, that is, how the Romans understood their purpose in the world. Wengst maintains that behind every Roman military campaign lied the conviction that Caesar and Romans were 'born to rule.' The strength of this conviction rested in its construction as the will of divine fate: "When Aeneas has been taken by the Sibyl of Cumae to the underworld after landing in Italy, Virgil makes Anchises tell him — 'Remember, O Roman, to rule the nations with your power – there shall be your arts – to crown peace with law, to spare the humbled and to tame in war the proud.'"<sup>38</sup> This self-awareness is further supported by Aelius Aristides when he writes: "Since from the very beginning you (the Romans) were born free and in

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<sup>36</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 12.

<sup>37</sup>.For more on Roman coins see G. M. Paul, *Roman Coins and Public Life Under Empire*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.; R. A. G. Carson, *Coins of the Roman Empire*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.; Laura Breglia, *Roman Imperial Coins: Their Art and Technique*. New York: F. A. Praeger, 1968.

<sup>38</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 14. Wengst is quoting Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 851-853. ( Translated by H. Ruston Fairclough, LCL, 1918.

a sense directly to rule. . . .”<sup>39</sup> Jewish historian Josephus notes in *Jewish Wars* that Titus also appeals to Roman self-awareness as he addressed his cavalry before the attack on the city of Tarichaea: “Romans! For it is right for me to put you in mind of what nation you are, in the beginning of my speech, that so you may not be ignorant of who you are, and who they are against whom we are going to fight. For as to us, Romans, no part of the habitable earth has been able to escape our hands hitherto . . . and a sad thing it would be for us to grow weary under good success.”<sup>40</sup> This notion of Roman superiority dismisses the significance and power of the motives for fighting held by their opponents, as again made clear by Titus in his speech to his soldiers: “Your fighting is to be on greater motives than those of the Jews; for although they run the hazard of war for liberty, and for their country, yet what can be a greater motive to us than glory? And that it may never be said that after we have got dominion over the habitable earth, the Jews are able to confront us as equals.”<sup>41</sup> According to the logic espoused by Titus to his soldiers, the motivation to liberate oneself and one’s land from oppression and occupation necessarily pales in comparison to the Roman motivation for glory which is ultimately grounded in their will to create and sustain the domination-subjection relationship between them and their subjects. In their minds, this reality is their fate, it represents the will of the gods.

Yet, as Althusser explains and Wengst points out regarding the domination-subjection relationship between Rome and its opponents, no ideology is complete without

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<sup>39</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 14. Wengst is quoting Aristides, *Eulogy of Rome*.

<sup>40</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and Peace of Jesus Christ*, 14. Wengst is quoting Josephus, *Jewish Wars* III, 427f. (Translated by H. St J. Thackeray, LCL, 1927-28).

<sup>41</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*, 15. Wengst is quoting Josephus, *Jewish Wars* III, 480. (Translated by H. St J. Thackeray, LCL, 1927-28).

its recognition on the side of both the victor and those whom they conquer. Again, Josephus helps clarify this point when at the siege of Jerusalem he states to the defenders:

Men may well enough grudge at the dishonour of owning ignoble masters over them, but ought not to do so to those who have all things under their command: for what part of the world is there that has escaped the Romans, unless it be such as are no use because of their heat or cold? And it is evident that fortune has gone over to them on all sides, and that God, when he had gone round the nations with this dominion, is now settled in Italy. That moreover, it is a strong and fixed law, even among brute beasts, as well as among men, to yield to those who are too strong for them; and to suffer those to have the dominion, who are too hard for the rest in war.<sup>42</sup>

Like the Roman writer Virgil, Josephus attributes Roman superiority to the will of the gods/God. Therefore, the Jewish rebels were waging war not only against the Romans but also against God (compare Romans 13.1-7).

### **The Creation of Society: The Religio-Cultural Aspects of the *Pax Romana***

While the military aspect represents the most obvious form of power within the *Pax Romana*, several other features comprise the structural integrity of this ideological system. Hardt and Negri argue, in their third characteristic for Empire as a concept, that Empire seeks to rule life in its entirety by operating on every level of the social world -- it regulates human interactions and in many ways rules over human nature. This characteristic echoes the conclusions drawn by recent historical, archaeological and biblical scholarship which maintains that for one to fully appreciate the power wielded by the *Pax Romana*, one must move beyond understanding the Roman empire's capacity for domination solely in military and administrative terms. Instead, as Richard Horsley argues, the power of the Roman empire "was apparently more of a pattern of social

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<sup>42</sup>.Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*, 15. Wengst is quoting Josephus, *Jewish Wars*. V, 366f. (Translated by H. St J. Thackeray, LCL, 1930).

relations articulated most visibly in . . . political-religious forms.”<sup>43</sup> He further adds that when exploring the concept of power in the Roman empire, one should conceive power “in relational terms, less as a force possessed by the rulers with which to threaten (to enforce their will upon) the ruled than a complex and often subtle set of relations by which the interactions of society are structured.”<sup>44</sup> In this light, the principal conditions of Paul’s mission “were constituted by the combination of emperor cult and patronage networks in Greece and Asia Minor.”<sup>45</sup> The following sections highlight the works of S. R. F. Price and Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller as they offer a socio-historical and ideological analysis of the role and function of the imperial cult and the patronage system within the life of the *Pax Romana*.

The emperor cult (or imperial cult), the association of the emperor with the gods (perceiving Caesar as divine), and its connection to the political realm of the Roman empire are best explained by examining the role ritual plays in maintaining the domination-subjection relationship between Rome and those it conquered. Rituals, according to S. R. F. Price, provide a significant source for exploring the imperial cult, not because it reveals a positivistic knowledge regarding what an individual “really” believed about the emperor and his relationship to the gods. Instead, rituals represent and describe a “public cognitive system.”<sup>46</sup> Rituals represent (on one level) what I call

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<sup>43</sup>.Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 13.

<sup>44</sup>.Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 13.

<sup>45</sup>.Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 13.

<sup>46</sup>.S. R. F. Price, “Rituals and Power” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Imperial Society* ( ed. Richard Horsley. Trinity International Press: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1997), 50. Also, for a more in depth discussion on the role of rituals in ancient society see Price’s *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1984.)

subjection -- the world into which individuals are born, and therefore the social system to which individuals react. Price explains it as such: “. . . Individuals are born into a society which already contains sets of institutions, practices and a common language, from which individuals construct the world and themselves. Thus with the imperial cult the processions and the sacrifices, the temples and the images fill our sources. They are the crucially important collective constructs to which the individual reacted. . . .”<sup>47</sup>

With this basis, Price argues that rituals enabled those subjected by Rome to make sense of their oppression by representing the “emperor to themselves in the familiar terms of divine power.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, one sees in a subject community’s religious festivals (as ritual) and in civic space (as ritual) a representation of the city’s attempt to find a position for the ruler and to a large degree, align themselves with the power and prestige associated with the ruler. On the latter issue of alliance, Price, when describing the long-term vitality of the imperial cult within local communities in Asia Minor, argues that inherent in the cult was the capacity to “exploit the competitive values of the urban elite.” Although the local counsel and general citizenry established and supported the imperial cult, the gifts of prominent individual citizens naturally enhanced the imperial cult’s administrative fund. For instance, Price describes an imperial festival at Chios where the Caesar was celebrated every four years on the income donated by a prominent citizen. As Price further explains, such a gift assured a continuing prestige of the citizen by the inclusion of his decedents in the procession at the festival.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 51.

<sup>48</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 71.

<sup>49</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 55.



Moreover, imperial priests came from prominent citizens which afforded them a privileged position in the assembly as well as eponymous honors. However, in most instances, such positions were obtained and/or lost based on performing an extraordinary act of generosity.<sup>50</sup> This competitive nature of individual urban elites, as expressed through the imperial cult, was also evident in the pressure of competition amongst cities. Individual cities within the provinces experienced the seduction of prestige that came with honoring the imperial cult. Price writes: “With the provincial cults the rivalry between cities was almost unbounded. The decision as to which city should be the site for an imperial temple, and hence for a regular imperial festival, naturally involved the elaborate ranking of the claims of individual cities.”<sup>51</sup>

Ritual as an expression of the imperial cult is best evidenced in the imperial festivals which, according to Price, formed the essential framework of the imperial cult. These ceremonies enlivened the vague ideas (collective representations) concerning the emperor. “It is in some sort of ceremonial form . . . that the moods and motivations which sacred symbols induce in men and the general conceptions of the order of existence which they formulate for men meet and reinforce one another.”<sup>52</sup> Festivals were celebrated on occasions ranging from the accession of a new emperor or the receipt of good news about the emperor to adapting a traditional festival in honor of the chief local deity to the honor of the emperor alone in local competitions in athletics or music. The celebration of the emperor even affected the construction of time and space. For instance:

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<sup>50</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 56.

<sup>51</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 56.

<sup>52</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 57.

. . . The years were distinguished in some cities no longer by the holders of the old magistracies but by the names of the annual imperial priests. Within the year time was divided by months, some of which acquired imperial names such as ‘Kaisarios’ or ‘Tiberios,’ perhaps to mark the celebration of an imperial festival. A more radical change was the transformation of the calendar of the province of Asia under Augustus. The old luni-solar Macedonian calendar was replaced by a more convenient calendar based on a new Julian system, but the motivation for the change was not so much efficiency as to provide a way of honoring Augustus. Whereas the old year had begun at a point determined by the sun, the autumnal equinox, the new calendar was to commence on Augustus’s birthday, September 23, which ‘we could justly hold to be equivalent to the beginning of all things. . .’<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, the reconstruction of civic space provided the most vivid picture of the integration of the imperial cult within the institutions of the city. In Ephesus, for example, the whole upper square was redesigned during the reign of Augustus with buildings honoring him, Artemis and Tiberius. Toward the end of the first century, in the same square, another imperial temple was built to honor Domitian. Also, a special imperial space was built in porticoes on the main square of the cities containing shrines that could be used for cult purposes.<sup>54</sup>

As we can see, the imperial cult and the rituals which represent its embodiment play a central role in the everyday life of the people as it shapes the world in which they exist. However, equally important in a discussion on rituals, especially on how they informed the society governed by the Roman empire, is an investigation on the sacred nature of the king and his political power. Rituals had considerable importance in conceptualizing the political actions of the emperor. Religion was not simply a gloss on politics, but both “diplomacy (political administration) and the imperial cult were ways of

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<sup>53</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 59.

<sup>54</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 62.

constructing the emperor, and religious language was used in both contexts.”<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, the significance of the imperial cult is dependent on its relationship both to the religious and political systems. For example, Price points out instances where imperial priests served as diplomats as well as instances, during the Roman period, where religious language was used in political and diplomatic contexts. Political texts often referred to emperors as gods. For instance, one Greek political text refers to the manner in which Emperor Gaius interacted with client kingdoms: he is called “a great god.”<sup>56</sup> It was customary for Greeks to use divine language in both their diplomatic approaches to the emperor and in response to his political actions. As Price notes, the imperial cult and politics are intricately intertwined in the life of the Roman empire because each represents a systematic way of constructing power. The imperial cult created a relationship of power between subject and ruler, between local elites over the populace and cities over other cities. Yet, still following Price, power was not merely force or a sense of fear of the emperor’s violence. Rather the term power designates “complex strategic situations.”<sup>57</sup> Power has to do with how people imagine themselves in relationship with one another. That is, power is relational: “power relationships between A and B exists when B complies with A’s wishes on a matter where there is a conflict of values or plans as a result of calculation of the consequences of non-compliance.”<sup>58</sup> Power must be understood as both relational and compliant and not always having to do

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<sup>55</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 66.

<sup>56</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 69.

<sup>57</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 68.

<sup>58</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 67.

with force.<sup>59</sup> In this light, as the common thread in a tapestry of power, the “imperial cult stabilized the religious order of the world . . . the symbolism evoked a picture of the relationship between the emperor and the gods. The ritual was also structuring; it imposed a definition of the world. The imperial cult, along with politics and diplomacy, constructed the reality of the Roman empire.”<sup>60</sup> With Price, we can conclude that the force of Rome’s military might did indeed influence Rome’s power over its subjects, the imperial cult, as a way of organizing society and negotiating human relationships, was also a viable and defining power within the Roman Empire.

### **Defining Human Nature: The Patronage System and the *Pax Romana***

Thus far in our analysis we have discussed how the *Pax Romana* essentially promoted a domination-subjection relationship between Rome and subject societies, through its military conquests and the imperial cult. In this final section on Paul’s contextual world, I would like to briefly examine the patronage system as a third type of socialization structure within the Roman Empire. I will examine how the patronage system exemplifies the domination-subjection relationship established by the *Pax Romana*. Horsley suggests that patronage represented a system both of social control and of social cohesion -- which held together the interests of Roman society and the disparate people of the Roman empire.<sup>61</sup> Defined as an asymmetrical exchange relationship

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<sup>59</sup>.In agreement with several social scientist (Geertz and Foucault), Price draws a distinction between force and power. Force connotes a situation that is non-compliant, non-relational and non-rational. Religion, for instance, may not concern itself with force, but it is always concerned with power—with establishing and organizing people in relationship with the each other and in the case of the imperial cult, people in relationship with the emperor. (See Price in Horsley, 67-68).

<sup>60</sup>.Price, “Rituals and Power,” 71.

<sup>61</sup>.Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 91. Here Horsley relies on the work of a comparative studies scholar, Alex Weingrod, “Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties,” in Steffen W. Schmidt et al., eds., *Friends*,

between unequal parties where one party controls the resources and therefore holds power and status over the other, patron-client relations arise where “authority is dispersed and state activity limited in scope, and in which considerable separation exist between the levels of village, city, and state.”<sup>62</sup> The parties are bound together primarily because their association can serve their mutual interest through the exchange of resources. Yet, as Andrew Wallace-Hadrill argues, the exchange of resources moved from the ruling nobility, priests, magistrates, judges, legal counsel, and generals who assured their status and control by possessing both the power to refuse as well as the readiness to deliver the goods needed and/or wanted by the larger society.<sup>63</sup> The patronage relationship, like the logic underlining Roman military conquests described above, was grounded in the basic Roman values of honor and prestige. However here, honor and prestige are derived from the power to provide for the needs and/or wants of others. Garnsey and Saller’s “Patronal Power Relations”<sup>64</sup> help us better envision the strategic function of patron-client relations and how the patronage system sustained the domination-subjection relationship inherent in the *Pax Romana*.

Garnsey and Saller ground their argument in Seneca’s *On Benefits* where he concludes that the exchange of favors and services “most especially binds together

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*Followers, Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 325.

<sup>62</sup>.Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 88.

<sup>63</sup>.Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Patronage in Roman Society: From Republic to Empire,” *Patronage in Society* (London: Routledge, 1989), 73.

<sup>64</sup>.Peter Garnsey, and Richard Saller, “Patronal Power Relations” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. Richard Horsley; Trinity Press International: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania), 96-103. Also, for a more in depth analysis of Patronal Relations see Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller’s *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1987.

human society.” Roman society, according to Seneca, finds its fullest expression in one man’s offering of a favor and the recipient, in turn, responds with gratitude and a sense of indebtedness. Failure to uphold this ethical precept represents, for Seneca, the highest form of social deviance: “Homicides, tyrants, traitors there always will be; but worse than all these is the crime of ingratitude”<sup>65</sup> As inferred in the definition, the patron-client relationship reflected matters of honor and therefore helped shape the social standings of those involved. Hence, if a man turned to another for services, the proper conduct of the recipient was not only to acknowledge, but also to advertise his benefactor’s generosity and power. In doing so, the recipient also acknowledges and advertises his benefactor’s superior status over his inferior status in society. Ultimately, the exchange system created a vertical stratification in human interactions and patterns of relating. The relevant question however is: is this pattern of relating necessary or can a more reciprocal pattern of human relating be established?

The patronage ideology reached every level of society, beginning with the concept of the emperor as patron. Augustus established the legitimacy of his rule largely through the traditional modes of patronage, wherein, he showered the Roman people with his benefits and services. For instance, Augustus distributed his benefits individually to those in proximity to him (friends, family, servants in his household), by offering them offices, honors, financial assistance, citizenship, etc. At the same time, he also extended benefits to the masses of the Roman people. Augustus built paved roads free of bandits; Augustus established sea lanes free of pirates; Augustus linked conquered cities with a common culture and economic stability. Recipients could never repay the emperor for

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<sup>65</sup>.Garnsey and Saller, “Patronal Power Relations,” 96. Garnsey and Saller quote Seneca (*Ben. 1.10.4*)

his contributions to the betterment of their lives. Therefore, in return, they offered deference, respect and loyalty. Augustus provided the ideological paradigm and the following emperors imitated it in their relating with the populace. “Consequently, as Seneca pointed out, the emperor who played the role of a great patron well had no need of guards because he was protected by his ‘benefits.’”<sup>66</sup>

However, the strength of the patronage ideology extended beyond the patronage of the emperor. Emperors encouraged and supported patronage networks of the aristocratic houses in Rome and the provinces. Garnsey and Saller highlight instances where, for instance, the letters of Pliny which show emperor Trajan (98-117) granting offices and citizenship at Pliny’s request, thereby bolstering Pliny’s status as an effective benefactor.<sup>67</sup> In the provinces, governors and other officials representing imperial power possessed patronage authority. The authors list several examples from North African inscriptions describing governors securing from the emperor citizenship, offices and honors on behalf of the provincials.<sup>68</sup>

On a more interesting note, Garnsey and Saller point out the common Roman practice of patronage within government, explaining how it was customary for lawyers or other government officials to pay “tribute” to governors in exchange for administrative and legal decisions in their favor. However, this practice was not considered dishonorable or corrupt, but simply a way of interacting in a society grounded in the patronage ideology. Finally, one’s moral disposition was characterized by active

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<sup>66</sup>.Garnsey and Saller, “Patronal Power Relations,” 97.

<sup>67</sup>.Garnsey and Saller, “Patronal Power Relations,” 99.

<sup>68</sup>.Garnsey and Saller, “Patronal Power Relations,” 100. Garnsey and Saller quote (Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.55) also see Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 1270-79.

participation within the patron-client relationship. Tacitus describes it best in his division of the common citizens of Rome into good and bad. “Tacitus describes the former by their attachment to the great houses – an implicit commitment to the social order as it was.”<sup>69</sup>

In the end, the patron-client relationship served as a means of easing the tensions caused by social inequalities by portraying social benevolence as an honorable characteristic for the elite citizens or representative of Roman authority while presenting personal indebtedness as an equally honorable characteristic for the poor citizens and conquered masses of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire as a representative of the concept of empire not only defined the world in which human beings lived, it defined human nature. One was either a benefactor or a recipient, a patron or a client.

### **In Summation**

This chapter offered a general reconstruction of three essential features of the *Pax Romana*. The analysis was in no way exhaustive, but attempted to offer a sweeping perception of how the Roman Empire viewed itself and therefore the view to which others necessarily responded. Characterized by an intricately connected web of military prowess, religious blurring between the human and divine realms, and a highly sophisticated socio-economic class stratification, Rome imagined and presented itself as the *Pax Romana*. Ultimately, the *Pax Romana*, centered in the emperor as an institution, presented itself as the total and absolute organizer and sustainer of human social relations as well as human-divine encounters. The *Pax Romana* (in all its manifestations), the political reality structured by the Roman Empire, represented the “governing authorities”

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<sup>69</sup>.Garnsey and Saller, “Patronal Power Relations,” 100.



to which Paul referred in his letter to the Christian community in Rome (Romans 13:1). A primary question we will address in the following chapters is: in Romans, how does Paul suggest the Christian community must imagine itself in relationship with the Roman Empire? Yet, our analysis is not simply an historical inquiry. We are also interested in how Paul's writings on Christians' relationship to "governing authorities" are relevant for Christian communities today. This interest necessarily shapes our comments on Rome as Empire, our readings of Romans and of what Paul says regarding "governing authorities." Hence, for the present day readers of Paul's letter to the Romans, the question is: what is the empire, the dominant ideological system in which we participate, whether consciously or unconsciously, and read Paul's letter to the Christian community in Rome?

## CHAPTER II

### THE CONTEXTUAL FRAME: TOTAL AND ABSOLUTE -- THE MARKET ECONOMY AND GLOBALIZATION

#### Introduction

These are challenging and overwhelming times for many of the world's citizens. Paul's letter to the Christian community at Rome encourages contemporary readers to acknowledge this sense of powerlessness and to think and act against the injustices by which so many people are subjected. The promises of "freedom" that are fundamental to the logic of the market economy must not occur as a privilege to the few but as the rights of all.<sup>70</sup> In the most simple but unrealistic view about how the market works, but nonetheless a view that factors heavily into both domestic and foreign policy discussions, the market economy is understood to advance and secure at least five types of freedom: 1) the freedom to consume; 2) the freedom of the seller and the producer; 3) freedom from government interference; 4) the freedom to secure lower costs; 5) the promotion of democracy. However, the market doctrine, with its emphasis on "freedom" carries deep contradictions because it fails to consider the power of external influence in the production and exchange of goods between buyers and sellers who agree to the transaction. Even Adam Smith, regarded as the father of modern economics and credited with "institutionalizing" self-interest as the sole motivator for mutually beneficial exchange,<sup>71</sup> understood that when dealing with issues such as distribution and equity and

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<sup>70</sup>.Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*. Anchor Books: New York, 1999, 142-143.

<sup>71</sup>.Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations*. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1970. pg. 119. The most popular assumption posited by the market economy (as commonly interpreted today) involves

ways of measuring economic efficiency, broader motivations were needed -- “humanity, generosity, and public spirit, are the qualities most useful to others.”<sup>72</sup> There are human and natural needs that cannot be measured by a “cost-benefit analysis”<sup>73</sup> and human oppressions (lack of freedoms) that are not only sustained but also caused by an uncritical and positivistic application of market doctrines.

Consider for example, the argument that the market economy grants individuals the freedom to consume. This is fine, but the analysis is too narrow. The freedom to consume presupposes one has the money to buy those things she needs or desires. “Under the rules of the market, need without effective demand (i.e. the purchasing power of money) is not recognized. It counts for nothing. Need with no money to back it has no reality or value for the market . . . The ‘freedom of the consumer’ in the market, is really only the freedom of those who have enough money to demand what they need or want.”<sup>74</sup> The question begs: under the rules of the market, do those without the money to purchase the things they need have the right or freedom to live?

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behavioral motivations. Following Adam Smith’s proclamation in 1776: “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, and the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard for their own self-interest,” market economy theory argues that human beings naturally pursue the goal of rationally maximizing their individual well-being by seeking the most satisfying products at the best available price. The key assumption here is that everyone acts to maximize their own self-interest and by doing so all will eventually benefit. That is, “freely acting, inquisitive individuals will eventually, though not intentionally, work out the best solution for production and consumption in society.” This market mechanism of supply and demand, stirred by the individualist spirit, works under the guidance and authority of what Smith calls “the invisible hand.” That human beings are self-interested is how that which is divine uses each person to better humanity as a whole.

<sup>72</sup>.Smith, Adam, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, (edt. Knud Haakonssen). New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 189.

<sup>73</sup>.Cost-benefit analysis projects the costs of a particular project and compares them to the projected benefits to discern if the project is worth doing.

<sup>74</sup>.McMurtry, John. “The Contradictions of the Market Doctrine: Is There a Solution?” *Journal of Business Ethics*. 16: 1997. 646.

The market economy also guarantees consumers the reduction of costs on production and distribution. In a market economy producers and sellers must compete to produce and sell their goods at the lowest price, thereby ensuring lowering costs for consumers. Again, competition as a means for reducing cost is a fine concept. The problem with this argument is that “it looks only to lower costs for the consumers, not to the way these lower costs are achieved.”<sup>75</sup> For instance, private businesses can lower their costs by avoiding or eliminating pollution control, minimum wages, workers’ benefits, health and safety standards, etc. The highly controversial NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) is an example of how businesses promote lower costs at the expense of the environment and human integrity. New trade laws established by NAFTA have encouraged the trend of major companies relocating to areas where they are not required to pay the costs of protecting human life and the environment. For instance, many private corporations move to the Maquiladora Zone “where wages are a small fraction of what they are in Canada or the U.S., effective pollution controls are non-existent and taxes for public health and education have been reduced or abolished.”<sup>76</sup> Moreover, under the rules of the international market, the obvious consequence of companies relocating is that unemployment increases in the home country and lowers the price of labor. Ultimately, lower costs to private businesses results in lower wages paid to employees.<sup>77</sup> So, while consumer goods may become less expensive, though this is by no means assured, “the shared goods of life such as our air and water, social conditions,

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<sup>75</sup>.McMurtry, “The Contradictions of the Market Doctrine,” 658.

<sup>76</sup>.McMurtry, “The Contradictions of the Market Doctrine,” 658.

<sup>77</sup>.See Friedman, *The World is Flat* for a discussion on the expansion of global labor, as it relates to Asia and India and its impact on wages and job loss in America.

mutual security and cultural diversity deteriorate, with no limit in market doctrine to their decline.”<sup>78</sup>

Critics counter this position by suggesting:

. . . Foreign direct investment in the third world is known to be one of the best spurs to economic development: just look at China. Even when wages and other terms offered to local workers are much less generous than those offered to their western counterparts, they are typically much better than the local economy can provide, which is why jobs with foreign multinationals are nearly always in great demand in poor countries . . . Attitudes that discourage such investments by making it less profitable, or by exposing companies that have made such investments to ridicule or censure, undoubtedly hold poor countries back. They also keep in poverty the very workers who would otherwise have got those jobs . . . .<sup>79</sup>

However, Noble Prize economist Amartya Sen notes about such attitudes on poverty and human development, attitudes he considers dominant in many policy circles: ‘human development’ (as the process of expanding education, health care and other conditions of human life) . . . is really a kind of luxury that only richer countries can afford.”<sup>80</sup> But, China and other East Asian economies’ “success” with market-oriented economies, notes Sen, is not simply or primarily the result of direct foreign investors offering jobs with no consideration for the well-being of the human being or the environment. Instead, argues Sen, the Chinese (and Japanese) enhanced “economic growth through social opportunity, especially in basic education . . . These economies went comparatively early for massive

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<sup>78</sup>.McMurtry, “The Contradictions of the Market Doctrine,” 649. These same concerns are highlighted in the recent free-trade pact (CAFTA) President Bush (United States) signed on August 2, 2005 with five Central American nations and the Dominican Republic. For instance, Bush argued that the measure would advance peace and prosperity throughout the region. The opponents of the agreement argue that free trade agreements negotiated by both the Clinton and Bush administrations prompted the flight of American jobs overseas and that the labor rights provisions in CAFTA are too weak to protect workers in impoverished Central American countries from exploitation.

<sup>79</sup>.Economist, “Survey of Corporate Responsibility,” 9, January 22, 2005.

<sup>80</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 41.

expansion of education, and later also of health care, and this they did, in many cases, **before** they broke the restraints of general poverty. And they have reaped as they have sown.”<sup>81</sup>

The difference in the two approaches on assessing and combating poverty is obvious. The first position advocates broadening the freedoms of companies and therefore enabling them to create larger monetary profits (with little regard for issues beyond profit margins) in order to combat poverty and secure a better life for people. Sen’s approach, however, suggests that issues of poverty and human development are better addressed by first expanding the elementary freedoms or social opportunities (public education, health care, free and energetic press, etc.) which can in turn “contribute both to economic development and the reduction in mortality rates.”<sup>82</sup>

The point here is that the tools for effectively combating poverty and to securing a viable existence for the world’s citizens cannot be limited to market arrangements with its emphasis on the maximization of monetary profits. The United States, for instance, is headed down a very dangerous path, if in this age of globalization, we focus more on creating an elitist class for quality primary and higher education while neglecting the public (massive) education of our citizens; we will not have the creative brain-power to compete in the labor market with the wave of intellectual competence being produced in Asia and India. If we leave the health care of our citizens to market forces alone, in this age of globalization, we will create an environment too unhealthy and preoccupied with

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<sup>81</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 41.

<sup>82</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 41.

“sickness” to compete and share in the productive efforts to create a more perfect world.<sup>83</sup>

Therefore, as I will argue throughout this project, Paul understands that the Christ-event invites believers to protect human life, to create an environment that values human health and the natural world around us, and to ensure just treatment of poor and rich. These imperatives are not sold in the market. In fact, as Ackerman and Heinzerling remind us in their recent book *Priceless*, they are priceless and we sometimes can “make very good decisions without benefit of intricate economic analysis, and even without noticeable attention to market mechanisms.”<sup>84</sup> We **can** and we **must**, move both within and beyond the market economy in order to discern the will of God and create a world committed to the mutual upbuilding of its citizens.

In this light, the remainder of the chapter offers an overview of the market economy, what I understand as the “governing authorities” functioning as Empire - ideology in our contemporary world. Whereas the previous chapter focused on the totalizing ideological world that framed Paul’s letter to the Christian community at Rome (especially 13:1-7 in 12:1-13:14), the following discussion will focus on the totalizing ideological world that shapes today’s readers of Romans. That is, it will discuss the market economy as empire in the sense of Hardt and Negri’s understanding of empire as a concept.<sup>85</sup> This section argues that the market economy presents itself as an absolute

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<sup>83</sup>.For an interesting description on the social and economic problems that arise if a nation neglects to adequately provide these basic freedoms for its citizens (in this phase of globalization) see Thomas Friedman’s *The World is Flat*, chapters 5-8.

<sup>84</sup>.Frank Ackerman & Lisa Heinzerling, *Priceless: On Knowing the Price of Everything and the Value of Nothing*. New Press: New York and London, 2004, 206-207.

<sup>85</sup>.Hardt and Negri do not name the market economy as empire, but as a part of empire. Thus my analysis departs from theirs on this central point.

reality by which all social arrangements must be organized. The analysis seeks in no way to be exhaustive, but offers a sweeping commentary on how the market economy presents itself (public transcript) and therefore imagines itself in relationship with the “world.” The discussion is not intended to present how particular individuals believe themselves to be in relationship with the market economy. Instead, the point is to present the market economy as a “public cognitive system” which represents the social system to which individuals must react.<sup>86</sup> As with our discussion on the *Pax Romana*, the objective is to present market economy in its own terms: What does the market economic model claim about itself?

Before proceeding, it is important to reemphasize that following Hardt and Negri, we are not referring to Empire as a metaphor but as a concept. Therefore we are not interested in demonstrating the resemblances between what I consider today’s “governing authorities” and the governing authorities of the past (namely, for this project – Rome). Instead, we are primarily interested in presenting a conceptual analysis of the market economy in an age of globalization within the theoretical parameters posited by Hardt and Negri. As such, I organize the remainder of the analysis around Hardt and Negri’s several characteristics of Empire and show how each of these is manifested today by the market economy. That is, I claim that: 1) the market economy presents itself as beyond the bounds of history; 2) this current phase of globalization allows the market economy to penetrate national boundaries and therefore extend its influence and rule throughout the world; 3) the logic of the market economy defines human nature and consequently reaches into every aspect of human existence; and 4) the market economy

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<sup>86</sup>.Horsley, Richard A. ed. *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1997). p. 50.



presents itself as the bringer of peace and stability, yet is ultimately framed by various forms of violence.

### **Beyond the Bounds of History: The Absolute Nature of the Market Economy**

Having briefly outlined a few of the general assumptions associated with the market economy and its inherent contradictions (and I will discuss more below), let us now examine how the market economy currently functions as empire (as concept). Our first objective is to call to consciousness the absolute authority the market economy possesses over our lives. We are subject to it and subjected by it. That is, in our current reality, market economy functions as the ethos of our social and economic context throughout the world. Whether actively or passively, voluntarily or involuntarily we are “subject” to its rules and demands. Since 1989, and the fall of the USSR and communism, the market economy reigns as what appears to be the absolute system of maintenance in which the world functions. Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man*<sup>87</sup> wrestles with the question: has the end of the Cold War and the triumph of market capitalism as the most effective way to organize a society, signaled that humanity has reached the fullness of its destiny – that the way things are is the way they were always meant to be? Fukayama leaves this question open and scholars differ on whether or not the neo-classical model of the market is most appropriate for the maintenance of human and natural life. However, all concede that at this moment in history and for the foreseeable future, the market economy is the ideological framework for the efficient production and distribution of life resources. The market economy is absolute.

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<sup>87</sup>.Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. The Free Press: New York. 1992.

For instance, journalist Thomas L. Friedman's work *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* observes about the absolutism of the market economy in the age of globalization:

. . . When it comes to the question of which system today is the most effective at generating rising standards of living, the historical debate is over. The answer is free market capitalism. Other systems may be able to distribute and divide income more equitably, but none can generate income to distribute as efficiently as market capitalism . . . But, in the end, if you want higher standards of living in a world without walls, the market is the only ideological alternative left. . . .<sup>88</sup>

MIT economist Lester C. Thurow echoes this dominant view regarding the absolutism of the market economy when he states:

Since the onset of the industrial revolution, when success came to be defined as rising material standards of living, no economic system other than capitalism has been made to work anywhere. No one knows how to run successful economics on any other principles. The market, and the market alone, rules. No one doubts it . . . . Capitalism's nineteenth - and twentieth-century competitors — fascism, socialism, and communism — are all gone . . . Capitalism stands alone.<sup>89</sup>

In his summation of the current state of the global economic reality, British economist John Gray notes, "Whatever else the coming century may bring, the collapse of socialism looks irreversible. For the future we can foresee, there will not be two economic systems in the world, but only varieties of capitalism . . . . But the core project of implanting free markets throughout the world looks to persist for the foreseeable future."<sup>90</sup> Finally, theologian Sallie McFague writes of the market economy and its worldview: "The neo-classical anthropology and its worldview would not be such a serious matter if it were but

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<sup>88</sup>.Friedman, Thomas L. *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. Anchor Books: New York. 2000, 104.

<sup>89</sup>.Thurow, Lester C. *The Future of Capitalism: How Today's Economic Forces Shape Tomorrow's World*. Penguin Books: New York, 1996, 1.

<sup>90</sup>.Gray, John. *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*. The New Press: New York, 1998, 214 and 205.

one of several attractive, vibrant ideologies competing for our loyalty. But it is not: it is the only one.”<sup>91</sup>

Essentially, McFague’s concern about the market economy and its worldview rests in its singularity. It is a “serious matter” because no other alternatives exist which provide for varying expressions of human-human, human-natural, and human-divine patterns of relating. Consequently, the singularity of the market economy and its culture lends itself to the absolutization of the reality it espouses. Human existence falls under the logic of the market economy. The marketplace demand influences, even guides our decision making process. It decides who will die of disease and who will receive adequate health care. It decides who will receive a viable education and become equipped with the appropriate information required for rational thought, judgment, and planning, and who will fall prey to the vultures of ignorance. The marketplace demand decides who will be demonized as an enemy and who will be extolled as a friend. The marketplace demand, in many arenas, even circumscribes our relationship with God.

The market economy as empire, that is, as ideology, gains much of its thrust by locating its origin beyond history, therefore appearing fundamental to the human experience. For instance, historians Appleby, Jacob, and Hunt, analyzing the power of the market economy and its culture on the American psyche, describe how the ideological nature of the market economy has been historically construed to appear natural to the human condition. They argue that the American economy is sustained by cultural modes such as “individual fortitude, prosperity, agricultural abundance, open opportunity, hard

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<sup>91</sup>.McFague, Sallie. *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 2001, p. 81.

work, free choice, inventive genius and productive know-how.”<sup>92</sup> These models, according to Appleby, Jacob and Hunt, permeate America’s historical consciousness. America’s people have come to understand and accept these “coerced” values as transcending the bounds of history and as natural to human existence:

History texts have provided American children with exemplary models of trailblazing initiatives, disciplined efforts, and individual sacrifices for progress. Beginning with the accounts of nation-building in the revolutionary era, national history has imparted the kinds of moral lessons that have enabled capitalism to flourish, but like the roots of a plant, this vital cultural sustenance is hard to see.<sup>93</sup>

The force of the market economy lies in its ability to appear fundamental to the human condition or as essential to the human exchange of services and goods. This perception, fueled by the presumed naturalness of self-interest, creates an environment where the very act of “commercial transactions appear voluntary and its participants feel as if they are free to choose.” Appleby, Jacob and Hunt provide a simple yet profound example:

The fact that people must earn before they can eat is a commonly recognized connection between need and work, but it presents itself as a natural link embedded in the necessity of eating rather than as arising from a particular arrangement of distributing food through market exchanges. Despite the fact that men and women must buy and sell in order to live, the optional aspects of the market remain most salient.<sup>94</sup>

It is the specific individual or the specific group who decides to take actions and suffers the misfortune or enjoys the benefits. Nevertheless, as the authors remind us, because we have become so accustomed to natural and personal (freedom/voluntary) presentations of how people provide for the necessities of life, the “social and compulsory” aspects of market economy elude us. The market economy and its values are transcendent — they

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<sup>92</sup>.Appleby, Joyce, Hunt, Lynn and Jacob, Margaret. *Telling the Truth About History*. New York: Norton, 1994. pg. 119.

<sup>93</sup>.Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*, 120

<sup>94</sup>.Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*, 120.

stand beyond the bounds of human history and present themselves as realities which always was and will always be. Sallie McFague reiterates this point nicely when she writes that market economy as an absolute ideology (as empire) “covers the world with [its] interpretive grid and we cannot see the world otherwise.”<sup>95</sup>

### **Globalization: Collapsing Boundaries and Penetrating National Borders<sup>96</sup>**

“Spatial barriers have collapsed so that the world is now a single field within which capitalism can operate . . .”<sup>97</sup>

The second and third criterion for empire, according to Hardt and Negri, are that an empire rules not only a particular territory (United States of America, for instance), but that it rules over the entire ‘civilized’<sup>98</sup> world, regulates human interactions and seeks directly to rule over human nature. Globalization creates the circumstances that allow the market economy to operate and reign throughout the world and to also regulate human interactions by the natural assumptions it holds regarding human nature. This next section then, will briefly explain the role of globalization in developing the market

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<sup>95</sup>.McFague, *Life Abundant*, 74.

<sup>96</sup>.Scholars admit that globalization is not new. The world has experienced several phases of globalization. The period of the Roman Empire is considered one age of globalization. The second age of globalization extended from the early 1870s to 1914 – the first World War disrupted international commerce. This current phase of globalization took hold in the final decade of the twentieth century.

<sup>97</sup>.Waters, Malcolm. *Globalization*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. pg. 187.

<sup>98</sup>.The term civilized, in this context, refers to those countries that accept to abide by appropriate economic rules, namely those of the market economy. Other types of economic rules, such as ‘tribal’ economic rules in which there is so-called corruption (because according to the rules of the community you have to make free gifts to elders and uncles, cousins, etc) or the rule of *utang-n-loob* (Filipino tradition) in which you need to give gifts to those to whom you are indebted, etc. or parallel kinds of economic systems through which one deliberately privileges people who are in certain life positions (option for the poor, for example) instead of allowing the free exchange of the market economy to govern exchanges are considered uncivilized.

economy as empire (as a concept) and how the market economy's understanding and shaping of the human being supports its rule.

The contemporary debate on globalization is dizzying and gives the term a wide variety of meanings largely based on the increased level of technological and informational advancements unknown to the world even thirty to forty years ago. However, most scholars define the term in a way that emphasizes either a socio-cultural perspective<sup>99</sup> or an economic perspective. Globalization, however, entails each of these dimensions. Scholars simply disagree as to which aspect serves as its driving force. This project privileges the economic aspect of globalization, but it understands quite well that economy is largely about social ordering and human and natural maintenance. Therefore, this project follows Yergin and Stanislaw's description of globalization as:

. . . foreign direct investment and trade . . . but it is also more than that. Globalization is a move to a more connected world in which borders of many kinds—from the Iron Curtain to corporate identity to government control of airwaves—are coming down, felled by technological change, especially technologies that bring down the costs of transportation and communication, and by ideas and policies that bring down the barriers to the movement of people, goods, and information. This is an era in which a world that is organized around nation-states is increasingly conjoined in a global marketplace . . . it represents an accelerating and integration and interweaving of national economies through the growing flows of trade, investment, and capital across historical borders . . . Globalization has also come to involve the increasing coordination of trade, fiscal, and monetary policies among countries.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>.For an analysis privileging the socio-cultural aspects of globalization see Waters, Malcolm. *Globalization*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.; Hoogvelt, Ankie. *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2001.

<sup>100</sup>.Yergin, Daniel and Stanislaw, Joseph. *Commanding Heights: The Battle for the World Economy*. New York: Simon and Scuster, 2002, pg. 383.

The technological advancements that have been made which allow for social and political changes all serve the purpose of spreading the market economy to virtually every country in the world.

The spread of the market economy is facilitated primarily by two sister organizations: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Created in 1944, at a gathering of representatives of forty-four nations in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, these institutions are the product of an agreement on an institutional framework for the post World War II global economy. “The public purpose of the ‘Bretton Woods system’ was to unite the world in a web of economic prosperity and interdependence that would preclude nations’ taking up arms.”<sup>101</sup> These organizations were to originally serve as institutions that would finance reconstruction projects in war-ravished countries following World War II. But, since the 1970's and 1980's much of the organizations’ resources go to providing loans to developing countries. The loans are given under the strict demands and supervision of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank. Therefore, developing countries entering into the global economy must adopt certain beliefs and implement these beliefs into their governmental policies. The IMF and the World Bank, as agents of market economy’s public transcript, include in the lending agreement that borrowing countries must make certain “structural adjustments” that reflect a nation’s commitment to: 1) Sustained economic growth, as measured by gross national product, with the belief that it is the path to human progress; 2) Markets unrestrained by government, with the belief that they generally result in the most efficient and socially optimal allocation of resources; 3) Privatization, which moves functions and

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<sup>101</sup>.Kuttner, Robert. *Everything For Sale: The Virtues and Limits of Markets*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997, p. 180.

assets from governments to the private sector with the belief that it improves efficiency;

4) The belief that the primary responsibility of government is to provide the infrastructure necessary to advance commerce and enforce the rule of law with respect to property rights and contracts; 5) Ultimately, the belief that economic globalization, spurs competition, increases economic efficiency, creates jobs, lowers consumer prices, increases consumer choice, increases economic growth, and is generally beneficial to almost everyone.<sup>102</sup>

Most importantly, as the market economy spreads throughout the world under the supervision and/or surveillance of the Bretton Woods institutions, it not only influences governmental and judicial policies in borrowing nations, it also requires from them and therefore creates a certain type of society to support it. Hence, the market economy also advances certain assumptions about the character of the human nature and the relationship of human beings among themselves. The market economy imagines: 1) that humans are motivated by self-interest, and that this self-interest is primarily expressed through the quest for financial gain; 2) that the action that yields the greatest financial return to the individual or company is the one that is most beneficial to society; 3) that competitive behavior is more rational for the individual and the company than cooperative behavior; consequently, 4) that societies should be built around the competitive motive; and 5) that human progress is best measured by increases in the value of what the members of society consume, and ever higher levels of consumer spending advance the well-being of society by stimulating greater economic output.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>.Kuttner, *Everything For Sale*, 70.

<sup>103</sup>.Kuttner, *Everything For Sale*, 70.



In other words, human beings are essentially motivated by greed; the drive to acquire is the highest expression of what it means to be human; the relentless pursuit of greed and acquisition leads to socially optimal outcomes; and it is in the best interest of human societies to encourage, honor, and reward these values. As noted by Max Oelschlaeger, the market economy creates a specific human identity best seen in the American consciousness. But through the globalization process, it is becoming increasingly present throughout the world:

In so far as Americans have a collective identity it is as Homo oeconomicus—the mass person, the consumer who lives amid unprecedented material splendor and the producer who bends the earth to virtually unrestrained human purpose.<sup>104</sup>

The market economy requires human beings to envision themselves as self-interested consumers. This logic is embedded so deeply into the fabric of our society that it appears to be natural and unconscious; and this too is the vision that developing nations need to acquire so that they may become successfully integrated into the global economy. Globalization promises that all who accept this logic and organize their social institutions to accommodate humanity's natural inclination as a consumer will inevitably experience higher standards of living. But, as Thomas Friedman reminds us, "Globalization isn't a choice. It's a reality."<sup>105</sup> To live in the world today, is, for better or for worse, to live under the logic and rules of market economy.

### **Peace and Violence: The Paradox of the Market Economy**

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<sup>104</sup>.Max Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>105</sup>.Friedman, *Lexus and Olive Tree*, 112.

As we have argued throughout this chapter, the primary objective of empire is to create, voluntarily if possible, but coercively if necessary, a domination-subjection relationship with those over whom it seeks to rule. The market economy as empire is no exception. In this light, Hardt and Negri's final criterion for understanding empire as a concept (ideology) invites us to look more closely at its practice. Hardt and Negri argue that although the concept of Empire is always dedicated to peace, the practice of Empire is constantly solidifying its domination through various forms of violence. When reviewing the paradox of violence and peace in the *Pax Romana* we noted the connection between the two experiences was most commonly evidenced in Roman legions. Today, a nation's military might (a tool of violence) still functions as a tool for promoting peace.<sup>106</sup> But, when considering the market economy as empire, the connection between the experiences of peace and violence are most commonly evidenced in the global economic policies shaping virtually every country in the world (Structural Adjustment Policies). These policies are created and implemented by the sister institutions introduced in the previous section, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These institutions are significant and worth exploring for two interconnected reasons. First, they put into practice the doctrines fostered by the market economy. Second, through the practice and policies of these institutions, most of the world has come to believe that the "greatest good for the greatest number will necessarily emerge from its (the market economy's) adoption, voluntarily if possible; if not, then under

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<sup>106</sup>.See Mandelbaum, Michael. *The Ideas that Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy and Markets in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2002. pp. 107-200.

duress.”<sup>107</sup> As with the other sections, the purpose of the following discussion is to present as public transcript the market economy as manifested in the policies of the World Bank and IMF. The market economy is the way in which these institutions perceive themselves; and therefore it is the reality to which the world’s citizens must orientate their lives. Ultimately, these organizations and the policies they advance, influence people’s perception of their relationship with the market economy by constantly promoting the possibility of peace in the midst of ever-present violence.

### **Defining Peace**

The market economy equates peace with the possibility of economic growth. Peace equals the possibility of higher standards of living -- the possibility for a better life. Yet, the possibility of peace that the market economy offers, not its realization, necessarily requires violence. Economist Joseph Schumpeter, for instance, refers to economic growth as a process of “creative destruction.” By its very nature it both creates and destroys: indeed, it creates by destroying.<sup>108</sup> Economic growth, writes Michael Mandelbaum, “depends chiefly on increases in productivity. Productivity involves doing things differently: making new things, or old things in a new way, or the same things in the same way but by different people in new places. The essence of productivity is change and change is usually disorienting and often painful. It requires adaptation and penalizes those who cannot adapt.”<sup>109</sup> But, as noted by Thomas Friedman, no matter

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<sup>107</sup>.George, Susan and Sabelli, Fabrizio. *Faith and Credit: The World Bank’s Secular Empire*. Boulder, San Francisco: West View Press, 1994, pg. 72.

<sup>108</sup>.Mandelbaum, *The Ideas that Conquered the World*, 300.

<sup>109</sup>.Mandelbaum, *The Ideas that Conquered the World*, 300.

how painful and destructive the process, people will endure the inherent violence to experience the possibility of peace: “. . . Because if they have half a chance . . . They want to get a piece of the system . . .”<sup>110</sup> They want to experience the peace it offers.

Today, the most public declaration of the peace offered by the market economy is stated in the MDG (millenium development goals) set by the Untied Nations Development Programs and managed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The goals include to: 1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2) achieve universal primary education; 3) promote gender equality and empower women; 4) reduce child mortality; 5) improve maternal health; 6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7) ensure environmental sustainability; and 8) build a global partnership for development. But it is important to remember that the peace offered by the market economy (as described above and as will be further analyzed below) necessarily involves violence. While it is beyond the scope of this project to examine each of these goals, a closer look at the United Nations Development Program’s first and overarching goal and the institutions (and institutional policies) used to achieve it will help better explain the paradoxical nature of market economy as it presents itself as the “bringer” of peace — a peace that is necessarily secured and sustained by violence.

### **Tools of Peace: The World Bank and IMF’s Inception and Logic**

In July, 1944, at the invitation of American president Franklin D. Roosevelt, delegates from forty-four nations arrived at the Mount Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. Roosevelt called these delegates together to create a world

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<sup>110</sup>.Friedman, *Lexus and Olive Tree*, 349.

economic system. This new world economic system would ensure that the war-torn world would never “revert to the competitive currency depreciations, imposition of exchange restrictions, import quotas and other devices which had all but stifled trade and plunged the planet headlong into its most devastating conflict ever.”<sup>111</sup> The result of this conference would be the creation of the World Bank and the IMF. These organizations were to prevent the “disruption of foreign exchanges and the collapse of the monetary and credit systems; to assure the restoration of foreign trade; and to supply the huge volume of capital that will be needed virtually throughout the world for reconstruction, for relief and for economic recovery.”<sup>112</sup> The accomplishment of these goals was key to providing global peace (or a world capable of global peace). On the other hand, if these goals were not achieved, according to then Treasury Secretary’s Henry Morgenthau’s assistant Harry Dexter White, “[we will] drift from the peace table into a period of chaotic competition, monetary disorder, depressions, political disruption and finally into new wars within as well as among nations.”<sup>113</sup> Essentially, the hope and promise of world peace would rest in the economic logic and values defined by the World Bank and the IMF. In this light, these two institutions function, or rather are perceived to function as a “global peace-making machine.”<sup>114</sup>

While the World Bank was officially established in 1945, its critical impact on the world began to take shape under the leadership of Robert S. McNamara (1968-1981). Before McNamara the bank was lead by businessmen and bankers and therefore spent

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<sup>111</sup>.George and Fabrizio, *Faith and Credit*, 22.

<sup>112</sup>.George and Fabrizio, *Faith and Credit*, 25.

<sup>113</sup>.George and Fabrizio, *Faith and Credit*, 25.

<sup>114</sup>.George and Fabrizio, *Faith and Credit*, 25.

much of its resources on merely doing business with sovereign governments. It had failed in attempting to realize the fullness of the vision articulated by one of its central founders, John Maynard Keynes:

. . . the field of reconstruction from the consequences of war will mainly occupy the proposed Bank in its early days. But as soon as possible, and with increasing emphasis as time goes on, there is a second primary duty laid upon it, namely to develop the resources and productive capacity of the world, with special attention to the less developed countries, to raising the standard of life and the conditions of labour everywhere, to make the resources of the world more fully available to all mankind.<sup>115</sup>

Under McNamara's leadership, however, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund began to focus on this latter cause. In a speech addressing the Bank's board of governors in 1973, McNamara turned the World Bank's attention towards alleviating world poverty. He denounced "absolute poverty" as:

a condition of life so degraded by disease, illiteracy, malnutrition and squalor as to deny its victims basic human necessities...a condition of life so limited as to prevent realization of the potential of the genes with which one is born: a condition of life so degrading as to insult human dignity — and yet a condition of life so common as to be the lot of some 40% of the peoples of the developing countries.<sup>116</sup>

No longer would the World Bank and the IMF's "developmental task" simply focus on making sure nations had the infrastructural systems (electrical power, transport, communication, etc.) to become more like the already industrialized countries. Instead, McNamara understood the primary objective of the Bank's mission as combating the conditions that create the extremes of privilege and deprivation. Under McNamara's leadership, the World Bank and IMF began to present itself to the world as institutions

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<sup>115</sup>.George and Fabrizio, *Faith and Credit*, 30.

<sup>116</sup>.George and Fabrizio, *Faith and Credit*, 38.

which sought to relieve the poverty of severely deprived men, women and children, individually or collectively.<sup>117</sup>

However, during the 1980's, the era when Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher promoted market ideology in the United States and the United Kingdom, a dramatic shift occurred in the basic philosophy governing the World Bank and the IMF. These institutions were founded with the recognition that markets often did not work well. In fact, they often caused major social and economic disruption and quite often they might fail to make needed funds available to countries to help them restore their economies. Nevertheless, during the 1980's the IMF and World Bank became the primary tools used to transport the ideas of market ideology to countries throughout the world that often desperately needed their loans and grants. Joseph Stiglitz, former World Bank chief economist and senior vice president (1997-2000) locates the practical shift in the institutions' role in the changing of the World Bank's leadership from Robert McNamara and Hollis Chenery (chief economist in research and development department who guided the bank's thinking and direction from 1973 to 1981) to its new president in 1981, William Clausen, and new chief economist, Ann Krueger. Stiglitz writes, "While Chenery and his team had focused on how markets failed in developing countries and what governments could do to improve markets and reduce poverty, Krueger saw government as the problem. Markets were the solution to the problems of developing countries."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>.George and Fabrizio, *Faith and Credit*, 38.

<sup>118</sup>.Stiglitz, Joseph. *Globalization and its Discontents*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2002, pg. 13.

During this period, according to Stiglitz, the activities of the IMF and World Bank became increasingly intertwined. For instance, notes Stiglitz, in the 1980's "the Bank went beyond just lending for projects (like roads and dams) to providing broad-based support, in the form of structural adjustment loans; but it did this only when the IMF gave its approval -- and with that approval came IMF's imposed conditions on the country. . . ." <sup>119</sup> In theory, there is a division of labor between the two institutions. The World Bank is in charge of structural issues — what the country's government spent money on, the country's financial institutions, its labor markets, its trade policies. The International Monetary Fund, on the other hand, is to oversee a country's macroeconomic dealings, that is, the government's budget deficit, its monetary policy, its inflation, its trade deficit, and its borrowing from abroad. But, in practice, maintains Stiglitz, the IMF controlled both the country's policy-making and spending parameters: "since almost any structural issue could affect the overall performance of the economy, and hence the government's budget or the trade deficit, it (IMF) viewed almost everything as falling within its domain." <sup>120</sup> Ultimately for borrowing countries the IMF and World Bank function as a single unit, setting policies or conditions to which nations are expected to submit if they are to receive the support needed to experience peace. <sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>.Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents*, 14.

<sup>120</sup>.Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents*, 14.

<sup>121</sup>.Stiglitz's work displays an open bias against the policies of the IMF and portrays the World Bank in a much more favorable light. This is a major criticism of his work.



## **Structural Adjustments: The Crossroad between Peace and Violence**

The public transcript of the World Bank and IMF, then, is two-fold. First, these sister institutions seek, through a world-economic structure, to prevent the world from falling into international and civil conflict. As a second and interrelated feature, they seek to eradicate extreme poverty and thus offer people the possibility of higher standards of living. Today, the World Bank and IMF seek to meet these goals through the promotion and implementation of its “structural adjustment” lending policies. These policies include the lending requirements that governments must accept before receiving financing from the IMF and World Bank, and consequently from other private and public sectors. As outlined by Susan George and Fabrizio Sabelli, structural adjustment lending is characterized by:

1) privatization of government corporations and severe ‘downsizing’ of public employment and government bureaucracy; 2) promotion of exports of raw materials and of export industries to earn foreign exchange; 3) import liberalization and elimination of trade barriers or quotas; 4) elimination or sharp reduction in subsidies for agriculture, food staples, health care, and other areas (generally excluding the military, however); 5) restrictive monetary policies and high interest rates to curb inflation; 6) a reduction in real wages (especially for lower wage earners), which is called ‘demand management’, also intended to control inflation.<sup>122</sup>

A nation’s implementation of these policies, according to the World Bank and IMF’s public transcript, serves two significant purposes. First, it creates a practical environment where the possibility of economic advancement, of peace, is more realizable. For instance, by eliminating trade and investment barriers, these adjustment policies improve a country’s economic climate and capacity to attract foreign investment. By privatizing government corporations and downsizing public employment and government

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<sup>122</sup>.George and Fabrizio, *Faith and Credit*, see 18-19 for specific examples.

bureaucracy, countries reduce government deficits through spending cuts. And by emphasizing the exportation of their raw materials rather than focusing on importation, countries boost foreign exchange earnings, thereby, providing the developing nation with the hard currency necessary for economic exchange and servicing its debt.

Second, it creates an ideological environment which ensures that a nation willingly submits itself to the domination-subjection relationship advanced by the market economy between itself and the world's citizens. The implementation of these policies ultimately weaves into a nation's social fabric the market economy's logic and values. It creates the type of individual to which it promises to "bring" peace (see previous section). To better represent the assumptions and moral standards of the World Bank and IMF's philosophy and/or anthropology, the implementation of these policies allows human beings to become more of who we hope to be. Consider, for instance, American economist George Katona's comments during the 1960's regarding the international power of the promise of peace offered by the market economy as evidenced in American consumer logic:

Today in this country minimum standards of nutrition, housing, and clothing are assured, not for all, but for the majority. Beyond these minimum needs, such former luxuries as homeownership, durable goods, travel, recreation and entertainment are no longer restricted to a few. The broad masses participate in enjoying all these things and generate most of the demand for them . . . What is known all over the world as the American standard of living does not consist of luxurious living by the wealthy. Prosperity by a thin upper class would be neither new nor envied by millions abroad. What is new is the common man's sharing in the ways of living that in the past were reserved for the few. The common man's ability to use some of his money for what he would like to have rather than for what he must have represents the revolutionary change.<sup>123</sup>

Much of the world agrees with this position -- or would like to be able to realize this "revolution" in their societies. Therefore, the power of the market economy rests in its

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<sup>123</sup>. Goodwin, Neva, Ackerman, Frank and Kiron, David ed. *The Consumer Society*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

ability to speak to and meet each person's deepest desire: the market economy creates the opportunity and fashions an environment (as promoted today by World Bank and IMF Structural Adjustment Lending Policies) where people can meet their basic human desire for a better life. So while the world is subjected by market economy and its logic, its absolute authority rests in the fact that people willingly subject themselves to it -- people even demand its rule.

And there are instances where, once people or nations have accepted its logic and submitted to its rules, the market economy provides the peace it promises. For example, as Thomas Friedman explains about the spread of capitalism and about countries' developmental adjustments to World Bank and IMF's policies:

. . . the spread of capitalism has raised living standards higher, faster and for more people than at any time in history. It has brought more poor people into the middle classes more quickly than at any time in human history. So, while the gap between rich and poor is getting wider—as the winners in today's globalization system really take off and separate themselves from everyone else—the floor under the poor has been rising steadily in many parts of the world. In other words, while relative poverty may be growing in many countries, absolute poverty is actually falling in many countries. . .<sup>124</sup>

Friedman credits Taiwan, Singapore, Chile and Sweden's willing subjection to market economy (and organizing their economic systems based on World Bank and IMF's policies) as the reason for their achieving standards of living comparable to those of America and Japan.<sup>125</sup> He applauds the market economy's success in the last forty years

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<sup>124</sup>.Friedman, *Lexus and Olive Tree*, 350.

<sup>125</sup>.Friedman, *Lexus and Olive Tree*, 350.

in helping to decrease infant mortality rates, malnutrition and illiteracy while simultaneously providing more people with access to safe water.<sup>126</sup>

The peace offered by the market economy is most commonly evidenced in transnational corporations' investments in foreign markets. Globalization as the spread of market economy around the world and the World Bank and the IMF's roles of indoctrination of the world's citizens to the market economy's logic and values (especially the insistence on eliminating trade barriers) have opened the door for the access of transnational corporations access to foreign, including developing markets. Hence, multinational corporations are investing in the social infrastructures of developing countries (and even in the social needs of first world countries) above, and often times in the place of, governmental institutions. Transnational corporations, and their leaders, are serving as ambassadors of peace. That is, because of the structural adjustment policies established by the World Bank and the IMF, multinational corporations have a vested interest in supporting the creation of environments that allow for the possibility of higher standards of living. For instance, consider the recent rise in CEO's philanthropic efforts and how they are affecting world peace. A few recent examples come to mind: George Soros' \$100 million to help post-Soviet science and his \$50 million to support Sarajevo from Serb attacks; Tom Monaghan's \$1 billion to a nationwide school building program in the United States and his financing an hydroelectric dam in Honduras; Bill Gates' \$21 billion foundation which will provide vaccines for the developing world and education for its children. These 21<sup>st</sup> century philanthropist are ambassadors for the market

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<sup>126</sup>Friedman, *Lexus and Olive Tree*, 350. Yet scholars point out that FME policies were tempered by government intervention in many of these countries, ultimately allowing for their success. See for instance, Stiglitz chapters 1-3.

economy and are so by placing “ladders within reach upon which the aspiring can rise.”<sup>127</sup>

These philanthropists, rather than seeking a political position, are using the leverage of their business empires to gain access to world leaders, using that access to lobby for changes that will, in their opinion, better the world.<sup>128</sup> Hertz refers to these business people as a “class of unelected politicians, ambassadors, and advocates, . . . using their power, wealth and influence to effect political and social change to an unprecedented degree.”<sup>129</sup> For instance, Paul Fireman, Robert Haas, and Bruce Klatsky, CEOs of Reebok, Levi Strauss, and Philips Van Heusen respectively, created production facilities that uphold human rights in countries “where human rights abuses are the norm.” The trio, in April 1999, even wrote to President Jiang Zemin, China’s President, attempting to persuade him to broaden human rights for approximately four million workers. Moreover, CNN owner, Ted Turner, in 1997 pledged \$1 billion to the United Nations: “Rather than donating money to a party in order to help his business interest, Turner has earmarked funds for his favored causes: the environment, children, population control, and women’s projects (mdg).”<sup>130</sup> Turner, as well as other philanthropists, use their wealth to influence governmental policy or bypass it altogether in order to, in the

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<sup>127</sup>.Hertz, Noreena. *The Silent TakeOver: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy*. New York: The Free Press, 2001, pp. 158-159.

<sup>128</sup>.Hertz, *The Silent TakeOver*, 160.

<sup>129</sup>.Hertz, *The Silent TakeOver*, 160.

<sup>130</sup>.Hertz, *The Silent TakeOver*, 162.

words of Turner: “benefit the world . . . to control population, to stop the arms race, to the preserve the environment.”<sup>131</sup>

Not only are individual CEOs contributing to the social development of societies, but privately held corporations are taking on the traditional roles of government as “welfare providers and social engineers, environmentalist and mediators . . .”<sup>132</sup> For instance, while the South African government’s response to the HIV/AIDS crisis has been largely inadequate, notes Hertz, AngloGold, Gold Fields, Iscor’s and other privately owned corporations are providing basic health education and care for the country’s people. “Companies, rather than the state, have set up clinics to tend to the dying; companies, rather than the state, are producing poster campaigns to explain the dangers of unsafe sex, are financing free condom dispensing machines, and are sponsoring and running AIDS education classes for junior managers, encouraging them to pass on the information to their workers.”<sup>133</sup>

In Nigeria, continues Hertz, “Shell spent \$52 million in 1999 on a social investment program, building schools, hospitals, roads, and bridges, supplying electricity and water to areas that the government effectively abandoned in the early 1980's. And in today’s environment that is ever more pressed to find adequate funding for education, McDonald’s supports literacy programs, Nike contributes to parks, recreational facilities and other youth-related projects and Honda builds multi-million dollar educational facilities for students whom the public school system is failing.”<sup>134</sup> Peace is possible.

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<sup>131</sup>.Hertz, *The Silent TakeOver*, 162.

<sup>132</sup>.Hertz, *The Silent TakeOver*, 169.

<sup>133</sup>.Hertz, *The Silent TakeOver*, 168.

<sup>134</sup>.Hertz, *The Silent TakeOver*, 173-174.

It remains though, as noted by Hardt and Negri, the peace of empire is secured through violence. The World Bank and the IMF are very aware of the destruction and violence necessarily involved with the possibility of peace it offers. This violence is not directly associated with military might but is more clearly evidenced in the cultural and economic devastation nations face resulting primarily from universally applied structural adjustment policies.<sup>135</sup> As one intimately involved with the workings of the World Bank and IMF in relation to the world's citizens, Stiglitz' analysis is again helpful. He explains how the World Bank and the IMF's policies, based on the presumption that markets, by themselves, lead to efficient outcomes, have produced and continue to produce disastrous effects on the lives and environments of world citizens. At the same time (whether voluntarily or involuntarily) nations are made ever more dependent on the market economy policies that subject them. Stiglitz writes about the absolutism of the World Bank and the IMF policies which promote the market economy (and its values and logic throughout the world):

... In our personal lives we would never follow ideas blindly without seeking alternative advice. Yet countries all over the world were instructed to do just that. The problems facing developing countries are difficult, and the IMF is often called upon in the worst situations, when the country is facing crisis. But remedies failed as often, or even more often than they worked. IMF structural adjustment policies—the policies designed to help a country adjust to crisis as well as to more persistent imbalances—led to hunger and riots in many countries; and even when results were not so dire, even when they managed to eke out some growth for a while, often the benefits went disproportionately to the better-off, with those at the bottom sometimes facing even greater poverty. What astounded me, however, was that those policies weren't questioned by many of the people in power in the IMF, by those who were making the critical decisions. They were often questioned by people in the developing countries, but many were afraid they might lose IMF funding, and with it funding from others, that they articulated their doubts

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<sup>135</sup>For a very provocative discussion on the intentions and motivating factors guiding World Bank and IMF policies see John Perkins' *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. San Francisco: Berrett-Kehler Publishers, Inc. 2004.

cautiously, if at all, and then only in private. But while no one was happy about the suffering that often accompanied the IMF programs, inside the IMF it was simply assumed that whatever suffering occurred was a necessary part of the pain countries had to experience on the way to becoming a successful market economy, and that their measures would, in fact, reduce the pain the countries would have to face in the long run. . . . Undoubtedly, some pain is necessary; but in my judgment, the level of pain in developing countries created in the process of globalization and development as it has been guided by the IMF and the international economic organizations has been far greater than necessary. . . .”<sup>136</sup>

The pain and violence Stiglitz speaks about is most commonly evidenced in the structural adjustment policy that requires borrowing countries to eliminate all trade barriers. This point is significant because the United Nations, under its millennium development goals, promises world peace through the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger throughout the world. Today, approximately 1 billion people live in extreme poverty. However, using the World Bank and the IMF as managing institutions, the goal is to reduce the proportion of people living on less than one dollar a day to half the 1990 level by the year 2015. If achieved this would reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty to 890 million or 750 million if growth stays on track. The program concedes however that, if reached, this achievement falls well short of eradicating extreme poverty throughout the world but it does “bring us much closer to the day when we can say that all the world’s people have at least the minimum to eat and clothe themselves.”

The program involves the use of “aid” and “trade” as strategic tools in the “war on poverty.” It is estimated that it would take approximately 100 billion dollars a year in developmental aid to meet the 2015 deadline. This is double the current levels of aid, yet it is only one fifth of one percent of the income of donor countries. Aid is filtered

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<sup>136</sup>.Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents*, xiv.



through the HIPC (heavily indebted poor countries) initiative. The initiative offers debt relief to poor countries and so far 1 billion has been promised in the year 2002 by G8 countries. But, as World Bank head, James Wolfensohn has recently noted, these funds have yet to be secured. He encouraged rich countries to implement and deliver on the commitments made during the world summits to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015: “Together, we have set 2015 as the deadline for our results. We must now, together, move beyond words and set deadlines for actions. We have said we are mutually accountable. It is time to deliver.”<sup>137</sup>

The challenges, however, are far more complex than rich countries simply donating money. Financial resources for developing countries are also to be secured through trade agreements. Let us take a step back for a moment. Debt relief, or aid, as a tool for meeting the MDG, is a direct result of the loans given by the World Bank and IMF to developing countries during the past three decades.<sup>138</sup> However, one of the conditions for receiving these loans is that borrowing countries must implement certain “structural adjustments” into their governmental policies (see above). Most important

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<sup>137</sup> .\_\_\_\_\_, “Jaswant urges rich nation to end subsidies,” n. p. [cited 30 September 2002. Online: <http://www.cgi.rediff.com>.

<sup>138</sup> .For an analysis of Third World debt see Robert Kuttner’s *Everything For Sale*. Also in July 2005 at their summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, the G-8 countries (United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, Canada, United States, Italy and Russia) agreed to cancel the debt of 18 African countries. The debt cancellation is reported to be forty billion dollars. It is beyond the scope of this project to discuss the details of the agreement. However, I do want to note that the agreement is not without controversial “conditions” attached to it (similar to what I discuss as “structural adjustments” in this chapter). Some observers even suggest that these structural adjustments function as a type of economic blackmail against African nations, enabling international bankers to profit from Africa’s natural resources in exchange for debt relief. One point is certain, we cannot responsibly reflect on African debt (debt relief), or any form of debt without also discussing and reflecting on the conditions tied to debt (and debt relief). I allude to this point at the close of chapter six when I offer my understanding of Paul’s conception of indebtedness – which I feel is an appropriate way of perceiving debt (and debt relief) as we attempt to alleviate world poverty. I do not however, offer an analysis of the concrete implications of this as it relates to African debt relief – that is a follow up project.

here, is that borrowing countries are required to avoid all exchange restrictions and open their markets to foreign products.

It is important to remember that the elimination of trade barriers is an inherent component in the globalization process. As such, not only are developing countries or borrowing countries bound to eliminate trade barriers, but rich countries are equally bound by this process. But rich countries have refused to scrap their trade barriers. Stiglitz calls this a basic inequality in the global trading system -- “a system that pretends to help developing countries by forcing them to open up their markets to the goods of the advanced industrial countries while keeping their own markets protected, policies that make the rich richer and the poor more impoverished . . . .<sup>139</sup>” For instance, president George W. Bush signed into law a farm bill that provides a large increase in subsidy payments. The United States, then, is able to maintain its quotas on agricultural goods (that is, manage what goods come into its markets that would compete with or drive down the prices of its farmers) while insisting that developing countries open up their market to its goods. The Bush administration has said it is prepared to reduce these payments, but only as a part of a comprehensive trade agreement with other countries to cut farm subsidies.<sup>140</sup> Consider the African country Ghana which can export its cocoa beans tariff/duty free to Europe, but must pay more than 25 percent tariffs on processed chocolate; food processing is shifted to Europe, leaving Ghana deprived of the manufacturing base to escape from poverty. After receiving an IMF loan during the 1980's to aid in its debt payment, the IMF encouraged Mexico to shift vital food crops

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<sup>139</sup> Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents*, xv.

<sup>140</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, “Wealthy nations agree to help the poor,” n. p. [cited 30 September 2002]. Online: <http://www.sabcnews.com>.

(namely maize) with cash crops—like strawberries and exotic fruits. The IMF also had Mexico lift any trade barriers to the country’s agricultural goods. So Mexico’s export crops now compete with those from the USA, which, as in many northern countries and as explained above, are highly subsidized. Poorer countries cannot compete with the prices offered by wealthier countries who subsidize their farmers. One sees this clearly in Jamaica where farmers can no longer sell their goods since, due to World Bank and IMF strategies, the markets have opened and the United States and other countries have brought in the same items for significantly lower prices. Judy Coode explains this more directly in her review of Stephanie Blacks’ film “Life and Debt” when she writes: “The Jamaican dairy industry, once very strong, lost a huge chunk of its market when import taxes (along with subsidies to local farmers) were eliminated. When powdered milk from the United States started arriving free from taxes, and Jamaican dairy farmers lost their subsidies, not only were thousands of gallons of milk lost, but 700 cows had to be slaughtered.”<sup>141</sup>

Globalization, as the spread of the market economy around the world, promises peace and promises to work for everyone. But trade barriers, most erected by rich countries “are eating up \$650 billion that could otherwise be used to improve the livelihoods around the world each year and are limiting poor countries’ sorely needed access to world markets.”<sup>142</sup> Nicolas Stern, a World Bank chief economist, echoes this sentiment when he states “It is hypocrisy to encourage poor countries to open their

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<sup>141</sup>.Judy Coode. “Living on Bananas,” Sojourners Magazine May-June 2002: 55-57.

<sup>142</sup>.Anna Willard, “Poor countries get raw deal at IMF, World Bank meeting,” n. p. [cited 30 September 2002]. Online: <http://www.reuters.com>.

markets while imposing protectionist measures that cater to powerful special interest.”<sup>143</sup>

Addressing the inaugural session of the joint discussion of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in Washington on Sunday, September 29, 2002, Finance Minister Jaswant Singh said 85 percent of the world’s population has access to only 15 percent of the global resources. Singh largely contributes this imbalance to the “trade-distorting subsidies in industrialized countries.”<sup>144</sup> World Bank director, James Wolfensohn, speaking at this same conference best sums up the problem of financing the eradication of poverty. Wolfensohn acknowledged that the \$1 billion per day spent by rich countries on farm subsidies “squander resources and profoundly damage opportunities for poor countries to invest in their own development.”<sup>145</sup>

Stiglitz argues that the problem moves beyond the issue of trade barriers and encourages investigators to look at the very “terms of trade.” From the price inequities which developed and less developed countries get for the products they produce to the disproportionate benefits Western banks receive from the loosening of capital market controls in Latin America and Asia, to the strengthening of intellectual property rights and its adverse effect poorer countries, the terms of trade are often stacked in favor of developed countries over and against the majority of the population of poorer countries.<sup>146</sup> In short, critics argue that while the MDG seeks to eradicate extreme world

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<sup>143</sup>. \_\_\_\_\_, “Wealthy nations agree to help the poor,” n. p. [cited 30 September 2002]. Online: <http://www.sabcnews.com>.

<sup>144</sup>. \_\_\_\_\_, “Jaswant urges rich nation to end subsidies,” n. p. [cited 30 September 2002]. Online: <http://www.cgi.rediff.com>.

<sup>145</sup>. Anna Willard, “Poor countries get raw deal at IMF, World Bank meeting,” n. p. [cited 30 September 2002]. Online: <http://www.reuters.com>.

<sup>146</sup>. Stiglitz, 8-9. Also see Stiglitz chapter six: “Unfair Fair Trade Laws and Other Mischief”

poverty and the market economy promises the peace of economic security throughout the world, poor countries suffer from the rich countries failing to meet their pledges and contribute to the HIPC (heavily indebted poor countries) funds. Poor countries also suffer from the very logic of the market economy that encourages individuals and/or nations to act in their own best interest to create the most advantageous profit margins for their particular nations (or segments of the nation) with the hope that the individual's interest will benefit the whole.

Although the developed world often capitalizes on the benefits of globalization at the expense of poorer nations, the issue is not simply a matter of the market economy's peace and violence as it affects the developing world. For instance, Noreena Hertz' recent work *The Silent TakeOver: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy* systematically outlines the depth and scope of the market economy's rule over both the developed and developing worlds. The peace and violence of the market economy as Empire is just as much a reality in the wealthier nations as is in the poorer nations. The economic gap is widening between the have and have nots. Forty-five million Americans have no health insurance. In America, during the ten years after 1988, income for the poorest families rose less than 1 percent, while it jumped 15 percent for the richest fifth. One in five American children live in poverty. And then there is Enron, Tyco, and WorldCom and the countless other transnational corporations that have filed bankrupt and left countless people's lives reeling from the violence and uncertainty associated with the belief that unfettered the market economy and/or corporations build the road to 'Nirvana'.

As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century we live in a one-ideology world where the problems and solutions we face as world citizens, in both developed and developing communities, are defined and measured within the logical parameters of the market economy. The public transcript of the market economy presents itself as the bringer of peace but it also acknowledges that this peace (or the possibility of peace) is only achieved through violence and/or the constant threat of violence. Hence, according to the market economy's public transcript, violence and destruction are an acceptable reality for the possibility of peace (economic prosperity). For as Thomas Friedman concludes from observing world citizens and their experience of the violence of the market economy in this current phase of globalization:

With all due respect to revolutionary theorists, the 'wretched of the earth' want to go to Disney World—not to the barricades. They want the Magic Kingdom, not *Les Misérables*. And if you construct an economic and political environment that gives them half a sense that with hard work and sacrifice they will get to Disney World and get to enjoy the Magic Kingdom, most of them will stick with the game—for far, far longer than you would ever expect.<sup>147</sup>

It is not just the 'wretched of the earth' but all the world's citizens who live under the market economy's "interpretive grid." All the world's citizens live in the tension between the possibility of peace secured and sustained through violence or the threat of violence. In this light, Noreena Hertz, in defining the role of government/democracy in relation to the market economy, succinctly describes for us the world in which we currently exist and around which all social relationships must organize themselves: ". . . Governments once battled for physical territory; today they fight in the main for the market share. One of their primary jobs has become that of ensuring an environment in which business can prosper, and which is attractive to business. The role of nation states

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<sup>147</sup>.Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, 364.

has become to a large extent simply that of providing the public goods and infrastructure that business needs to the lowest costs while protecting the world's free trade system."<sup>148</sup> In protecting the world's market system governments, who represent the people, best represent them by providing an environment, though often destructive and violent, that offers them the opportunity to experience Disney World and the Magic Kingdom. Peace is possible when the world's citizens enter into a domination-subjection relationship with the market economy.

### **In Summation**

This chapter has been dedicated to offering a general overview of the contextual worlds' that shaped Paul's writing of Romans and the contemporary readers of Romans. Using Hardt and Negri's criteria for understanding empire as concept, the first section of the chapter examines the *Pax Romana* as the "public transcript" of the Roman Empire. Divided into three divisions, this section describes how the military aspect of the *Pax Romana*, the cultural-religious aspects of the *Pax Romana*, and the patronage system combined to create a worldview where people imagined themselves in a domination-subjection relationship with the Roman Empire. One sees in the discussion on the military aspect of the *Pax Romana* the ways in which this ideology presented itself as total and absolute, a reality that ruled the entire world. The discussion also highlights the ways in which the military presented Rome as the bringer of a peace secured and sustained through violence. The discussion on the *Pax Romana's* cultural-religious aspects revealed the Roman Empire's understanding of itself as beyond the bounds of

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<sup>148</sup>.Hertz, *The Silent TakeOver*, 7-8.

history. The greatness and domination of the Empire over others was not simply a historical event, but a reality guided and pre-ordained by divine fate. The analysis of the patronage system ends this section and outlines its role in helping to create the society over which the Roman Empire ruled as well as shaping and defining the nature of the human beings over which it governed.

The second section of the chapter, again using Hardt and Negri's criteria for understanding empire as concept, names and describes the market economy in this current age of globalization as today's empire. After offering a brief overview of the assumptions on which the market economy is grounded, the section discussed the absolute nature of the market economy as the only ideological position in the world today. The discussion further explored the underlining assumptions of the market economy and how these assumptions appear natural and therefore divinely ordered—that is, beyond the bounds of history. The analysis then discussed Hardt and Negri's first and most obvious criterion for empire as concept. The market economy was described as the “ruler of the entire world” by examining this current phase of globalization as primarily characterized by the spread of the market economy throughout the world. Because the market economy involves a certain type of culture and individual in order to exist, through the process of globalization, the market economy also shapes the values of the society over which it rules and defines the nature of the human over which it governs. Finally, the discussion concludes by looking at the market economy as the bringer of peace, a peace naturally secured and sustained through violence or various forms of oppression. We defined peace as economic security. Therefore the discussion examined the ways in which economic institutions (namely IMF/World Bank) and economic



policies offer nation's peace (or the possibility of peace) and in some ways bring peace, while perpetuating violence or presenting the threat of violence on those who do not enter into a domination-subjection relationship with the market economy.

### **Revisiting the Contextual-World: Past and Present**

It remains that we must ask this question regarding economy: Is economy embedded in society or is society embedded in the economy? The first position holds that the promise of peace (the eradication of extreme poverty) must be considered as a human right and that economic and social policy should work directly toward that end. The other position contends globalization's creation of wealth is the road to the eventual eradication of poverty and advocates the global economic policies of a market system. But, can a system whose primary interest is for the purpose of making money provide the staples for a community's healthy existence in today's world (this is the question ultimately asked by Hertz)? The question is posed nicely by Mike Brklacich and Shona Leybourne as they quote James Wolfensohn. They write:

. . . Of course, economic growth and sound macroeconomic policies are critical to poverty reduction, but growth alone is insufficient. Effective poverty reduction requires sound and *pro-poor* (emphasis mine) institutions, effective governance, and action to deal with high levels of inequality in assets such as land and education. Poverty reduction also requires safety nets to mitigate the impact of personal and national calamities. And it necessitates actions to confront problems of gender and ethnic discrimination.<sup>149</sup>

For James Wolfensohn, and following him, for Mike Brklacich and Shona Leybourne, neither market forces alone, nor their logic can eradicate world poverty. There are human needs that cannot be met by the market, nor understood through the

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<sup>149</sup>.Brklacich, Mike and Leybourne, Shona. "Food Security in a Changing World" in the 2001 World Food Day Teleconference Study/Action Packet. Edt. Winthorp P. Carty. pg. 12.

logic of a self-interested human being. When speaking about the fullness of the market economy, the concept of freedom needs to be rethought as Sen explains in his book *Development as Freedom*.<sup>150</sup> Freedom is a reality that encompasses more than the economic dimension of human existence. That is, the environment needed to advance the “general capability of a person” moves beyond one’s participation in the market economy. Instead, as Sen notes, the creation of an environment that fosters human capabilities and substantive freedoms must include interrelated instrumental freedoms: 1) political freedoms; 2) social opportunities; 3) transparency guarantees; 4) protective security and 5) economic facilities.<sup>151</sup> In this light, the challenge that humanity must address in order to have peace (the eradication of extreme poverty), is more fundamental, more radical.

My thesis maintains that it is this fundamental challenge that Paul poses to the members of the Christian community at Rome. He does so by inviting them to envision a faith reality where that which is divine exists both within and beyond the world they understand as absolute. In this light, we Christians at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must find both the strength to recognize our subjection to the market economy, and the wisdom to accept that the reality we have constructed and deemed absolute is an ideology and not “natural reality.” Finally, we must command the courage to resist perpetuating the domination-subjection relationship we have with the market economy. At the points where its system does not serve the purpose of preserving the dignity of human and natural life, we must challenge it, critique it, and fashion it anew. But, we cannot hope to

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<sup>150</sup>.Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*. (New York: Anchor Books), 1999.

<sup>151</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 10.

do so before acknowledging our subjection to the market economy and recognizing its role as an ideology that governs our lives. We need to recognize that this ideology is a helpful and enticing vision of the way to attain a peaceful life in a society from which poverty would be eradicated. As such it can be seen as a good gift or revelation from God. But it is only one among several visions – revelations or gifts from God – regarding peace in society. As we shall see, the danger we face in defining this vision as an absolute is what Paul describes as “worshiping the creature rather than the Creator.” It is idolatry.

## CHAPTER III

### SUBJECTION, REFLECTION, RESISTANCE AND THE INTERPRETIVE PROCESS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

#### **Introduction**

The two previous chapters presented the view that both Paul and contemporary interpreters of his writings live within and are subject to an ideological construct. This construct presents itself as a natural reality and ultimately influences how human beings imagine themselves in relationship with each other and the socio-economic and religious institutions and ideals that help shape their lives. The first chapter argued that the *Pax Romana* (in all its manifestations), the political reality structured by the Roman Empire, represented the “governing authorities” to which Paul referred in his letter to the Christian community in Rome (Romans 13:1). The second chapter laid the initial foundation to how this project suggests that Paul’s writings on Christians’ relationship to “governing authorities” are relevant for Christian communities today. It offers an overview of the market economy in this current phase of globalization as the “governing authorities” functioning as Empire - ideology in our contemporary world. The primary question now before us is how does or how might Paul’s writings (especially Romans 13:1-7 in 12:1-13:14) inform the contemporary Christian community in its relationship to “governing authorities”?

Yet the question, how does or how might Paul’s writings (especially Romans 13:1-7 in 12:1-13:14) inform the contemporary Christian community in its relationship to “governing authorities” is essentially a question of biblical hermeneutics. Therefore,

before moving into a discussion on the possible teaching (s) this text can have for people's lives today, we must first examine how biblical meaning (s) are discerned. The previous chapter's conclusion named idolatry as a state of being which ravishes a person (or group) when one absolutizes a single manner of thinking, doing or being in the world and when one exists in relationship with others as if it is the only possible way of experiencing life. This chapter presupposes that the potential to absolutize one's understanding of life and being in the world, and thereby the potential to fall into idolatry, is a danger that extends beyond the historical world of the *Pax Romana* and the contemporary worldview expressed in the market economy. The danger of idolatry as the absolutizing of meaning reaches into the academic world and poses a threat to biblical interpretation.

For instance, as noted by a Scriptural Critical approach to biblical interpretation,<sup>152</sup> every biblical interpretation contains at least three "types" of interpretive moves: a contextual one, a theological one, and an analytical one. Although every interpretation bears these three frames, they often do so in different degrees and without making the less prominent features explicit. Some biblical interpretations, for instance, emphasize the contextual frame (s). These readings give considerable weight to the teaching the text offers readers for life with others in a particular life-context, and interacts with the particular ideology that structures this life-context for all of them. Other readings give more weight to the theological/hermeneutical features of the text. They are primarily concerned with the religious experience -- experience of the holy,

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<sup>152</sup>.See Patte et al., *A Contextual Reading of the Gospel of Matthew*, 43-53. See also Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, eds., *Reading Israel in Romans*, Trinity Press International: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 2000, 1-54.

experience in ritual -- through which and in which believers lose themselves into the Other (Divine other). They totally abandon themselves in the hands of the Other; totally submitting to the Other in complete trust that it will be for the good. And in this process, they envision everything in a striking new light that they know with their guts to be authentic truth. This is a very different vision as compared with the ideology which governs their daily life, which the text and the believers express in certain theological concepts and issues (God, Christ, Sin, Salvation, Discipleship, etc.). Still other biblical interpretations highlight textual features within the Bible and emphasize certain methodological tools for analyzing the text.

For nearly two centuries biblical scholarship emphasized the analytical dimension of the interpretive process and sought to uncover the theological meaning of biblical texts through linguistic and historical analysis. In doing so, interpreters proceeded as if they abandoned their personal experience and reality so as not to distort the Bible's original meaning with modern questions. In other words, readers proceeded as if they understood themselves as "objective interpreters" and imagined that the reading of a biblical text had as a goal the "establishment of an authoritative, comprehensive, and universally acceptable understanding of it; and that the teaching believers-readers draw for their lives from a biblical text is legitimate only insofar as it is grounded in such an authoritative interpretation of the text."<sup>153</sup> A biblical reading which has this as its hermeneutical aim is what I call "interpretive idolatry" (a reality which continues to haunt biblical scholarship today). Such a reading cannot adequately serve the needs of those looking to the biblical text for a teaching that empowers them in their relationship

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<sup>153</sup>.Patte et al., *A Contextual Reading of the Gospel of Matthew*, 11.

to governing authorities because neither the reader nor her social reality is consciously factored into the interpretive process.

Therefore, as we seek to read Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as a text that empowers those who feel powerless and overwhelmed in their relationship to governing authorities, we must first explore how biblical scholars might imagine this task as a counter-practice to interpretive idolatry—the establishment of an authoritative, comprehensive and universally acceptable understanding of the past. Interpreting Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutical theory in terms of the subjection-reflection-resistance pattern (named in my thesis) as the framework around which the discussion is centered, helps me to assess the extent to which Gadamer addresses interpretive idolatry. The first section examines “interpretive idolatry” and develops a critique of the traditional ways in which Romans 13 is and has been studied. It argues that “. . . a single, absolutely true interpretation does not exist, despite the claims of historicist scholars who seek to establish the so-called objective meaning of the text and those of fundamentalist Christians who read the text for its so-called literal meaning. Such claims are betrayals of the text because each biblical passage is a discourse, whose meaning is, and has always been, incarnated in the way the text affects its readers. . . .”<sup>154</sup> The second section examines the work of James C. Scott’s *Hidden Transcripts* and constructs a methodological approach through which to study the issue of subjection (reflection-resistance) in terms of Paul’s text so as to provide a critique of both the historical and contemporary situation (as described in the previous two chapters).

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<sup>154</sup>.Daniel Patte et al., *A Contextual Reading of the Gospel of Matthew*, (Nashville, TN.: Abindgon, Press, 2003), 47.

## **Subjection, Reflection, Resistance: Interpretive Idolatry and the Hermeneutical Theory of Hans-Georg Gadamer**

The fundamental premise framing the discussion thus far is that people are “always already subject” to the normative values and ideas that shape or lay at the roots of particular societies (with Althusser). As Gadamer’s hermeneutical theory explains, this premise is equally important when considering biblical hermeneutics and the interpretive process.

Gadamer argued against the presumption of an objective interpreter. Similar to Althusser’s understanding of ideology and human existence, Gadamer maintained that every reader enters the interpretive process always already affected and influenced (consciously and/or unconsciously) by one’s historical situation. Therefore, the reader necessarily brings to the interpretive task “fore-groundings,” “prejudices” or “prejudgments” about the subject matter addressed by the text. Gadamer writes about the hermeneutical requirement: “If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon (work of art or traditional text) from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always already affected by history. It determines in advance both what seems to us worth inquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation. . . .”<sup>155</sup> Gadamer suggests that interpreters fall short of reaching the fuller truth of a text and are even self-deceptive if they fail to recognize their personal “horizons” as well as the horizon to which the text under investigation belongs. Essentially, Gadamer suggests that any historical-critical interpretation of a biblical text must take serious the world of the text, the subject matter of the text and the (semantic) world of the interpreter. Gadamer’s analysis helps biblical interpreters recognize that we

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<sup>155</sup>.Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; New York: Continuum, 2003), 300.



are subject to a certain type of interpretive ideology and provides not only a certain reflection on it but also a certain resistance to it. A closer look at Gadamer's hermeneutical theory helps us see more clearly how it contributes to challenging the interpretive idolatry. However, in order to address this problem Gadamer's theory will need to be rethought from the perspective of resistance literature as advocated by James C. Scott.

### **Subjection and the Interpretive Process: Laying Bare Our Prejudices**

Gadamer defines horizon as "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point."<sup>156</sup> Both interpreters and texts are always already immersed in a horizon or situation that "limits their possibility of vision."<sup>157</sup> Theoretically, the role of the interpreter, according to Gadamer, is three-fold. First, interpreters must recognize and make explicit the worldview that shapes and influences their interpretive questioning. In other words, interpreters must foreground their prejudices, must lay them bare so that they do not distort the "authentic meaning" the text might relay. Gadamer builds his interpretive theory on the grounds of language as the medium of hermeneutic experience. Tracy's discussion on Gadamer's views regarding the significance of language on the interpretive process is helpful here. Consider, for instance, one's use of language. "Every language carries with it the history of effects, the traditions of that language."<sup>158</sup> The word religion as used in the English language, the

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<sup>156</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 302.

<sup>157</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 302.

<sup>158</sup>.Robert M. Grant and David Tracy, *The Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 156.

authors explain, “carries with it the history of the effects of both the Roman notions of ‘civil religion,’ Jewish and Christian notions of ‘faith’, and Enlightenment notions of ‘natural’ and ‘positive’ religion. No one who speaks or writes English escapes the tradition.”<sup>159</sup> This is true of every language. Therefore, Gadamer concludes that human beings are shaped and limited by the language of their respective cultures.

Moreover, when interpreting a classical text (as a writing, symbol, event, ritual or person) one is confronted by/with cultural differences that characterize how people in various historical horizons imagine themselves in the world. Tracy, for example, recalls the difficulty a Westerner might experience in attempting to interpret a classic Buddhist text. The challenge is that Westerners have a historical tradition that radically emphasizes the importance of an individual self. Whereas the Buddhist tradition emphasizes the dissolution of the self. Therefore, when attempting to interpret a classic Buddhist text, a Westerner always already comes to the text with preunderstandings regarding the role and significance of the self and is necessarily confronted by the challenges and/or critiques the Buddhist text places on this predisposition: “... we are startled not only by the questions and responses on the meaning of self in these texts. We are startled as well into a recognition of how deeply any language, any tradition, and, therefore, any preunderstanding is affected by this Western insistence on the importance of an individual self.”<sup>160</sup> These are for Gadamer essentially, hermenutical issues that reflect visions of what is significant in the life of the interpreter. In this light, every interpreter and therefore every interpretation is subject to her/his present cultural reality.

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<sup>159</sup>.Grant and Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 156.

<sup>160</sup>.Grant and Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 157.

Readers are challenged to embrace rather than ignore the limitations of our cultural perspectives. Recognizing our subjection to our cultural biases and therefore acknowledging the “myth” of an objective reader is for Gadamer a critical first step in the interpretive process.

### **Reflection and the Interpretive Process: A Fusion of Horizons**

A second and central aspect which Gadamer’s hermeneutical theory posits against a traditional historical-critical approach to interpretation is that interpreters must take seriously the semantic or meaning horizon (which is linked to a certain historical context—but transcends this history) of the text under investigation. Interpreters must “transpose” themselves into the horizon from which the text speaks. Gadamer likens this step to a conversation persons have in order to get to know one another—to discover the other’s background or horizon. The content of such a conversation is only “means to get to know the horizon of the person (for instance, certain types of conversation between doctor and patient).”<sup>161</sup> Transposing oneself into the horizon of others, is to perceive the other’s horizon, situation and ideas as intelligible. The purpose of this interpretive “transposition” is not to dismiss one’s own horizon nor does it require the one seeking understanding to agree with or see oneself in the historical horizon of the other. For instance, as Tracy notes, one does not have to believe in a particular tradition of the Bible in order to interpret it.

Gadamer warns however, that when speaking of the interpretive process, conversation (with the text) which seeks only to gain information about its horizon

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<sup>161</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 303.

diminishes, even prohibits the text's capacity to speak something true and valid for the interpreter. Gadamer writes that in such an instance the interpreter cannot find any truth in the past that is valid and intelligible as long as she does not acknowledge the otherness of the historical other and does not lose herself in authentic conversation:

[By] "factoring the other person's standpoint into what he is claiming to say, we are making our own standpoint safely unattainable. In considering the origin of historical thinking, we have seen that in fact it makes this ambiguous transition from means to ends—i.e., it makes an end of what is only a means. The text that is understood historically is forced to abandon its claim to be saying something true. We think we understand when we see the past from a historical standpoint—i.e., transpose ourselves into the historical situation and try to reconstruct the historical horizon. In fact, however, we have given up the claim to find in the past any truth that is valid and intelligible for ourselves. Acknowledging the otherness of the other in this way, making him the object of objective knowledge, involves the fundamental suspension of his claim to truth."<sup>162</sup>

A more profound meaning of Scripture is uncovered through a to-and-fro dialogue between the biblical text and questions that arise from the interpreter's context which are formulated in the perspective of her or his semantic horizon. Gadamer likens this to-and-fro dialogue, which is essential to the interpretive process, to play.

Consider for a moment play as a general concept. According to Gadamer the essence and power of play rests not in the subjective, controlled orientation of the players of the game. Instead, play "fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play."<sup>163</sup> Play or a game becomes meaningful only when the players release themselves (their subjective-controlled orientation) to the to-and-fro, back and forth movements which define the game itself. Play for Gadamer represents an heteronomous experience.<sup>164</sup> It

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<sup>162</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 303-304.

<sup>163</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 102.

<sup>164</sup>.See Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, eds., *Reading Israel in Romans*, Trinity Press International: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 2000, 1-54.

is a giving up of oneself; it is a suspension of one's subjective act of "knowing." Play is complete immersion into the occurrence of movement as defined by the structure of play.<sup>165</sup> Therefore, as Tracy notes in his summation of Gadamer: "The attitudes of authentic players of any game depend above all upon the nature of the game itself. If the game is allowed to take over, then the back-and-forth movements take over the players. In any game, it is not so much our opponents as it is the game that plays us. If we cannot release ourselves to that back-and-forth movement, we cannot play. . . ." <sup>166</sup> So, it is not one's usual self-consciousness that is central here but the common experience of the game and through serious playing "we may find however temporarily a sense of a new self. . . ." <sup>167</sup>

Like authentic play, authentic conversation rests in the participants' ability to release themselves to the to-and-fro movement of the conversation, or rather to the subject matter under discussion. Genuine conversation rests not on the subjective orientation of each participant but on the dynamic created in the back-and-forth movements generated by the participants reflecting on the questions and concerns posed by the subject matter. Gadamer insists that this model of conversation is equally applicable to the interpretive process. He speaks of the hermeneutical conversation, a conversation between an interpreter and a text where the interpreter "brings into language the subject matter that the text points to."<sup>168</sup> Gadamer understands that unlike a conversation between two people, texts only find their expression through the

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<sup>165</sup>.See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 105-106.

<sup>166</sup>.Grant and Tracy, *Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 158.

<sup>167</sup>.Grant and Tracy, *Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 159.

<sup>168</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 387.

interpretive lens of the human partner. This is not to say however, that the text has no voice in the conversation. In fact, it is the subject matter brought forth in the text that binds the text and the interpreter to each other. Therefore, in order to gauge meaning the interpreter must participate in the questions and responses provoked by the subject matter of the text by acknowledging the otherness of the text as representative of an other. Interpreting in this sense is not an objective exercise seeking to uncover an “immovable and obstinately fixed point of view” by the author of the text, nor is it a subjective exercise where the interpreter seeks to reconstruct how a subject brought the text into being. Instead, Gadamer maintains that the interpreter’s intent should be to “understand the text itself” which ultimately means that the “interpreter’s own thoughts too have gone into re-awakening the text’s meaning. In this the interpreter’s own horizon is decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces, but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and that helps one truly to make one’s own what the text says. . . We can now see that this is what takes place in conversation, in which something is expressed that is not only mine or my author’s, but common.”<sup>169</sup>

Therefore, to transpose oneself into the text’s semantic or meaning horizon (the subject matter of the text) is not simply to recognize the particular otherness of the text. Rather, it is to engage in the fullness of conversation where the interpreter brings her horizon into dialogue with the horizon of the past so as to see more fully the various dimensions represented in the “one horizon under which all exist.”<sup>170</sup> That is, the

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<sup>169</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 388.

<sup>170</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 304.

interpreter's horizon and the text's horizon are not alien worlds, but represent different phases of the historical movement of human life. Therefore, the text's horizon always already informs the interpreter's horizon and the interpreter's horizon always already informs the questions or prejudices one brings to the interpretive process.

Gadamer suggests that through the fusion of horizons there occurs 1) "authentic" conversation between the interpreter and the text (as a conversation partner) and, 2) participant's values, prejudices, prejudgments, and foregroundings on a subject matter are called into question, challenged and critiqued.

"Transposing ourselves consists neither in the empathy of one individual for another nor in subordinating another person to our own standards; rather it always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other. The concept of 'horizon' suggest itself because it expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand—not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion."<sup>171</sup>

This is a heteronomous reflective step for Gadamer where one finds a deeper level of truth looking both in and beyond the reality to which one is subject by acknowledging and participating in the otherness of the text as other.

### **Resistance and the Interpretive Process: Groping with the Issues**

The third dimension of Gadamer's hermeneutical theory that is central for this project is his emphasis on application. Gadamer recalls that the "early tradition" of hermeneutics consisted of three elements: *subtilitas intelligendi* (understanding), *subtilitas explicandi* (interpretation) and *subtilitas applicandi* (application).<sup>172</sup> The

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<sup>171</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

<sup>172</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 302.

romantics however, collapsed the distinction between understanding and interpretation. “Interpretation is not an occasional, post facto supplement to understanding; rather, understanding is always interpretation, and hence interpretation is the explicit form of understanding.”<sup>173</sup> To understand is to interpret. When understanding and interpretation are fused in this problematic way, application, the third element in hermeneutics, become totally disassociated from the interpretive process. Gadamer reclaims application as an essential hermeneutical element.

For Gadamer, application as a hermeneutical element has to do with the fixed text on the one hand and on the other hand, the sense arrived at by applying it at the concrete moment of interpretation. One sees this clearly when considering two often forgotten hermeneutical disciplines: legal hermeneutics and theological hermeneutics. A law (fixed text) “does not exist in order to be understood historically, but to be concretized in its legal validity by being interpreted.”<sup>174</sup> Likewise, a biblical text or a Gospel, “does not exist to be understood as a merely historical document, but to be taken in such a way that it exercises its saving effect. This implies that the text . . . if it is to be understood properly -- i.e., according to the claim it makes -- must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way. Understanding here is always application.”<sup>175</sup> According to Gadamer, it is a false pretense to suggest a split in the interpretive process between understanding what a text meant and discovering how to apply it in a particular situation. Therefore, Gadamer argues, the task of a historical

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<sup>173</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 307.

<sup>174</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 309

<sup>175</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 309.



hermeneutic is “to consider the tension that exists between the identity of the common object and the changing situation in which it must be understood.”<sup>176</sup>

Hence, the point of the interpreter acknowledging her or his subjection and entering the process of reflection (authentic conversation) through a fusion of horizons with the other conversation partner (text) is not to disregard one’s own subjection. Instead, Gadamer calls for an interpretive application, which in a limited sense is an interpretive moment of resistance against interpretive idolatry. That is, Gadamer invites the interpreter to apply (orient one’s thinking toward) the teaching learned in the reflective interpretive moment to the concrete interests and concerns of one’s life-situation (the subjection). Application then, according to Gadamer’s theory and challenge to “interpretive idolatry,” is an interpretive act of resistance because it applies to the interpreter’s subjection a “truth” or a teaching understood from a reality both in and beyond that of the interpreter’s given subjection. In doing so, the act of application (the act of reorienting our life around a new ideal) resists the absolutizing of meaning found in each of the participant’s worldviews (subjection) because “truth” is discovered through a new reality created by the fusion of horizons.

Application understood as an (interpretive) act of resistance against interpretive idolatry moves Gadamer beyond the traditional posture of the historical-critical method where the primary meaning of the text lie “behind” it (in the mind of the author, in the original social setting, in the original audience). “Historically conscious interpreters do not seek simply to repeat, to reproduce the original meaning of the text, in order to understand its questions. Rather, they employ all the tools of historical criticism and then

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<sup>176</sup>.Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 309.

seek to mediate, translate, interpret the meaning into their present horizon. . . .”<sup>177</sup>

Gadamer’s hermeneutical theory makes explicit that historical interpretations are “full-fledged” interpretations and they should not contend that they are only “analytical” or “exegetical.”

### **The Contributions and Limitations of Gadamer’s Hermeneutical Theory**

Interpreting Gadamer’s hermeneutical theory in terms of the subjection-reflection-resistance pattern is done to assess the extent to which he deals with interpretive idolatry as manifested in the practice of historical-critical biblical studies. Gadamer’s theory helps us to acknowledge a part of the subjection that frames our interpretations. It allows us to reflect on this subjection and to recognize that, rather than demanding that we distance the text from our theological and hermeneutical concerns, authentic conversation calls for an even closer to-and-fro dialogue with the text and a fusion of horizons. Thus, Emilio Betti’s criticism of Gadamer is beside the point. Betti criticized Gadamer’s emphasis on subjective prejudices, arguing that Gadamer’s theory made every interpretive act subjective and therefore it is not possible in principle to speak of a correct interpretation in a definitive way. Betti is correct, Gadamer’s work does seek to move historical criticism beyond its claims to positivistic truth (as Bultmann did before him and as many contemporary practitioners of historical criticism would acknowledge). And it is exactly the position this project argues must be taken in order to move biblical hermeneutics beyond interpretive idolatry.

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<sup>177</sup>.Grant and Tracy, *Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 159-160.

Gadamer's hermeneutical theory revealed biblical interpretation's subjection to a certain way of practicing the historical-critical methodological approach and addresses the issue by debunking the assumption of the "objective" interpreter. However, Gadamer does not dismiss the relevance of the historical-critical method; he attempts to enhance it by encouraging interpreters to acknowledge a plurality of contexts (different cultural and historical worlds -- as long as they are places where one can find different kinds of semantic horizons) as explicit factors in the interpretive process, to reflect on these different contexts so as to discern a more "authentic truth," and ultimately to apply this "truth" as an understanding of reality around which one orients her/his life. In these ways Gadamer's work proves invaluable in moving biblical hermeneutics beyond interpretive idolatry because it now lends itself to acknowledging as legitimate a plurality of meanings that readers might draw from the text. Moreover, Gadamer's hermeneutical model provides a theoretical impetus for understanding the interpretive process as three-dimensional, moving between subjection-reflection-resistance (as teased out above) and, in support of my thesis, offers a theoretical starting point for envisioning Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as an empowering word for those overwhelmed by their relationship to "governing authorities."

Yet, Gadamer is appropriately criticized by scholars other than Betti, including Habermas, Derrida,<sup>178</sup> and feminist scholars. Jurgen Habermas criticized Gadamer's focus on tradition as the locus of truth and consensus because it "ignored the dangers that such a consensus of meaning might be systematically distorted: for example, that it might

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<sup>178</sup>.For an insightful discussion on "hermeneutics in dialogue" between Gadamer, Habermas, Betti and Derrida see Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (trans. Joel Weinsheimer; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 124-144.

be the result of force and coercion. . .that tradition is a locus for untruth, oppression, and distortion.”<sup>179</sup> Derrida saw in Gadamer’s collapse of “understanding” and “agreement” and the appropriation of the other’s point of view (fusion of horizons) a “metaphysical will to dominate: an instrumental will to power that assimilates, denigrates, and annihilates otherness and difference.”<sup>180</sup> Finally, many feminist thinkers find Gadamer’s work to be patriarchal in that it “celebrates custom and tradition, reifies the past, and assigns a privileged position to male-biased language.”<sup>181</sup>

Against Derrida, I want to emphasize the value of Gadamer’s insights on authentic interpretation as marked by a fusion of horizons, which, when it is conceived of as “heteronomy,” involves precisely a recognition of the otherness of the other that one can acknowledge only insofar as she loses herself in the other. Therefore, Derrida’s claim that Gadamer “annihilates otherness and difference” is not for me, in and of itself, a criticism. Yet, Derrida raises an appropriate issue when he perceives in Gadamer’s conception of the fusion of horizons, and therefore of authentic interpretation, the trace of a “metaphysical will to dominate: an instrumental will to power that assimilates, denigrates, and annihilates otherness and difference.” There are two issues. First, along with Derrida, as well as Habermas and feminist critics, I want to underscore that the notion of a “fixed text” with a “particular meaning horizon” posits once again a text object – a classic, a custom, a tradition – and “reifies the past” without raising the issue of

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<sup>179</sup>.Susan-Judith Hoffman, “Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics and Feminist Projects,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (ed. Lorraine Code; Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 83.

<sup>180</sup>.Hoffman, “Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics and Feminist Projects,” 83.

<sup>181</sup>.Hoffman, “Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics and Feminist Projects,” 84.

the effect of this interpretive move on the oppressed and on women.<sup>182</sup> Second, and more generally, I want to note that one certainly does not find in Gadamer's hermeneutical theory any theoretical reflection on issues regarding social and political problems that reference ideological positions of domination.

For my present concern this means that Gadamer does not enable us to fully envision an interpretive process that allows for a reading of Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as a life-giving text. His understanding of subjection (foregrounding prejudices), reflection (fusion of horizons), and resistance (application) does not and cannot address the needs of those who feel powerless in their relationship to governing authorities. The critique leveled against Gadamer by Habermas and feminist scholars – that he ignores the dangers and impact of ideology and domination on people's lives<sup>183</sup> – moves my analysis beyond Gadamer's hermeneutical theory. In order to read Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as an empowering word with those who may feel powerless in their relationship with governing authorities, we must examine ideology, where now the focus is not the semantic horizon but the structures of power (religious institutions, political/state institutions, educational institutions and economic in which one finds subjection and resistance to subjection).

Therefore, in order to further demonstrate my thesis, I examine Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as resistance literature through an ideological critical lens. I use ideology

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<sup>182</sup>.Derrida's issue with Gadamer rests primarily in Gadamer's notion of a "fixed text" with a "fixed horizon." If there is a fixed horizon, rather than at least a two-fold horizon (similar, for instance, to Scott's two-fold contextual dimension represented by the public transcript and the hidden transcript -- see below) then there is a "metaphysical will to dominate: an instrumental will to power that assimilates, denigrates, and annihilates otherness and difference."

<sup>183</sup>.See for instance Marie Fleming, "Gadamer's Conversation: Does the Other Have a Say?," in *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (ed. Lorraine Code; University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 109-32.

in the sense of Louis Althusser's understanding of the term where beyond Marx, "ideology is not just a case of the powerful imposing their ideas on the weak."<sup>184</sup> Rather people are always already subject to the normative ideals, values and expectations of one's society. Even more, they endorse these ideals, values and expectations "because it provides a sense of identity and security through structures such as language, social codes and conventions."<sup>185</sup> In ideology people "represent to themselves their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them" and therefore accept as normal how they imagine themselves in relation to these real conditions of existence. That is, "people collude with ideology by allowing it to provide social meaning."<sup>186</sup> However, for Althusser, ideology is that which is self-evident. But, since it is a "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence," that which is self-evident is a construct, it is created through the imagination. And therefore, as Tiffin, Ashcroft and Griffith make clear in their analysis of Althusser and as I will further illustrate in my description of resistance literature, "although ideology serves the interests of the ruling class, it is not static or unchangeable and its materiality has certain important consequences. For while ideology is dominant it is also contradictory, fragmentary and inconsistent and does not necessarily or inevitably blindfold the 'interpellated'<sup>187</sup> subject to a perception of its operations."<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup>.Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 221.

<sup>185</sup>.Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 221.

<sup>186</sup>.Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 221.

<sup>187</sup>.Ideological state apparatuses such as church, education and police, etc. interpellate people or call them forth as subjects. They provide the context in which and the conditions by which one "knows" oneself. For instance, interpellation has been explained in the following way: when a policeman hails you with the call "Hey you!", the moment you turn around to acknowledge that you are the object of his

## **Subjection, Reflection, Resistance: Hidden Transcripts and the Interpretive Process**

The commanding nature of ideology as well as its fragmentary elements can be clearly seen in James C. Scott's study *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, which suggests that in any given political situation where an elite class dominates segments of the population, there exists a public transcript of events managed by the ruling elites and hidden transcripts of the same events produced secretly by the oppressed. Scott defines "public transcript" as a "shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate."<sup>189</sup> Hidden transcript, on the other hand, characterizes "discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders."<sup>190</sup> Produced by the dominant class, public transcript presents "the self-portrait of the elite as they would have themselves seen."<sup>191</sup> Although each group has both a public and hidden transcript, the public transcript produced by the elites serves as the ideological norm that conforms to the "flattering self-image of the elite."<sup>192</sup> The oppressed group's survival usually depends on their seeming compliance and obedience

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attention, you have been interpellated in a particular way, as a particular kind of subject. For Althusser, the subject is the individual's self-consciousness as constructed by those institutions (see Ashcroft, 221).

<sup>188</sup>.Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 222.

<sup>189</sup>.Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>190</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 4.

<sup>191</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 18.

<sup>192</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 18.

to the “onstage” script and political play of the elite, seeking recourse for their interest within the “prevailing ideology without appearing the least seditious.”<sup>193</sup>

Of course, the hidden transcript of the oppressed offers another form of political discourse, but it is relegated to the “offstage,” beyond the purview of the powerholders. Therefore the oppressed actions “onstage” seem consistently to affirm the ideological norm, limiting the hidden transcript of the oppressed to little more than a private venting mechanism. The power of the hidden transcript of the subordinate group, however, is that it is not limited to the “offstage.” Rather the oppressed hidden transcript functions as a “politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors.”<sup>194</sup> Usually, the subordinate group’s hidden transcript transmits a worldview fundamentally different from and opposed to that of the elites.

According to Scott then, resistance is about acting and speaking in such a way that reflects commitment against conformity to a given subjection. Resistance literature, as a framework for reading Romans, especially as presented by Scott’s “hidden transcript,” allows me to explore in Romans the textual features that Paul employs to challenge pockets of social and/or religious authority as absolute. As with Gadamer’s hermeneutical theory, through Scott’s analysis one sees three interrelated characteristics of resistance literature which again, I call subjection-reflection-resistance. However, the implications for Scott’s analysis around subjection-reflection-resistance as concepts for understanding the interpretive process prove quite different from those of Gadamer.

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<sup>193</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 18.

<sup>194</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 18-19.



Rather than privileging the hermeneutical frame and how people should orient their lives around a certain semantic reality, Scott emphasizes the contextual frame where the ideological dynamics are fundamental to the interpretive process.

### **Subjection and the Interpretive Process: The Public Transcript as Normative**

First, Scott infers that a given historical and contextual reality and a normative social ideology, not simply a semantic reality, inform the pattern of relating between the elite and the less valued group. Scott presumes that a public transcript fashioned by the elite functions as the ideology to which the subordinate group must respond both at the levels of thought and action. In other words, human relationships are, in Louis Althusser's understanding of ideology, "always already subject" to normative ideals, values and expectations which lay at the roots of particular societies and ultimately shape how people imagine themselves in relation to their real conditions of existence—and therefore how people act toward these relations. The challenge, according to Scott, is to recognize this seemingly natural ordering of the world and human relationships as ideology. Beyond Gadamer's semantic horizons, Scott recognizes that the power of an ideology (as absolute) is that it distorts our perceptions with its "interpretive grid" so that in order to envision a world counter to its conception of reality we must first acknowledge our subjection to a given ideology—to how people imagine themselves in relation to their real conditions of existence. As I will argue in the following chapter and a central aspect of my thesis, this is precisely what Paul is doing in Romans 13:1-7. Paul is acknowledging and calling the Christian community at Rome to acknowledge their

social reality to the Roman state that is part of the existence of life in the Christian community.

### **Reflection and the Interpretive Process: Discerning Differently**

Yet, according to Scott, disadvantaged groups are not bound to this “false consciousness.” Against theories on ideology which argue that subordinate groups are unable to draw revolutionary conclusions from its actions because they are enslaved by “hegemonic social thought,”<sup>195</sup> Scott maintains that although the public transcript of the dominant group functions as the ideology to which the disadvantaged group responds (their subjection), the subordinate group always creates a “hidden transcript” or a resistance text which discerns differently and draws different conclusions of the same events experienced by both it and the elite. The creation of this resistance text, this process which enables the less valued group to discern differently than the elite is for Scott, reflection.

This view of reflection which values and emphasizes difference varies greatly from Gadamer’s understanding regarding the role and process of reflection. According to Scott’s *Hidden Transcripts*, reflection does not collapse the distinctions between the participants in an event or conversation neither does reflection seek to overcome the “particularity” of each participant by factoring out of the interpretive process the other’s or one’s own “standpoint” (that is, real conditions of existence). Instead, reflection is possible on the part of the subordinate group precisely because they maintain a sense of

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<sup>195</sup> Here Scott refers to Antonio Gramsci’s formulation on ideology and hegemonic thought. See Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*. Edited and translated by Quinten Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London: Wishart.

autonomy and subjectivity and do not completely appropriate into their “meaning horizon” the worldview and/or interpretation of events as espoused by the ruling class.

While it is imperative that the subordinate group “understand” the ideological position of the elite, Scott does not make understanding synonymous with “agreement” and therefore dismiss the concrete factors of power relations inherently involved in the interpretive process [of the shared event (s)]. Scott recognizes reflection, as expressed by the disadvantaged group, as a dysphoric rather than a euphoric moment between the subordinate and the elite. Reflection represents a discerning moment of separation not integration, of critique and challenge not acquiescence. It is this type of dysphoric reflection that I argue Paul means when he appeals to the Christians at Rome not to conform to or live after the pattern of the “public transcript,” not to conform to “this world.” Instead, they are to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. They are to create hidden transcripts that envision a faith reality beyond that defined by the domination-subjection relationship normative to the ideology advanced by the elite. In this way, the Christians at Rome are able both to discern and demonstrate the will of God in the midst of “this world” (see Romans 12:2). However, the point of reflection in this sense is not to end the subjection. Instead, reflection prevents the subordinate group from viewing the elite and their interpretation of reality as a natural, universal, and closed understanding of the world and how people relate to one another in this world.

### **Resistance and the Interpretive Process: Posing or Practice**

The final characteristic of Scott’s resistance literature theory is resistance. Resistance, as expressed by the hidden transcripts of subordinate groups, represents those

acts (in words and/or gestures) that a person or community makes which places both their minds and bodies beyond the given subjection. Scott divides his major discussion on resistance into two sections: 1) resistance as posing and 2) resistance as practice. Resistance as posing addresses what Scott names the “safety-valve” theory which suggests that the “offstage discourse of the powerless is either empty posturing or, worse, a substitute for real resistance.”<sup>196</sup> Scott’s discussion on resistance as practice outlines his response to the safety-valve theory. Scott maintains that the subordinate group’s hidden transcript is more than just a “harmless catharsis that helps preserve the status quo.”<sup>197</sup> Instead, the hidden transcripts of the subordinate are firmly anchored in material practices that impact the power relations between the subordinate and dominant groups.

### **The Safety-Valve: Hidden Transcripts as Posing?**

Isn’t much of what is called hidden transcripts, even when insinuated into the public transcript, a matter of hollow posing that is rarely acted out in earnest?<sup>198</sup>

This quote represents the relevant question with which Scott struggles throughout his text. Hidden transcripts, at best, are of little or no consequence to dominant groups and at worst produce a condition of political passivity. Moreover, hidden transcripts as safety-valves can facilitate an even more fruitless fate for the subordinate: they can function as tools which enable the continued domination by the elite. As Barrington Moore notes, “Even fantasies of liberation and revenge can help to preserve domination through dissipating collective energies in relatively harmless

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<sup>196</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 184.

<sup>197</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 187.

<sup>198</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 184-185.

rhetoric and ritual.”<sup>199</sup> But, not only can hidden transcripts serve the interest of the dominant, they can also be orchestrated by the elite group, as many social theorist claim is the case with events such as carnival or other rites of reversal.

For instance, Max Gluckman and Victor Turner argue that because carnivals or rituals of reversal “underline an essential, if brief, equality among all members of a society and because they illustrate, if only ritually, the dangers of disorder and anarchy, their function is to emphasize the necessity of institutionalized order”<sup>200</sup> Ranajit Guha further notes that the “order-serving effects of rituals of reversal lie precisely in the fact that they are authorized and prescribed from above.”<sup>201</sup> Yet, Scott’s most compelling example illustrating the safety-valve effect of hidden transcripts comes from Frederick Douglass’ description of the holiday festivities among enslaved people in the antebellum South:

Before the holidays, there are pleasures in prospect; after the holidays, they become pleasures of memory, and they serve to keep out thoughts and wishes of a more dangerous character...these holidays are conductors or safety-valves to carry off the explosive elements inseparable from the human mind, when reduced to the condition of slavery. But for those, the rigors and bondage would become too severe for endurance, and the slave would be forced to dangerous desperation.<sup>202</sup>

Though Douglass’ reason is slightly different from the previously quoted social theorist, the essence of his argument is the same. The holiday festivities, explains Scott, do not substitute for an aggressive rebellion on the part of the enslaved men and women. Instead, it is as if the reprieve of a holiday provides just enough pleasure to quench any

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<sup>199</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 185. (Scott is quoting Moore)

<sup>200</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 185. (Scott is quoting Gluckman and Turner)

<sup>201</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 185. (Scott quoting Guhu)

<sup>202</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 185. (Scott quoting Douglass)

thirst for a radical rebellion. “It is as if the masters have calculated the degree of pressure that will engender desperate acts and have carefully adjusted their repression to stop just short of the flashpoint.”<sup>203</sup> In light of these safety-valve theories, Scott emphasizes a common perspective between his position and theirs. Both assume that the systematic oppression of one group by another elicits a desire in the oppressed group to strike out at and speak against the dominant group. Where they differ, explains Scott, is in supposing that this desire can be “substantially satisfied, whether in backstage talk, in supervised rituals of reversal, or in festivities that cool the fires of resentment.”<sup>204</sup>

**Acts of Rebellion: The Hidden Transcript as Practice.** According to Scott the fundamental flaw in the safety-valve position is that it overlooks the concrete, material struggle between the elite and the subordinate groups. The safety-valve theory relegates the struggle between the dominating and subordinate groups to the realm of thought and ideas about human dignity. But for Scott the fullness of reflection is also action or practice. Paul seems to make this same point.

Romans 12:1-2 is especially significant for our reading of Romans 13:1-7 and exploring how this text (in 12:1-13:14) might serve as an empowering word for those who feel powerless in their relationship to governing authorities. In 12:2, Paul, as explained in the previous section, challenges the Christian community at Rome to be transformed by the renewing of their minds, to think beyond the ideological norms advanced by “this world” which reinforces domination-subjection patterns of human

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<sup>203</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 186.

<sup>204</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 186.

relations. Paul uses the term ( $\delta\omicron\kappa\iota\mu\alpha$ ,  $z\omega$ ) which is often translated as discern. However, this term also carries the connotative meaning of “to demonstrate.” I think it is these two connotations of discernment and demonstration that Paul seeks to express in his usage of ( $\delta\omicron\kappa\iota\mu\alpha$ ,  $z\omega$ ) in Romans 12:2.<sup>205</sup> The point here is that through a “renewal of the mind” one is able both to “know” and to “clearly show” the good, pleasing and complete will of God. We can now see more clearly why in Romans 12:1, Paul calls for action. That is, in Romans 12:1 Paul calls the Christians at Rome to live or demonstrate (evidence) a way of life that reflects true worship and commitment to God: “. . . present your bodies as a sacrifice, living holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable worship” (Romans 12:1). The fullness of discernment is strategic action as Paul makes clear in the remainder of chapter 12. He offers exhortations as to how the people ought both to think and act (in words and gestures) in relation to one another in ways which are different from the norm espoused by Roman government.

In similar fashion, the fullness of reflection for Scott is also action or practice. Scott’s understanding of reflection is different both from Gadamer’s hermeneutical theory, which limits application or his notion of resistance to the insertion of a new theological vision (revealed through the fusion of horizons–reflection) into the interpreter’s context and the safety-valve theories which downplay the feasibility and viability of the hidden transcripts. Resistance for Scott includes an ideological analysis on human relationships and a fundamental appreciation for strategic actions on the part of the subordinate group against the public transcript constructed by the elite. Scott argues against the safety-valve view and its limited perspective on the challenges which the

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<sup>205</sup>.I will discuss this concept in more detail in the following chapters.

subordinate group makes against the elite. The struggle between these two groups is not limited to the realm of thoughts and ideas, but are anchored in strategic actions. Scott supports this argument by drawing a connection between “appropriation” and “domination.” He writes:

Virtually every instance of personal domination is intimately connected with a process of appropriation. Dominant elites extract material taxes in the form of labor, grain, cash and service in addition to extracting symbolic taxes in the form of deference, demeanor, posture, verbal formulas, and acts of humility. In actual practice, of course, the two are joined inasmuch as every public act of appropriation is figuratively, a ritual of subordination...The bond between domination and appropriation means that it is impossible to separate the ideas and symbolism of subordination from a process of material exploitation.<sup>206</sup>

Essentially, Scott argues that relationships are embodied, they express material characteristics that reflect how people imagine themselves in relation to their real conditions of existence.

Therefore, the flip claim of Scott’s position on how the dominant appropriates material “services” from the subjugated maintains that it is equally impossible to “separate the veiled symbolic resistance to ideas of domination from the practical struggles to thwart or mitigate exploitation. The hidden transcript is not just behind-the-scenes griping and grumbling; it is enacted in a host of down-to-earth, low-profile stratagems designed to minimize appropriation”<sup>207</sup> and to transmit a worldview fundamentally different from that of the dominant. Scott insists that one must not overlook actions taken by the subjugated against the pattern of relating established by the public transcript which ultimately seeks to maintain a domination-subjection pattern of relating between the two groups. For instance, one cannot examine the holiday festivities

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<sup>206</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 187-188.

<sup>207</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 188.



and their effects on the desire the enslaved community might have for acts of rebellion without also considering strategic acts such as “theft, pilfering, feigned ignorance, shirking or careless labor, footdragging, secret trade and production for sale, sabotage of crops livestock, and machinery arson, flight, and so on.”<sup>208</sup> Each of these acts functioned as a means for the enslaved community to oppose the slaveholders objective to produce hard-working, honest, and submissive slaves.<sup>209</sup>

The illustration of theft and deception in the slave community of the antebellum United States is helpful here. For example, narratives of former enslaved men and women often refer to the moral question of theft in explaining the different worldviews of the enslaved community versus that of the slave owners. The public transcript named theft, especially a slave stealing from an owner, as a moral vice. Slaves, on the other hand, viewed theft against the slave owners as a necessary response to an unjust social order. Consider Booker T. Washington’s response to a childhood experience where his mother awakened him and his siblings in the middle of the night to eat a chicken that she secured from an unknown source:

Some people may call this theft. If such a thing were to happen now, I should condemn it as theft myself. But taking place at the time it did, and for the reason that it did, no one could ever make me believe that my mother was guilty of thieving. She was simply a victim of the system of slavery.<sup>210</sup>

Ex-enslaved men and women viewed the vast inequities of the slave system as reason to engage in so-called theft. One ex-enslaved man, commenting on his behavior states:

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<sup>208</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 188.

<sup>209</sup>.Sanders, Cheryl Jeanne, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People: A Path to African-American Social Transformation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

<sup>210</sup>.Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics*, 14. (Sanders quoting Washington)

I did not regard it as stealing then, I do not regard it as such now. I hold that a slave has a moral right to eat and drink and wear all that he needs, and that it would be a sin on his part to suffer and starve in a country where there is plenty to eat and wear within his reach. I consider that I had a just right to what I took, because it was the labor of my hands.<sup>211</sup>

The ex-enslaved men and women's understanding of sin as an unjust social order that failed to provide for the basic human necessities of human beings and as failure to partake in the fruits of one's labor represent a radical reversal in moral reasoning on the part of the enslaved community. Theft and deceit, normally considered moral vices, were virtues to slaves in their dealings with whites. That is, according to the ex-slaves accounts, the greatest act of theft and deception happened in the event of the theft of human persons and their consequent treatment at the hands of slaveholders: "I told my master one day—said I, you white folks set the bad example of stealing—you stole us from Africa, and not content with that, if any get free here, you stole them afterward, and so we are made slaves."<sup>212</sup> Therefore, the goal of the enslaved community was to create an environment, under the guise of hidden transcripts, that destabilized the moral norms established by the public transcript. Sanders summarizes this point nicely:

...the ethics of stealing from thieves and deceiving the deceivers was empowering for these slaves insofar as they contextualized their thought and behavior with respect to a religious duty to undermine an unjust social order. In fact, the slaves' moral sense led them to define wrong in terms of white moral norms, where white attitudes and conduct were lifted up as counterexamples of what was acceptable in the slave community: 'a slave that will steal from a slave is called mean as master. This is the lowest comparison slaves know how to use: just as mean as white folks.' The slaves did not tolerate stealing and lying among themselves, because such behavior would constitute an imitation of white immorality to the detriment of black solidarity and well-being. It is clearly evident that the slaves fashioned a moral double standard with one set of norms applied to their own group and another to their interaction with whites. This double standard can be viewed as two

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<sup>211</sup>.Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics*, 14.

<sup>212</sup>.Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics*, 15.

aspects of a single moral code derived from a combination of social, religious, and racial considerations. . . To be sure, some slaves adhered to the Christian morality that precluded all stealing, lying, and sabotage, which may have worked for the benefit of the slaveholder. But at the same time these intragroup prohibitions also worked for the good of the slave community by preventing internal conflict.<sup>213</sup>

What is significant here is that the enslaved community did not reject the essential importance of the public transcript and its prohibitions against theft and deception. Instead, based on the ideological dynamics inherent in the two groups' pattern of relating, the enslaved community developed a hidden transcript (two aspects of a single moral code) that enabled them not to only disrupt the workings of the social order, but to espouse a worldview fundamentally different from that advanced by the slaveholders. Consider, for instance, Paul Escott's conclusions (quoted by Sanders) regarding the ex-slaves worldview of justice in relation to theft and deception.

. . . the slave community was governed by an ethic of justice, as opposed to the master's system of right and wrong: This ethic permitted 'theft' but imposed its own constraints. The former slaves believed it was right to take what was theirs; they plainly did not feel that it was right to turn the tables and inflict great harm on the master, thus causing injustice to flow in the opposite direction.<sup>214</sup>

The enslaved community not only thought differently than the slaveholders about their pattern of relating with one another, they often and necessarily acted in ways that denied the public transcript of the elite to function as the absolute governing authority. The hidden transcripts of the subjugated challenged the perpetual domination-subjugation relationship between the two groups. It also proved empowering to the subjugated group because through the hidden transcript as resistance (in words and gestures) the subjugated envisioned and created a reality beyond that advanced by the

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<sup>213</sup>.Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics*, 15-16.

<sup>214</sup>.Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics*, 15-16.

public transcript. In other words, the “hidden transcript has no reality as pure thoughts; it exists only to the extent it is practiced, articulated, enacted and disseminated. . . .”<sup>215</sup>

Therefore, examining Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as a type of resistance literature or hidden transcript allows me to present the text as an empowering word for those who feel powerless in their relationship to governing authorities. I am able to uncover in the text examples of ways in which Paul challenges the Christians at Rome to not only acknowledge and reflect upon their subjection to the Roman authority, but to actively (without appearing seditious) resist. Chapter six of this project explores pockets of Paul’s resistance language especially as it relates to Romans 12 and Romans 13:8-14. In these pockets Paul offers resistance language that denies the absolute authority of the Roman system of authority, (re)defining love as “debt of love” or the voluntary commitment one makes to addressing the physical and spiritual needs of both self and others.

### **Conclusion: Dysphoric Conversation and Subjection, Reflection, Resistance as Categories for Challenging Interpretive Idolatry**

Subjection-Reflection-Resistance has served as a weaving thread throughout the project thus far. These categories function as three interrelated interpretive pillars which are essential for moving biblical hermeneutics beyond interpretive idolatry. As interpretive tools, these categories invite readers 1) to recognize the embeddedness of one’s assumptions within a specific historical context; 2) to move to a cognizant space that recognizes a “truth-reality” framed both by their contextual world as well as their encounter with the text; and 3) to allow this new truth to transform how they imagine

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<sup>215</sup>.Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 119,

themselves in relationship with their conditions of existence. I teased out this pattern of subjection-reflection-resistance, in a very general manner, in Gadamer's work (see above) and it became clear how reading biblical text guided by these interpretive categories enhances the hermeneutical process.

While Gadamer's hermeneutical theory proves helpful in addressing our first concern -- moving biblical interpretation beyond a positivistic understanding of Scripture -- it proves less effective in helping us read Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as an empowering word for those who feel powerless in their relationship to governing authorities. Because Gadamer privileges the theological frame and finds "authentic truth" in a "fusion of horizons" his theory discards issues of politics, power, socio-economic authority, and domination and how these realities impact how people imagine themselves in relationship with each other. In other words, Gadamer's efforts to address the problem of "interpretive idolatry" ultimately is not sufficient. In his effort to resist this idolatry he ends up giving prescriptive and veto power to the theological/hermeneutical process (the fusion of horizons) over both the analytical process -- by positing a fixed text with a fixed horizon and the contextual interpretive process. He relegates the contextual interpretive process to what may be considered an "after-thought" application that ignores all the ideological issues of power and authority structures with regard to the teachings of the text. Without such contextual considerations, I am unable to effectively posit Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as an empowering word for those who feel subjugated by a governing authority because Gadamer finds such concerns antithetical to the interpretive process.

However, by continuing my use of subjection, reflection, resistance as framing concepts and turning to Althusser's understanding of ideology and Scott's theory of hidden transcripts (resistance literature), my reading privileges a contextual reading of the biblical text which necessarily takes into consideration issues of power and authority. Therefore, with Gadamer, I both recognize that the reader's context plays a role in the interpretive process and recognize the possibility of a multiplicity of meanings that readers might draw from the text. But, beyond and against Gadamer's hermeneutical theory, my reading presumes that the interpreter's specific social location necessarily informs and/or critiques the hermeneutical/theological features (as semantic meaning) involved in the interpretive process (against Gadamer).

For instance, to only understand authentic conversation as a "fusion of horizons" and absorb the identity and life experiences of the interpreter into "agreement" on a common subject matter between the two partners dismisses the concrete factors of power relations inherently involved in the interpretive process and essentially reconstructs the interpreter into an objective reader. Gadamer's theory does not invite the interpreter's context to offer a critique of the hermeneutical/theological frame because in Gadamer's analysis there is no recognition that the "authentic truth" arrived at during reflection, when applied to the interpreter's context, may not address the actual issues that the interpreter (as an individual or part of a group) faces. If the hermeneutical process does not allow for dysphoric conversation as authentic conversation, it may in fact, perpetuate the very subjection it seeks to transform.

In this light, I turn to Scott's *Hidden Transcripts* as a lens through which I may analyze in Romans the power dynamics present between the Roman "governing

authority” and the Christian community. By looking at how Paul discusses issues of subjection, reflection and resistance, I am able both to uncover the public transcript of the Roman governing authority (the *Pax Romana*) as well as point out the hidden transcript Paul created in response to the governing ideology. However, this project is not limited to a historical inquiry into what Paul’s letter might have meant for its first century recipients. Because meaning is interpreted anew in various contexts, this project seeks to understand how Paul’s letter to the Romans might help contemporary readers, living within a context where our “governing authority” is arguably more economic than political, address a feeling of powerlessness and helplessness in relation to the market economy and its logic. Based on the methodological approaches of both Gadamer and Scott,<sup>216</sup> I argue that Paul calls the Christian community at Rome to enter into the interpretive process as a movement between subjection, reflection and resistance. Likewise, I argue, that the contemporary Christian community must also enter into the interpretive process. We must acknowledge our subjection to the market economy in this phase of globalization, reflect on this subjection, leading to the conviction that God dwells both within and beyond our subjection, and resist this subjection (in words and gestures) so as not to allow our subjection to function as an absolute authority in our lives.

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<sup>216</sup>.I recognize that, by itself, Scott’s effort to address (*resistance*) this neglect of the ideological issues in interpretive idolatry (recognizing the public transcript of the elite as the only viable and reliable interpretation of an event) is not enough. The aspect of the *subjection* that he identifies is inadequate because of its exclusive focus, in his *reflection*, upon the ideological/contextual issues. Although his emphasis on the contextual character of resistance literature -- manifested through the tensions in its public and hidden transcripts) is essential in order to understand the contextual choices available to readers of such texts -- choices they make as they interpret in their own contexts, I am equally concerned with identifying the theological and analytical choices interpreters make as they read texts.

Our “hermeneutical conversation” with the text however, is not euphoric (with Gadamer) but dysphoric (with Scott). I enter into conversation with Romans 13:1-7 suspicious of its “first-glance” meaning and hoping for a possible empowering word. And only through examining this text through a hermeneutic of suspicion am I able to find it empowering and enlivening for those who may feel powerless and discouraged in their relation to the market economy in this current phase of globalization.<sup>217</sup> For even in dysphoric conversation, there is still the possibility of a paradoxical transformation in the conversation partners, because even amongst the disagreement and suspicion, one has opened oneself to the mystery of engagement, to a vulnerable sharing, where the insight (s) of the Other touches, no matter how slightly or contentiously, the preconceived theological notions of the partner (as Gadamer helps us to see). To engage in authentic conversation with the text is to be touched by the opinions’ of the Other/text and vice versa. However, such engagement does not come by disregarding self-identity (how one imagines oneself in relation to one’s real conditions of existence), but through its acknowledgment.

In this light, as I explore Romans 13:1-7, I acknowledge the market economy and its culture in this current phase of globalization as the “governing authority” in our current social structure. The market-place demand influences, even guides or decision making process. It decides who will die of disease and who will receive adequate health care. It decides who will receive a viable education and become equipped with the appropriate information required for rational thought, judgment, and planning, and who will fall prey to ignorance. The market-place demand decides who will be demonized as

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<sup>217</sup>.See Grant and Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 161-66.



enemy and who will be extolled as a friend. The market economy is the transcendent structure in which we live. We are “subject” to it and subjected by it. So, as we explore Paul’s three-dimensional process for Christians’ relationship to the state or “governing authorities,” his opening statement, “Let every soul be subjected by/to governing authorities” sets the interpretive tone for the remainder of the project in that it introduces the first step (subjection) in our hermeneutical frame.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUBJECTION IN ROMANS: NOW IS THE TIME TO BE AWAKENED FROM YOUR SLEEP<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the theoretical framework employed by this project to understand the import of Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as a liberative passage that empowers those who may feel overwhelmed in their relationship with governing authorities. Using Gadamer's hermeneutical theory, Althusser's understanding of ideology and Scott's theory of hidden transcripts (resistance literature), the analysis centers around subjection-reflection-resistance as three interrelated interpretive pillars that invite readers 1) to recognize that their interpretive assumptions are embedded within a specific historical context; 2) to move to a cognizant space that recognizes a "truth-reality" framed both by their contextual world and their encounter with the text; and 3) to allow this new truth to transform how they imagine themselves in relationship with their conditions of existence. In light of the theoretical framework discussed in the previous chapter, the analysis of Romans (particularly Romans 13:1-7) now focuses on examining the question in Romans: what is Paul's understanding of subjection as it relates to the Christian community's relationship to the "governing authorities" represented in the *Pax Romana*? However, because our analysis is not simply an historical inquiry, we are also interested in how Paul's position on subjection is relevant for Christian communities today, especially as it pertains to the global market economy when defined as the reigning governing authority.

As previewed in the introductory chapter, the analysis on Romans 13:1-7 builds on a series of questions raised by Jan Botha that historical scholarship fails to address:

Does it [Romans 13:1-7] call for obedience to the government on the part of Christians under all circumstances, or does it not? Can it be interpreted in such a way as to leave the door open for Christians to disobey and actively resist the state with a clear conscience? Stated differently, is the intended effect of Romans 13:1-7 conformity or confrontation on the part of its readers in their conduct regarding the authorities?<sup>219</sup>

Botha leaves these questions largely open and unanswered. This project, however addresses the issues raised directly, postulating that Romans 13:1-7, if read in light of its surrounding verses (12:1-13:14), reads less like a prescriptive demand and more like a call for Roman Christians to acknowledge the social reality of their lives in relation to the Roman state that is part of the existence of life in the Christian community. Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) is not necessarily destructive to people overwhelmed by “governing authorities.” Rather, this broader text shifts the emphasis from subjection as a single hermeneutical frame and expands the frame to include subjection-reflection-resistance. Subjection serves as one step of a three-dimensional process which moves between subjection, reflection, and resistance, which empowers those who feel powerless in their relationship to the oppressive power of governing authorities. In addressing Paul’s position on subjection, especially regarding Romans 13:1-7, both for its historical-textual and its current significance for those who may feel overwhelmed in their relationship with governing authorities, this chapter presents three interrelated claims. First, Romans 13:1-7 must not be understood as merely or primarily a prescriptive demand for how Christians ought to situate themselves in relation to the “governing authorities.” Rather, Romans 13:1-7 should primarily be understood as a type of

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<sup>219</sup>.Jan Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*. Scholars Press: Atlanta, Ga. 1994, 2.

descriptive signal that symbolizes the existing reality impacting on the lives of Christians in Rome – the reality in which the Christians in Rome always already exist. As such, Romans 13:1-7 can be understood as a call for Roman Christians to become aware, thus acknowledging their social reality in relation to the Roman state that is part of the existence of life in the Christian community.

This is to say then, as a second claim, that Romans 13:1-7 must not be left in the realm of narrative, but one must also examine its ideological dimensions. The power of ideology is that it appears obvious and is therefore accepted as the norm and the only “interpretive grid” through which persons envision the world. In describing the worldview and existing reality in which the Christian community at Rome lived, Romans 13:1-7 presents, in Althusser’s understanding of the term, an ideological ordering of society where the masses of people imagine themselves as “subject” to (and by) the governing authorities and accept their subjection to and control by the governing authorities as both natural and absolute. Therefore, the challenge Paul faces in his letter to the Romans, and in Romans 13:1-7 in particular, is one of idolatry where the dominant ideology under which the Christian community at Rome exists has become unrecognizable as a construct because it has been internalized as the natural order of society. Considering this view, the rhetorical significance of Romans 13:1-7 as a descriptive signal is to awaken the Christian community from its ideological sleep so that it is capable of envisioning and living a life different from that advanced by the dominant ideology, which appears natural but is in fact idolatrous.

Finally, Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) and its supposed call for Christian subjection to governing authorities can be read as a type of resistance literature. To understand Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as a type of resistance literature that

empowers those who feel powerless in their relationship with governing authorities is to recognize and examine the passage as paraenesis. Jan Botha's discussion on the social function of Romans 13:1-7 as paraenetic literature uncovers the ambiguity inherent in such literature.<sup>220</sup> Botha argues that the social function of paraenetic literature reflects both a paradigm of order and conflict. That is, paraenesis can be used both to maintain a particular social order as well as to disturb or undermine a particular social order. In the same way James C. Scott argues that a single event, interpreted by different groups of people can be either a public transcript (used to maintain the status quo) or a hidden transcript (used to challenge and critique the status quo), so too can a piece of paraenetic literature be used either to substantiate the ideological claims of the dominant class or to undermine these claims. A careful analysis supports the position that Romans 13:1-7 is paraenesis in the order of a hidden transcript whose rhetorical significance is to disturb and undermine the ideological position advanced by the *Pax Romana*.

### **Always Already Subject: Re-envisioning Paul's Rhetorical Reasoning**

Each of the positions outlined above differ in their conclusions regarding the rhetorical significance of Paul's call for subjection in Romans 13:1. Each of the positions also recognizes that the passage describes the current reality in which the Roman Christians always already exist, a cultural norm into which they were born, which they subconsciously or unconsciously accepted, without question or thought, like the air they breathe. The Roman Christians are always already subject to the governing authorities as

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<sup>220</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 202-212.

represented in the ideology of the *Pax Romana* (recall chapter one).<sup>221</sup> Scholars recognize these verses to represent the value system operative in Paul's textual and historical world and therefore suggest that Paul's supposed call for Christian subjection to the governing authorities reflects "the common-sense wisdom of the great mass of the powerless living within the power structure of the corporate state."<sup>222</sup> Interpreters highlight the political tension surrounding the burgeoning Christian community at Rome and, therefore, often conclude that Romans 13:1-7 stems from Paul's concern about its physical and political safety as well as the continued success of Paul's missionary journeys.<sup>223</sup> As such, "Paul's reminder is in effect, to say: you cannot change the terms under which you live, and since your position is already hazardous, remember the political realities of the politically powerless and live accordingly."<sup>224</sup>

Luke Timothy Johnson couches this same conclusion in explicitly ideological language (in Althusser's sense of the term) and therefore helps us see more clearly both the strength and limitation of understanding Paul's position on Romans 13:1-7 as simply

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<sup>221</sup>.Not all readings of Romans 13:1-7 presume that the "governing authorities" refer to the *Pax Romana*. For instance, Mark Nanos writes: . . . "Paul's instructions in 13:1-7 are not concerned with the state, empire, or any other such organization of secular government. His concern is rather to address the obligation of Christians, particularly Christian *Gentiles* associating with the synagogues of Rome for the practice of their new 'faith,' to subordinate themselves to the leaders of the synagogues and to the customary 'rules of behavior' that had been developed in Diaspora synagogues for defining the appropriate behavior of 'righteous gentiles' seeking association with Jews and their God. (Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996, 291).

<sup>222</sup>.James D. G. Dunn, *Commentary on Romans* V. 38b Romans 9-16, (Dallas, Texas: Word Book Publisher, 1988), 770. Also see Kaasemann above.

<sup>223</sup>.See Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 188. Johnson states that Romans 13:1's instruction to "be submissive" is a "recommendation that made perfect sense in a world where status and rank were so carefully defined and observed, and in which failure to be 'submissive' in the appropriate circumstances could threaten the existence of the community . . ." Also see Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 224 where he writes, ". . . Paul's exhortation to be subordinate to the authorities (13:1-7) focuses the ethic of nonretaliation on a potentially volatile situation . . ."

<sup>224</sup>.Dunn, *Commentary on Romans*, 770.

a call for, in Dunn's terms, political quietism.<sup>225</sup> Johnson writes: "For Paul and his contemporaries, the idea of changing the given social order would have been unthinkable. The social order was as stable as nature. Indeed, it was considered 'natural.' . . . The social order of household and empire was 'according to nature' . . ." <sup>226</sup> Johnson maintains that the values presented in Romans 13:1-7 are derivatives of the ancient household codes where the household's power of authority ran from the top down with every lower order showing respect and submission to the upper levels. Paul's statement in Romans 13:1-7 reflects such a pattern of human relationships. Now however, the household is understood as the "great household where the emperor reigned supreme as imperial paterfamilias. . . the emperor was owed respect, gratitude, and, above all, submission." <sup>227</sup> According to Johnson, Paul, in his infamous statement on subjection recognizes the normative ordering of society and the Christians place in it. In other words, Romans 13:1-7 represents the ideological convictions presumed natural in the first-century Roman world.

The more pressing point of concern, however, is the scholarly presumption of Paul's acquiescence. Some scholars presume that because Paul recognizes this normative ordering of society and reminds the Christians at Rome to acknowledge it as well, he understands and accepts this ordering of society as natural and therefore resistance to this order of human relationships as futile. If this is the case, Kallas is right when he asserts that, if this passage is not an interpolation then Paul relays a "servile and hypocritical"

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<sup>225</sup>.See James D. G. Dunn, "Romans 13:1-7 – A Charter for Political Quietism?" in *Ex Auditu*, V2, 1986, 55-68.

<sup>226</sup>.Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 187.

<sup>227</sup>.Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 186.

message. If this is correct, Keck accurately points out that Romans 13:1 profoundly digresses from the remainder of the Pauline corpus and its position on the estrangement of the world from God.

Yet, in my analysis, it is precisely this presumption of the naturalness of the dominant ordering of society and human relationships that Paul seeks to confront in Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14). Paul's attention to the concept of subjection here reflects neither a posture of servility nor hypocrisy. In fact, because there is an expectation of the imminent end of the age (cf. 13:11-13) or the nearness of salvation<sup>228</sup> Paul calls the Christians at Rome to acknowledge their social reality in relation to the Roman state that is part of the existence of life in the Christian community. One might ask, why would Paul need to remind the Christians at Rome about the power and the presence of the Roman Empire and its obvious influence on their lives? The answer to this question becomes clear if we again consider Althusser's understanding of ideology.

### **Natural and Absolute: Romans 13:1-7 and its Ideological Implications**

The value system functioning in Romans 13:1-7 reflects an ideology in Althusser's understanding of the term, according to which people are "always already subject" to the normative ideas or values which lay at the roots of particular societies. For Althusser, ideology is a "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence."<sup>229</sup> That which is self-evident is a construct, a creation of the imagination. In Romans 13:1 (13:1-7), the construct (following Althusser) is not the fact that the governing authorities exist nor that they have power. The construct

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<sup>228</sup>.Against Keck, see previous paragraph.

<sup>229</sup>.Althusser, *Essays on Ideology*, 16.



is the way in which human beings conceive of their relationship with the governing structure and to other individuals and groups. The construct is the “imaginary relationship” of domination-subjection. At the same time, however, the imaginary becomes reality as human beings accept the ideology as the natural ordering of human relations: the imaginary equals the obvious. The power of the ideology is that it does, as Dunn suggests, become the “common-sense wisdom” and therefore makes absolute the reality it espouses. Hence, Paul must remind his audience about their subjection because the power of ideology rests in its capacity to ingratiate itself into the very fabric of our social pattern of relating so as to prohibit our ability to envision the world any differently.

In this light, Romans 13:1-7 represents the dominant ideology in which the Roman Christians exist and therefore represents for Paul’s audience the natural ordering of society. Paul reminds the Roman Christians of their ideological reality, not simply to prevent the members from “making trouble in the streets,” but as a call to conscious knowing. A call to conscious knowing represents one step in a three dimensional process of empowerment for those who feel overwhelmed in their relationship with governing authorities.

Romans 13:1-7, as Paul’s reminder of Christian subjection to “governing authorities,” is best read in light of Romans 13:11 where Paul petitions his audience to awake from their sleep: “Moreover, knowing the time, now is the hour for you to be awakened from your sleep, for our salvation is now nearer than when we believed.”<sup>230</sup>

Paul employs the term sleep (ὑπνος) as a negative image which symbolizes mental

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<sup>230</sup>.καὶ τοῦτο εἰδότες τὸν καιρὸν, ὅτι ὥρα ἤδη ὑμᾶς ἐξ ὑπνου ἐγερθῆναι, νῦν γὰρ ἐγγύτερον ἡμῶν ἡ σωτηρία ἢ ὅτε ἐπιστεύσαμεν

indolence and weakness.<sup>231</sup> At the same time however, with an emphasis on an imminent eschatological expectation (νῦν γὰρ ἐγγύτερον ἡμῶν ἢ σωτηρία ἢ ὅτε ἐπιστεύσαμεν), Paul enlists a sense of urgency for the community to be awakened from their thoughtless inactivity and ignorance. Paul addresses a situation where the dominant ideology under which the Christian community at Rome lives has become unrecognizable as a construct because it has been internalized as the natural and obvious ordering of human relations. They are asleep. Paul's goal is to awaken<sup>232</sup> the people from their uncritical acceptance of viewing their current reality as a closed world from which there is no exit.<sup>233</sup> Neither Paul's proselytizing mission nor his efforts to strengthen current Christian congregations' faith in the lordship of Christ (as opposed to faith in the lordship of Caesar) will be effective or sustainable if the congregants' "minds" (see Romans 12:2) are not prepared to accept and participate in a different way of being in the world. Romans 13:1-7 names the ideological reality under which the Christians at Rome exist.

The rhetorical significance of the text rests not in its call to political quietism. Instead, as a liberative passage that empowers those who feel powerless in their relationship to governing authorities, Romans 13:1-7 is best understood as a type of rhetorical shock therapy. The passage jolts the Christians out of an ideological sleep which inhibits their ability to consciously know that they are indeed subjected to and subjected by a governing authority, the *Pax Romana*. Yet, for Paul, this ideological reality is not the natural ordering of society; neither is it absolute.

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<sup>231</sup>.See ὑπνος in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, V. 1: A-F, ed. Colin Brown, The Paternoster Press.

<sup>232</sup>.ἐγερθῆναι can also be translated as raise up or resurrect.

<sup>233</sup>.Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (rev. 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed.; trans. Mary Bergman Ramos; New York: Continuum, 1996), 31.

As such, Paul's comments in Romans 13:1-7 are part of his larger goal geared toward awakening the people from a sleep that keeps them from recognizing that they are no longer slaves to sin, and therefore no longer compelled to live according to the flesh (see Romans 8:12-13). This is not primarily an issue of subjective morality. Rather, it is an affront to the way in which human relationships have been ordered through the lordship of Caesar and the Roman Empire. One can also understand Paul's intention of his supposed call for Christian subjection to governing authorities in Romans 13:1-7 as a dimension of his ultimate efforts to disturb the ideological stability of the *Pax Romana* and its ordering of society.<sup>234</sup>

### **In Summation**

Thus far, I have made four essential and interrelated points regarding my first two claims about Romans 13:1-7: 1) the passage describes the reality in which the Christians at Rome always already exist; as such 2) Romans 13:1-7 presents, in Althusser's understanding of the term, an ideological ordering of society where one group of people maintains power and authority over (and often against) another group.

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<sup>234</sup>.Paul's goal, as is wonderfully illustrated in Luke's Acts of the Apostles, is to disrupt the normative status of the current social order under which the Christian community at Rome exists. Acts 17:1-8, for instance, presents a situation where Paul and Silas are described to the governing authorities as *the ones/people who have been turning the world upside down.*" (Οἱ θ.ν οἰκουμε,νhn avnastatw,santej ou-toi kai. evnqa,de pa,reisin - NRSV, KJV, RSV, and NKJV).

The second half of verse six explains more precisely what the accusers mean by their description of Paul and Silas. The accusers maintain that Paul and Silas have been acting against the emperor or Caesar claiming that there is another king, Jesus (6b). In this light, one can read Οἱ θ.ν οἰκουμε,νhn avnastatw,santej ou-toi kai. evnqa,de pa,reisin) more directly in relation to the *Pax Romana*. That is, οἰκουμε,νhn can be understood to represent the world as an administrative unit i. e. the Roman Empire. Furthermore, avnastatw,santej, understood as upsetting the stability of a person or group simply means, within the context of the pericope, that Paul and Silas, through their actions and teachings have been disturbing the ideological stability of the *Pax Romana* and its ordering of society.

The Christians are indeed subject to and subjected by “governing authorities;” 3) The power of ideology rests in its capacity to ingratiate itself into the very fabric of society so that its ordering of society appears obvious; 4) Romans 13:1-7 functions as a call to critical awareness, awakening its audience out of their ideological sleep.

According to these claims, Paul states the values presented in Romans 13:1-7, not as a prescriptive demand but as a descriptive reminder for the Christians at Rome to acknowledge their social reality in relation to the Roman state which is part of the existence of life in the Christian community. This is not to say that Romans 13:1-7 does not function as a type of paraenesis. On the contrary, Paul’s use of paraenesis as a rhetorical tool helps him call the Christian community at Rome to critical consciousness regarding how they envision themselves in relationship with the “governing authorities” and therefore how they live in relationship with the “governing authorities” and each other. Paraenetic literature possesses an ambiguous character in that it can serve both as a tool for maintaining and/or challenging the status quo. Because Romans 13:1-7 is descriptive (describes the current reality of domination-subjection under which the Christians exist) it appears to maintain the status quo. However, reading the passage in light of the larger letter (especially 12:1-13:14) conveys it as a hidden transcript that seeks to make visible the presumed natural and obvious assumptions guiding how people imagine themselves in relation to their conditions of existence. A closer look at paraenetic literature and its sociological function will help us better understand how Paul skillfully negotiates this genre in order to “awaken the community from their sleep.”

## **Subjection as Paranesis: Order and Conflict in Jan Botha's Sociological Reading of Romans 13:1-7<sup>18</sup>**

Understanding Romans 13:1-7 to function as a type of paraenetic literature which offers “general and practical guidance for human behavior within a previously shaped comprehensive understanding of social reality,”<sup>236</sup> Botha turns to L. G. Perdue's study, “The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature” (*Semeia*, 50:5-39, 1990), as a foundation for analyzing the sociological and rhetorical significance of the passage. While disagreeing with the ultimate conclusion Botha draws about the rhetorical significance of Romans 13:1-7 in light of Perdue's sociological model, Perdue's model and Botha's appropriation of it to Romans 13:1-7 are helpful conversation partners for further explicating the passage as an empowering word for those who feel powerless in their relationship to governing authorities.

### **Paraenesis as a Paradigm of Order**

Perdue employs Victor Turner's structure-anti-structure model to argue that the social function of paraenetic literature reflects both a paradigm of order and conflict. Paraenesis can be used both to maintain a particular social order as well as to disturb or undermine a particular social order. As a paradigm of order, paraenetic literature supports a view that understands the world to function as a harmonious whole with each element possessing its specific place and role. These set roles and social positions are governed by a divine council or natural law that maintains order through a system of reward and retribution. Those who live in harmony with these preordained cosmic norms

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<sup>236</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 202.

receive well-being but those who resist or violate these norms receive punishment and destruction.<sup>237</sup>

Perdue categorizes society on two levels. On a grand level, society is conceived of as a *Gesellschaft* (larger society) with its basic institutions, classes and laws grounded in and reflective of the cosmos. On a more intimate level, society is conceived of as a *Gemeinschaft* (smaller community) made up of family, kinship groups, clubs, and religious groups based on personal piety.<sup>238</sup> Social inequalities based on class, gender, and position were understood as the natural ordering of society and ordained by the gods. Perdue writes about individuals' and groups' responsibility to the larger society:

Individuals were to accept their fate, normally determined at birth, and to behave according to their place and its norms in the social order. Grounded in the order of creation and enforced by the power of the state, laws . . . were authoritative and required obedience. State religion legitimated social institutions, patterns, and laws, and its festivals and rituals were designed through mythic enactment to sustain the natural and social order. Conformity to social rules and obligations of the *Gesellschaft* was required, while variance from the laws and customs of the prevailing order was considered deviant behavior, threatening the wellbeing of both the individual and society. Change was viewed as disruptive and consequently was resisted by both political power and social custom.<sup>239</sup>

Botha argues that it is out of such a society that Paul's letter to the Romans originated. Through its appeal to divine order and tradition, paraenesis which reflects this type of paradigm tends to control powerless groups and maintain the privileged status of those who possess power and wealth.

According to Botha, one can easily point out elements of this paradigm of order in Romans 13:1-7 and therefore read the passage as legitimizing the status quo. For

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<sup>237</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 203. and Perdue, "The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature," 6-7.

<sup>238</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 203.

<sup>239</sup>.Perdue, "The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature," 7.

instance, Botha argues that the ideals expressed in Romans 13:1-7 reveal certain universal values attributed to God and ascribed to authorities: everyone should submit to God; those who resist God's ordinations are punished; God always does what is good; everything belongs to God. These values are thereby transposed to authorities. Thus, everyone should submit to governing authorities (Romans 13:1). Through the governing authorities, God punishes those who resist. The governing authorities always do what is good; everything belongs to God, therefore that which one gives to governing authorities, one gives to God (including honor and taxes).<sup>240</sup> Within the larger society then, the authorities are instrumental in maintaining the harmonious flow of this divinely ordained cosmic order. Botha's observations are worth quoting at length here because they speak directly to the correlation he draws between Perdue's social model of order and Romans 13:1-7. Botha writes:

Therefore in the context of Romans 13:1-7, those who submit to the authorities, are characterized as people who 'do good' (13:3). . . Those who 'do good' . . . receive the authorities' approval/praise . . . and their life and well-being assured. This assurance or bestowing of praise from the authorities is specifically grounded with a reference to the function of the authorities in terms of their divine ordination: the authority is a servant of God for your good, (13:4). Note that what 'good' consists of is not explicated. The unspoken assumption is that everyone knows what is good (and what is bad). The general and unspoken assumption is a reflection of the idea of a cosmic order consisting of a harmonious whole.

Those who violate the cosmic norms, in this case by resisting the authorities, will be punished: they will incur judgment, (13:2). The judgment is explicated with the reference to the 'sword' being carried and used by the authorities (13:4). The implication of this reference is clear, namely, the punishment consists of the fact that the authorities will execute those who do 'bad.' This may also be taken as an assumption presupposing a cosmic order of harmony and order. Everyone knows what is bad. To resist the authorities is one specific example of 'bad' conduct. To resist the authorities, therefore, endangers the harmony of the divinely ordained cosmic order sustained by the divinely ordained authorities. Therefore 'bad'

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<sup>240</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 204 and 224.

behavior should be rooted out to ensure the continued harmonious existence of the cosmic order.<sup>241</sup>

In relation to the Roman Empire, the social rules and obligations to authorities are submission and conformity. Perdue's sociological model of order and Botha's appropriation of it to Romans 13:1-7 substantiates my claim that Romans 13:1-7 reflects the Roman Christians' subjection; it reflects the public-transcript, describing the world and normative values in which they always already exist.

### **Paraenesis as a Paradigm of Conflict**

Paraenesis, however, reflects both a paradigm of order and of conflict. As a paradigm of conflict, paraenesis seeks to subvert an existing social structure and provide for the formation of a different one.<sup>242</sup> This model perceives the world as a place of dissonance where opposing forces/gods struggle for domination. People within the dominant society (Gesellschaft) who are denied access to power often view the elite as coercive and oppressive. For the dominated and disenfranchised group, paraenesis undermines and destabilizes the traditional teaching and oppressive institutions ordered and controlled by the elite.<sup>243</sup> While some groups in antiquity, notes Perdue, considered qualitative social change to be impossible and found meaningful existence within more intimate communities (families, clubs, friendship and religious groups), others did see change at the level of dominant society (Gesellschaft) possible. For instance, apocalyptic groups/individuals, argues Perdue, "considered social change at the level of

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<sup>241</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 205.

<sup>242</sup>.Perdue, "The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature," 6.

<sup>243</sup>.Perdue, "The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature," 8-9.



the Gesellschaft possible, but only by radical action, usually in the form of divine intervention, supplemented perhaps by nonconformist human behavior. . . .”<sup>244</sup>

Because a subversive social model is inherently based on change, Perdue finds helpful Turner’s model (based on A. van Gennep’s *Rites de Passage*) in which society, performing a type of rites of passage, represents the continuing movement back and forth between structure and anti-structure.<sup>245</sup> Turner maintains that whenever one experiences change in place, state, social position, and age, one moves between three temporal and spatial phases: separation, margin and aggregation. In the first phase of rites of passage, individuals or groups are detached from a fixed place in the social structure and leave behind all prior cultural conditions. The participants then enter the second phase, liminality, a state of betwixt and between, a state devoid of cultural norms and customs. Liminality consists of two stages. In the first stage, neophytes experience the death of their previous social identity and its governing norms which is often metaphorically described as, for instance a death, womb, or wilderness experience. Perdue parallels this phase of the liminal experience with practicing what can be described as a purely “deconstructive” model of conflict. In this phase of the rites of passage, paraenesis is designed to, at least temporarily, undercut the validity of the normative public social order, that is, the public transcript. Likewise, argues Perdue, the intent of a paraenesis following a purely deconstructive subversive model is to subvert the conventional understanding of reality by undermining its social knowledge and bringing into question

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<sup>244</sup>.Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature,” 9.

<sup>245</sup>.Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature,” 10.

its legitimacy.<sup>246</sup> This may include periods when groups who believe change possible, engage in activities designed to bring about the demise of the prevailing order.

During the second phase, the liminal experience takes the form of a type of rebirth where the values of the normative social order are not only questioned but repudiated. During this phase of the liminal experience, ritual leaders indoctrinate the novices with a new perception of the social world in which they exist and how they are to imagine themselves in relation to their real conditions of existence. The goal is to prepare the novices for reincorporation into the community (the *Gesellschaft*) where they are to live as new beings, “capable of living transformed lives with different behavior patterns.”<sup>247</sup> Perdue parallels this second phase of the liminal experience with practicing what I call a “constructive” model of conflict. From this perspective, “paraenesis may be subversive in positing a new, though not fully realized, social order which calls for its own code of behavior where the new group is either to be more egalitarian or to grant power and position to certain social groups previously denied them.”<sup>248</sup> Resistance to the normative social order is less directed at dismantling the dominant social order and more concentrated on establishing an alternative way of perceiving and being in the world that differs from that advanced by the prevailing social order.

Grounded in Perdue’s sociological paradigm of paraenesis as both a model of conformity and conflict, Botha concludes about the meaning of Romans 13:1-7:

. . . Within the rhetorical situation of the letter to the Romans, [Romans 13:1-7] forms part of a type of paraenesis which is characteristic of a society going through a liminal experience in the second phase, namely, the development of new patterns

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<sup>246</sup>.Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature,” 9.

<sup>247</sup>.Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature,” 10.

<sup>248</sup>.Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature,” 9.

of behaviour no longer compatible with the previous social order (ὁ αἰῶνος οὗτος). In order to succeed with the establishment of this new *communitas* and in order to further its aims (by means of the establishment of an operational base for Paul in Rome and his envisioned missionary activities in Spain), it is for pragmatic reasons necessary for the Christian *Gemeinschaft* [smaller community] to conform to some of the values of the *Gesellschaft* [larger society], in particular those regarding the conduct towards the people in positions of authority. . . .<sup>249</sup>

According to Botha's analysis then, Romans 13:1-7 represents Paul's call to partial conformity to the normative values of "this world" in order to secure both the safety of the Christian community at Rome and the continued expansion of his missionary activity. Because Botha reads Romans as part of a larger textual frame (in 12:1-13:14), he resists categorizing the passage as a paraenesis which ultimately supports the maintenance of the status quo. Instead, in reading Romans 13:1-7 as part of a larger textual frame (in 12:1-13:14) he suggests the passage must be understood as a compromised portion of a subversive paraenesis that is attempting to prepare the Christian community at Rome to accept new ways of thinking and being in the world contrary to that espoused by the *Pax Romana*. However, Botha fails to entertain the possibility that Romans 13:1-7 supports, not as a point of conformity but as a point of confrontation, a direct subversive paraenesis against the values and patterns of human relations advanced by the (dominant society) *Gesellschaft* and does not represent a Pauline call to conformity, partial or otherwise.

Botha rightly suggests that Romans 13:1-7 can be read as a type of paraenesis which is characteristic of a society going through a liminal experience. However, it does not represent, as Botha argues, a liminal experience of the second phase, where novices construct new patterns of perceiving and being in the world. Neither does Romans 13:1-7 reflect a liminal experience of the first phase where novices experience the death of

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<sup>249</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 225.

their previous social identity and its governing norms.<sup>250</sup> Yet, against Botha, Romans 13:1-7 can be read as a type of paraenesis which is characteristic of a society going through a liminal experience in what I will call the kindergarten phase where the novices are made aware or are “awakened from their sleep” regarding their perception of the natural ordering of the world. Turner’s sociological model of structure-anti-structure, Perdue’s employment of it to explicate paraenesis as reflecting both a paradigm of order and of conflict, and Botha’s appropriation of this model to help explain the rhetorical significance of Romans 13:1-7 all move from a presumption (s) that the novices are aware of the ideological nature (following Althusser) of the dominant society (Gesellschaft) and the values and patterns of human relating it espouses. Yet, we do not need to assume that Paul presupposes that his readers are aware of their subjection by governing authorities.

### **Subjection, Imposition and Volition: Dynamics of Awareness in Romans**

We need to explore various texts in Romans in order to recognize that Paul presupposes that his readers are unaware of their subjection by governing authorities in the sense that they assume the dominant worldview according to which these authorities are perceived as natural and absolute. Demonstrating this point begins with an examination of Romans 1:18-25. This pericope lays out, in the words of Luke A. Johnson, the “basic ‘rules of the game’ concerning relations between God and humans, as well as the way humans have managed to distort the game by their idolatrous turning

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<sup>250</sup>.Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature,” 10.

away from the source of their being.”<sup>251</sup> These passages illustrate that Paul placed considerable weight on ideology and its capacity to frame how people imagine themselves in the world.

After laying out the “basic rules of the game,” I will analyze four Romans texts that directly reference subjection (ὑποτάσσω): 8:7; 8:20; 10:3; and 13:1. In each of these passages (including Romans 1:18-25) Paul’s discussion on subjection is invariably tied to the concepts of one’s will and one’s ability. That is, the questions loom when reading these texts: Are people and nature subject as a consequence of their own choosing or as a consequence of external coercion or both? Also, within each of the aforementioned passages and their literary context are there also a wider reference to the concept of awareness and its role in sustaining or challenging one’s subjection to a given governing authority? Delineating the manner in which Paul correlates the concepts of subjection, volition, imposition and awareness helps us see more clearly the rhetorical significance of Paul’s argument in Romans 13:1-7 as an empowering word for those who feel overwhelmed in their relationship with governing authorities.

### **Subjection and Volition: Knowing but not Acknowledging**

18) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and injustice of humanity, who by their injustice suppress the truth. 19) Because what can be known about God is manifest to them, for God has shown it to them. 20) Every since the creation of the world God’s eternal power and divine nature, though invisible, have been clearly discerned through the things God has made. So they are without excuse. 21) For though they knew God, they did not honor God or give God thanks. Instead, they were rendered futile in their reasoning and their senseless mind was darkened. 22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools. 23) And they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. 24) Therefore, God gave

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<sup>251</sup> .Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 31.

them up to the eager desires of their hearts for impurity, resulting in the degrading of their bodies among themselves. 25) They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and served and worshiped the creature rather than the creator. . . .

The argument Paul lays out against humanity centers around four interrelated concepts: subjection, volition, imposition and awareness. Subjection is a key concept in Romans and Paul presents it both in a positive and pejorative sense. Paul understands the proper God-human relationship to be one where humanity understands itself to be subjected by God and in turn, humanity subjects itself to God. However, according to Paul, humanity “knows God” and clearly discerns that creation in all of its magnificence depends on God. Humanity understands itself to be subjected by God. Yet, argues Paul, humanity suppresses this truth in its refusal to acknowledge God as the Creator. Paul draws a distinction between knowing God and acknowledging God. To know God, according to Paul, refers to one’s capacity to recognize God as the premise of life. To acknowledge God as Creator, on the other hand, means to acknowledge that God has a claim on one’s being that no creature can make, indeed the ultimate and immediate claim on one’s very existence.<sup>252</sup> The acknowledgment that God has the ultimate and immediate claim on one’s very existence is therefore manifest through a willful choice both to honor the presence and power of God in the created order and to give God thanks for the life experienced in the goodness of God’s created order. Because humanity “knows God” or understands their subjection by God, they are gifted with the capacity for human freedom and are thus able to choose whether to live a life in subjection to God. Humanity’s subjection by God is, according to Paul, the gift of life afforded to them by

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<sup>252</sup>.Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 33.

the Creator. Humanity's subjection to God is, according to Paul, the proper response to this gift.

### **Subjection and Imposition: The Tragedy of a Darkened Mind**

Humanity's subjection by God represents, for Paul, subjection in the positive sense -- a rational exercise of God's righteous authority for the advancement and wholeness of God's creation. Humanity, however, rejects this ordering of divine-human relation, and thus condemns itself to a type of "surplus subjection."<sup>253</sup> Contrary to Paul's understanding of humanity's subjection by God as necessary for a stable natural environment and healthy human relationships, he characterizes humanity's "surplus subjection" as humanity being subjected by a distorted mind-set<sup>254</sup> that disrupts the natural environment (see 8:20) and dominates and devalues human relationships. Because humanity fails to give honor and thanks to God, because humanity fails to subject itself to God, "they were made futile in their reasoning and their senseless mind was darkened." Therefore, in Romans, Paul moves from the presumption that humanity is senseless and intellectually dysfunctional. Their condition is a manifestation of God's wrath, the inevitable consequence, according to Paul, of humanity's refusal to acknowledge the "truth about God." That is, they refuse to properly reverence God as the Creator. Instead of acknowledging God as the Creator of the universe, they "suppress" this truth and place themselves at the center of the universe. Humanity imagining itself

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<sup>253</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955. This phrase is an adaptation of Marcuse's "surplus repression." Marcuse defines surplus repression as: the restrictions necessitated by social domination. This is distinguished from (basic) *repression*: the 'modifications' of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization. (See chapter 2 [p.35]).

<sup>254</sup> I will further discuss Paul's understanding of "mind-set" or φρόνημα in the following section.

(and the objects of their making) as worthy of worship over God the Creator is, according to Paul, a lie, an idolatrous turning away from God.

As such, Paul draws a connection between idolatry and ideology. Essentially, Paul argues that because humanity imagines itself in an improper relationship with God (ideology), it falls into an idolatrous existence. This idolatrous existence cripples humanity's capacity for moral reasoning and just human relations. It is in this way, notes Robert Jewett, that human beings "come under a power so invisible, so *unconscious* [emphasis mine], and yet so encompassing in its evil consequences that they cannot grasp what has gone wrong. This is how all humans fall 'under the power of sin'" to use the frequent translation of Romans 3:9.<sup>255</sup> This is how all humans fall under the power of "surplus-subjection."

Paul extends humanity's subjection beyond that of irrational thought centered around aimless issues. The fullness of humanity's "surplus subjection" culminates in the darkening of humanity's mind/heart. Humanity's "darkened mind" as a "surplus subjection" can be likened to Althusser's understanding of ideology. First, note that Paul uses the singular *kardi, a* (Romans 1:21) when referring to humanity's diminished capacity for moral reasoning. The singular is significant because through its usage Paul references the heart/mind as the center of reasoning and moral judgment for each individual person. But, the fact that humanity's *kardi, a* (in the singular) is darkened, also presents the mind/heart as a system of thought or societal way of thinking or value system that lays at the base of a community, which, according to Paul defies the will of God for divine creation. That *kardi, a* in the singular can also represent a social value

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<sup>255</sup> Jewett, Robert. *Saint Paul at the Movies: The Apostle's Dialogue with American Culture*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1993, 33.



system or mind-set is further evidenced in Romans 1:28 where Paul argues that God hands humanity over to a debased mind (αὐδο, *kimon nou/n*) and then goes on to describe this debased mind, that again he presents in the singular, as a social pattern of acceptable behavior among the members of the community (Romans 1:29-32).

Humanity's darkened mind then, represents for Paul an idolatrous ideology out of which humanity always already exists because of its refusal to acknowledge God as the Creator.

Yet, as the two passive verbs indicate in Romans 1:21 (εὐματαιώ, *qhsan*, εὐσκοτί, *sqh*), Paul is not suggesting that humanity, of its own volition, made its reasoning foolish or its mind darkened. Rather, this mind-set is something that happened to humanity. This is subjection as an imposition -- as a manifestation of the "wrath of God." Essentially, Paul equates the "wrath of God" with God giving humanity up or "handing them over" to the eager desires of their hearts which resulted in exploitive and destructive human relations. By "withholding the appropriate recognition of God they became less (not more) able to function as rational beings; failure to recognize their own creatureliness brought with it a decreasing **ability** [emphasis mine] to function as a human being."<sup>256</sup>

Therefore, humanity's darkened mind can only imagine itself in a distorted relationship both with God and one another. Paul understands the reality created and perpetuated by humanity's darkened mind to be a "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence."<sup>257</sup> That which is self-evident is a construct, is created through the imagination. In Romans 1:18-32, the construct (following Althusser) is not the fact that the creation is a manifestation of

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<sup>256</sup>.Dunn, *Commentary on Romans*, 71.

<sup>257</sup>.Althusser, *Essays on Ideology*, 16.

God's presence and power. The construct is the way in which human beings conceive of their relationship with creation (with one another and the natural environment), and thus with God (see Romans 1:23). Humanity constructs an imaginary relationship based upon their cultural norms which they elevate to the status of being divine. Humanity therefore imposes an imaginary limit on God's order by substituting its limited perceptions and constructs as the antepenultimate natural order. The imaginary becomes reality as human beings accept their own ideology as the natural ordering of divine-human and human-human relations: the imaginary equals the obvious. Humanity becomes entrapped by and in its distorted view of its relationship with God. The artificial limits imposed on God's order subsequently impose a restraint on divine-human relationships, including humanity's relationship with other aspects of creation. Consequently, on both a social and individual level, humanity's mind is made unaware or unconscious to the fact that they are indeed subjected by God and they therefore become incapable of subjecting themselves to God.

Romans 1:18-32 offers a snapshot of the ideological nature underlining Paul's argument throughout the remainder of the letter. Paul presents humanity as intellectually dysfunctional and subjected by the irrational desires of their hearts. Humanity is, therefore, incapable of envisioning a faith reality beyond that created through their idolatrous absolutizing of partial manifestations of God as revealed in the created order. Yet, humanity is not without hope. In fact, Paul prefaces his comments about the "faithlessness" of humanity and the "wrath of God" with what Paul suggests is the solution for the human problem of idolatry. For God provides, through the gospel, a power that is capable of "saving" or allowing humanity to once again imagine itself in a proper relationship with both God and one another. However, in order for one to

experience “salvation” they must have faith (Romans 1.16). That is, one must know she is subjected by God, and rightly respond by subjecting herself to God.

Therefore, Paul writes that the righteousness or the justice of God is revealed in the gospel – out of faith and for faith (Romans 1:17). That the justice of God is revealed “out of faith” means on the one hand, that the gospel represents or reveals a way of perceiving the world as subjected by God. In doing so, the gospel, on the other hand, exposes humanity to their irrational thoughts and irresponsible actions. Furthermore, the justice of God is revealed “for faith.” The justice of God is revealed for the purpose of inviting humanity both to know and acknowledge the power and the presence of God in their lives. In essence, the justice of God invites humanity to envision a faith reality of a higher order of humanity and human relationships that brings us into a more perfect relationship with God and each other. “For as it is written, the just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).

### **In Summation**

The previous analysis of Romans 1:18-25 illustrates three significant points regarding the concepts of subjection, volition, imposition and awareness: 1) The discussion highlights Paul’s perspective on the dual nature of subjection: that subjection can result both from acting as an agent by will, as well as from being acted upon because of a lack of power. 2) Paul attributes one’s capacity for sound reasoning and righteous living with one’s willingness to acknowledge or subject oneself to the power and presence of God. 3) At the same time, Paul argues that one’s refusal to acknowledge one’s subjection by God leads to an existence guided by unsound reasoning. That is, when one does not subject oneself to God, one becomes unaware and incapable of

envisioning and living out of a reality other than the one created from our idolatrous mind-set.

Essentially, Paul describes two possible ways of being in the world: one characterized by an aware mind-set that acknowledges God as the Creator and the other characterized by unsound reasoning that not only refuses to acknowledge God, but because of its rejection of God's divine authority, becomes enslaved to irrational thoughts and irreverent behavior. As we examine four additional texts that reference subjection directly (8:7; 8:20; 10:3 and 13:1), we continue to observe Paul, on the one hand, describing humanity as living out of an unaware mind-set (φρόνημα -- see below) and on the other hand, confronting humanity with the power of the gospel, inviting them to subject themselves (their mind-set - φρόνημα) to its claim on their lives, in order to awaken them from their sleep.

### **Romans 8:7: Two Possibilities of Human Existence**

Romans 8:7 reads: “since the way of thinking (φρόνημα) that focuses on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit ( ὑποτάσσεται) to God's law – indeed it is incapable (ουδε. ga.r δύναται).” Paul's association of subjection with a lack of awareness figures into his argument here because he emphasizes φρόνημα (mind-set or way of thinking). For example, consider Romans 7:14-25 and 8:5-12, the textual frame of Romans 8:7. Not only do we find within these verses reference to subjection, we also find a Pauline conviction regarding Christian awareness or critical consciousness. For instance, Romans 8:6 twice mentions φρόνημα in describing two possible ways of being in the world -- one of the flesh and one of the spirit: “for the mind-set (φρόνημα) of flesh brings death, but the mind-set (φρόνημα) of spirit brings life and peace.” Then, in 8:7,

Paul argues that flesh-oriented<sup>258</sup> humanity's concern is death, which directly opposes the "life" offered by God through the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus (see Romans 8:1).

Therefore, those with a mind of the flesh resist what God desires. Building on Romans 7:15-25, Paul asserts that the refusal by those whose minds are set on "this world" to "subject" to the will of God moves beyond the matter of one's will. Paul raises the question of ability. Flesh-oriented humanity, dominated by sin, lacks the power to free itself when confronted by the law of God.<sup>259</sup>

'Flesh' and 'Spirit,' however, "do not denote separate elements in the make-up of human individuals . . . but rather two possibilities of human existence -- the one self-enclosed, self-regarding and hostile to God, the other open to God and to life."<sup>260</sup> Paul's coupling the terms "flesh" and "spirit" with φρόνημα, suggests that these ways of being in the world represent not simply how one tactically engages the world, but also a mind-set or a way of perceiving the world. For φρόνημα connotes both a mind-set or way of thinking about something as well as a focus on the practical striving toward the realization of a particular aspiration. The first possibility for human existence which Paul names "living according to the flesh" operates as the standard code of how one imagines oneself in the world prior to the new possibility opened up by God in sending Jesus the Christ (see Romans 8:1-4). More relevant to our point, such a mind-set or way of perceiving the world, according to Paul, is a type of bondage that prohibits one from

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<sup>258</sup>. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary. Romans*. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 489.

<sup>259</sup>. I do not read humanity's lack of power/ability as a result of an inherent sinful nature (see Fitzmyer, 489; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 121). Humanity's lack of power springs from a refusal to acknowledge its creatureliness which ultimately produces dominating attitudes and actions that can "lock so tightly into a mind-set that it takes a disruptive revelation to shatter the imprisoning mold in which those attitudes have become set" (Dunn, Romans 38a, 427).

<sup>260</sup>. Brendan Byrne, S. J., *Romans* (ed. Daniel J. Harrington, S. J.; Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 238.

pleasing God (Romans 8:8). Yet, in Romans 8:9, Paul, seeking to jolt the readers/listeners out of a passive acceptance of an existence held captive by “the law of sin (see Romans 7: 21-25—I will examine this text more in depth below), reminds his readers that this type of mind-set is no longer normative for them: “Yet you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit” (Romans 8:9a).

In drawing this dualism, Paul, on one level, brings to critical consciousness a way of life (living according to the flesh) that presents itself as the only possible way of being in the world. Even after the Christ-event, the power of this mind-set, according to Paul, still holds people in bondage. They are still “asleep” and therefore cannot envision a faith reality outside of “covetousness” (see 7:8- ἐπιθυμία), that is “the fundamental tendency to put “self” [as an individual, a group, a race, a particular society, or in specific relation to this project an economic system and its values] at the center of the universe, denying or perversely coopting the claim of the Creator and all other beings.”<sup>261</sup> As such, “living according to the flesh” represents for Paul an idolatry that sustains its power over the lives of people through its capacity to configure the normative values and patterns of human relations of a particular society which ultimately functions as the only “interpretive grid” through which to imagine how one exists in relation to one’s conditions of existence.<sup>262</sup>

On another level, Paul maintains that through the Christ-event, an alternative possibility for perceiving and being in the world now exists -- “living according to the spirit.” This way of perceiving and being in the world is fundamentally different from

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<sup>261</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 238.

<sup>262</sup>.For a thoughtful analysis on Romans and its presentation of the concept of an idolatrous system of convictions and its power over the lives of people see Daniel Patte, *Paul’s Faith and the Power of the Gospel*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, 277-287.

and opposed to that defined by “living according to the flesh.” Living according to the spirit is characterized by an indebted love of neighbor (Romans 13:8) rather than an insatiable and reckless love of self at the expense and disregard of others. Living according to the spirit offers life, characterized by affirming and respectful human relationships (Romans 12) which is diametrically opposed to a life characterized by destructive and exploitive human relationships (see Romans 1:28-32; Romans 13:13) and a polluted natural environment (see Romans 8:20-21).

Living according to the spirit represents an alternative way of perceiving and being in the world. However, “living according to the Spirit” does not eliminate the reality of one possibly continuing to live according to the flesh and therefore experiencing its destructive consequences. As mentioned above, a central element in Paul’s negative description of one living according to the flesh concerns the absolute nature of this reality (Romans 7:14-25) – there was no other interpretive grid through which to imagine and participate in the world. As such, the reality of “living according to the flesh” represents for Paul an idolatrous existence. The singularity of this reality, both in context (quantity) and in content (quality), makes it an alienating and fatalistic experience. Hence, Paul is careful not to characterize “living according to the spirit” as the only model for human or Christian existence (though it is the preferred model for Christian existence). Living according to the flesh “is still a possibility for believers. It is a possibility but not a necessity.”<sup>263</sup> This is the crucial difference we see in the move Paul makes from Romans 7:14-25 to 8:1-12 – “One has the freedom to say ‘No’ to sin

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<sup>263</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 238.

and ‘Yes’ to God.”<sup>264</sup> The power of Paul’s rhetorical argument here then is that it alerts or makes his audience aware of the ideological presence and force of the “indwelling power of sin” (Romans 7:17) that affects one’s perception of and participation in the world. Being aware of the presence of the “indwelling power of sin,” people are now able to envision an alternative ideological reality, the “indwelling of the Spirit” (Romans 8:9), which, according to Paul is also a power at work in the world. Now aware of both ideological realities and conscious to the fact that they are subjected by two governing authorities (the power of sin—living according to the flesh and the power of God -- living according to the Spirit), Paul’s readers can choose which authority they wish to pledge their allegiance. For Paul of course, the choice to live according to the spirit, is the only reasonable or rational (λογικῶς, see Romans 12:1) response for believers. Nevertheless, this reality is not an absolute. It is one possible way to live in the world, but it is not the only way.

### **Romans 8:20 (in 8:19-8:26): Awaiting Hope**

“for the creation was subjected to/by (ὑπετάγη) futility (ματαιο, τητι ) not of its own will, but because of the one who subjected it (υ̅ποτα, xanta).” For (ὅτι) with hope (ἐφ’ ἐλπίδι), even the creation itself will be liberated from the bondage of decay into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:20-21 - author’s translation).<sup>265</sup>

The creation is subject to purposelessness through no fault of its own. Rather, it lacks the ability to free itself from the bondage of decay (vs. 21). A closer examination of Paul’s statement on hope in Romans 8:21 and its interpretive implications helps better illustrate how Paul connects and fashions the concepts of subjection and awareness as

<sup>264</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 238.

<sup>265</sup>.Translations of this passage customarily place ἐφ’ ἐλπίδι as an awkward addendum to verse 20. However, I find the phrase better placed as the opening phrase of verse 21.



tools which empower those who may feel powerless in their relationship with governing authorities.

Traditionally, ἐφ' ἐλπίδι (in hope or with hope) is read with the final section of 8:20. As such, the translator either understands this phrase to modify the verb ὑπετάγη or reads it with the section that precedes ὑποτάξαντα. Read from the former perspective, the phrase is taken to mean that “creation was not subjected to futility [by God] without any hope: the divine judgment included the promise of a better future, when at last the judgment would be lifted.”<sup>266</sup> Then, ὅτι is read as the word used to introduce the statement in 8:21 and explains why creation is said to have been subjected and is therefore translated as either for or because -- because creation is going to be set free . . . .<sup>267</sup> In this translation the referent of “in/with hope” is God.

Similarly, the latter perspective argues that “God did not leave the frustrated creation in a hopeless situation. Creation could not free itself from the corruption and decay that beset it. . . .” But, according to this reading, “the ‘hope’ meant is that it [creation] will be freed by its association with the destiny of justified Christians.”<sup>268</sup> In this reading ὅτι points to the content of the hope and is translated either as because or that: . . . “God, though he cursed the ground because of Adam’s sin, still gave it [creation] a hope of sharing in human redemption or liberation.”<sup>269</sup> Here, the referent of “with hope” is creation.

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<sup>266</sup>.See Cranfield, C. E. B., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans Volume 1.*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1975. p. 414.

<sup>267</sup>.See Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans V. 1*, 415.

<sup>268</sup>.See Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 508-509.

<sup>269</sup>.See Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 508.

A third position, like the second, suggests that ἐφ' ἐλπίδι refers to creation's hope for the reversal of its destitute condition. This position argues that based on the "common-fate" principle, "creation was compelled, willy-nilly, to lapse into 'futility' because humanity, meant to be its 'subduer,' meant, that is, to exercise constructive responsibility in its regard as God's viceroy on earth (Gen. 1:26-28),"<sup>270</sup> became foolish in their thinking. Instead of seeing the non-human created world as a partial manifestation of God's glory, they absolutized these objects and made them objects of worship. Therefore, the referent of hope in this reading is creation, but it is a hope attached to its defiance or unwillingness to participate in humanity's lapse into idolatry as described in Romans 1:18-23. Creation's hope rests in the reversed state of the "common-fate principle": Should the 'subduer' [humanity] be restored to favor with God and once again image the divine glory, then, on the same 'common fate' principle (now operative in a positive direction), creation itself (v. 21) might be restored . . . ."<sup>271</sup> Ultimately, according to this position, the basis of creation's present "eager longing" is to become once more the vehicle of true human glorification of God.<sup>272</sup>

Botha's rhetorical reading of Romans 13:1-7, in my analysis, makes the false presumption that Paul understood his readers to be aware/conscious about the ideological nature (following Althusser) of the Gesellschaft and the values and patterns of human relating it espouses (see above). Here too, traditional interpretations of the meaning of "with hope" in 8:21 (or 8:20) overlook the rhetorical value Paul places on humanity's **awareness** as a prerequisite for the liberation of creation from its bondage to futility.

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<sup>270</sup>.See Byrne, *Romans*, 258.

<sup>271</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 258.

<sup>272</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 258.

Paul ties creation's bondage or subjection to humanity's lack of awareness. Paul personifies the natural environment and presents it in an ideological sense (following Althusser). The creation is thinking about or imagining the world differently from a reality defined by bondage and decay. Romans 8:19 states: for the creation anxiously awaits (ἀπεδέχομαι), deeply imagining, thinking about and longing for (ἀποκαραδοκία) the revelation of the children of God.

Creation understands that its liberation, its health and wholeness, depends on an awakened, an aware, a critically conscious humanity – “the children of God.” Paul argues that through their idolatry, humans distorted creation, forcing it into the same purposeless and worthless lot as they now endure (Romans 1:18-25). Therefore, with hope, creation awaits for the revelation that comes with human awareness (Romans 8:20-21).<sup>273</sup> The revelation that comes with human awareness, according to Paul, is the possibility for creation's liberation from bondage to decay and corruption. Therefore, “with hope,” that is with hope for a critically conscious humanity, creation will be restored as a vital reflection of the glory of God. Thus, this project translates ὅτι as a

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<sup>273</sup> Scholars debate the source of creation's subjection with most agreeing that God is the source (considering the “divine passive”-- ὑπετάγη). For views that support this position see for instance, Dunn, *Romans 38a*, 470; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 508; and Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 414. Another position maintains that Paul has Adam (Adam's sin) in mind, highlighting Genesis 3:17-19 as well as the wider Jewish tradition that presents Adam as the one to whom the rest of creation was subjected (see for instance, Psalms 8:6). For a discussion on this position see (Byrne, *Romans*, 257-258). A third position attributes creation's subjection to the human source that Paul mentions in Romans 1:23. This position argues that the most straightforward way to translate and read 8:20b is “not by its own choice but on account of the one who subjected it” is “as a reference to humans who distorted creation and ‘brought it into subjection’ by their idolatry” (see Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 128). The point, according to this position is to highlight that *on account of* humanity's idolatry, they have forced creation into subjection. “To make God the subject is to miss not only the literary cross-reference [1:18-25] but also the logic of the present argument. Paul is trying to show that, just as the fate of creation was tied to the disposition of human freedom for bad (so that human sin also corrupted God's creation), so is it tied to human freedom for good: as humans are liberated by the Spirit of God to share in the presence and power of God . . . so will creation itself share in that same liberation” (Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 128). This project stands closest to Johnson's perspective, moving from the logic that humanity's idolatry forced its companion-creation, the natural environment, into a purposeless existence.

transitional “for” from 8:20 to 8:21 and ἐφ’ ἐλπίδι to function more accurately as the opening statement of 8:21 that describes the means by which creation might experience the glory of God. Thus, ἐφ’ ἐλπίδι restates and emphasizes the disposition needed (an attitude of hope-- imaginative and deep desirous waiting, Romans 8:19) in order to restore both creation and humanity to a glorious relationship with God.

As such, Paul’s reference to hope is significant because it invites the reader to envision a faith reality beyond that currently visible through life lived “according to the flesh.” Human awareness (acknowledging subjection by governing authorities and choosing to subject oneself to the indwelling Spirit of God) opens the way for the Spirit to intercede on behalf of those choosing to be empowered by and subjected to the will of God. The Spirit speaks in a type of hidden-transcript, pleading for the liberation of humanity (and creation) with groans that cannot be expressed with words (ἀλάλητος). The Spirit’s intercession is required because Paul recognizes the continued presence and power of life lived “according to the flesh,” even on the awakened children of God. Life lived according to the flesh and life lived according to the Spirit represent the tension with which humanity must always struggle. It is the reality of living in the already, but not yet eschatological schema Paul presents throughout his work.

Thus Paul says, that even in our weakness (ἀσθένεια) (8:26), and even when the enlightened children of God lack the spiritual insight and the moral efficiency to stand against the normative values of “this world” (Romans 12:2), the Spirit comes to their assistance and offers to God a prayer that articulates their heart-felt desire to live according to the will of God -- a desire that represents a reality different from and opposed to that reflected in their weakness. Hence, ἀλάλητος (8:26) reflects language or

a message that the children of God are incapable of speaking/praying as a consequence of being in weakness: for we cannot perceive how to pray (how to commune with God) as we ought (τὸ γὰρ τί προσευξώμεθα καθὸ δεῖ οὐκ οἶδαμεν, Romans 8:26).

### **Romans 10:3 (in 10:1-13): Zeal without Critical Consciousness**

Romans 10:3 also addresses “subjection” in relation to human ability or the lack thereof. In 8:7, Paul describes humanity as being dominated by sin. In 8:20, Paul attributes the natural environment’s suffering to being held in bondage (by sin/decay) because of humanity’s sin/idolatry. Now in 10:3, we find ignorance of God’s righteousness to be the consequence and manifestation of being dominated by sin. Paul writes: For, being unaware (ἀγνοοῦντες) of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to (ὑπετάγησαν) God’s righteousness.” As in 8:20 we find here Paul understanding “subjection” in a sense where subjection can be both an act of volition and imposition. Paul suggests that humanity wills not to subject themselves to God’s righteousness. However, because humanity is subjected by sin they lack the ability to know and recognize what God requires. Moreover, Romans 10:2 suggests that the people have an intense interest in God (ζήλος) and are tenacious in their efforts to serve God. Nevertheless, Paul argues that their earnest zeal does not stem from a critical consciousness (ἐπίγνωσις) regarding the righteousness God offers through the Christ-event (see Romans 10:4).

The charge Paul levies against the people is essentially ideological (following Althusser) in that they fail to acknowledge and to comprehend an alternative way of being in relationship with God that moves both within and beyond their pursuit of

righteousness (right relationship with God) solely through “works of the law.” That the people fail to acknowledge God’s righteousness “implies not simply a lack of recognition in an intellectual sense but a failure to offer due creaturely ‘submission’ to the manifestation of God” (see Romans 1:21-23).<sup>274</sup> This is not to suggest that Paul does not regard the law as a manifestation of God. The problem is that the people have absolutized this manifestation and are unable to recognize the revelation of the righteousness of God through Christ. The consequence of their lack of awareness is that they worship the creature rather than the Creator. As the people seek to establish their own ways of being in right relationship with God they continue to perpetuate a relationship with God and other human beings that, according to Paul, can only be coopted by sin (see Romans 7:18-25) because they are misguided by a lack of awareness. The result is that the people continue to “live according to sin;” that is they imagine themselves in relationship with God but they are not because they lack the critical consciousness required by the Christ-event. Therefore, they have not subjected themselves to the righteousness of God or to how God imagines Godself in relationship with humanity. Being aware of one’s subjection by the righteousness of God, and consequently subjecting oneself to the righteousness of God, through belief in the Christ-event (see Romans 10:4-13), is for Paul living in a state of critical consciousness (living according to the spirit).

### **Romans 13:1 (with 1:18-25 and 13:11): A Call to Critical Consciousness**

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<sup>274</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 311.

The pattern of understanding “subjection” as both an act of volition and imposition is maintained when reading Romans 13:1. For instance, *πάντα φυγῆ ὑποτάσσεσθω* can be translated either as an imperative middle or an imperative passive. If translated as a middle imperative, the phrase reads “every person subject her or himself” to governing authorities. On the other hand, if translated as a passive imperative, taking into account the dative of means (*ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις*), the phrase reads “be every person subjected” by governing authorities. The first reading suggests that people possess the power to socially situate themselves within the order of their environment. “Subjection” then, is a matter of will only. The second translation, on the other hand, suggests that the “governing authority” is a structure in which people are placed or already exists and it acts upon the person’s existence. The Christian then, cannot but live within a preexisting social system that limits how one can best express one’s Christian faith within the parameters of the “governing” structure. That people are subject both as an act of imposition and will is made clear in the ambiguity of Paul’s “subjection” language throughout Romans. Moreover, Althusser’s understanding of ideology and its claim that an ideological construct becomes reality when people accept this perceived ordering of society as natural becomes apparent in Paul’s comment on subjection in Romans 13:1. For instance, if we take seriously the ambiguity embedded within the imperative mood as both middle and passive we see that Christians act as agents, tolerating and perpetuating their subjection to the “governing authority” because of its power upon them.

Essentially, Christians subject themselves to the governing authority (middle imperative) because they are subjected by the governing authority (passive imperative). However, the power that the governing authority wields over people is beyond that of

physical exertion. Paul is equally concerned with an ideological power of conscience (see 13:5); the people accept the governing authority's ordering of society (domination-subjection) as natural and absolute. The people are in an ideological bondage or sleep, therefore they cannot but subject themselves to the governing authorities because they are unaware that they are subjected by the governing authorities. In the end, we subject ourselves to (imperative middle) the governing authorities, because we failed to acknowledge that we are subjected by (imperative passive) the governing authorities. In Romans 12:2 Paul calls for a "renewal of the mind" as a way of redeeming and resisting the evil indicative of humanity's current mind-set (this analysis continues in the next chapter).

This demonstration of Paul's perspective on subjection and awareness underscores the point that Paul continuously moves back and forth between describing the normative pattern of thinking of those who live as if they are indebted to the flesh and how one ought to think as a critically conscious and awakened Christian (see Romans 8:12). His paraenesis in Romans 13:1-7 then, in my hermeneutical analysis, is not a prescriptive demand for some sort of subjective action or an admonition to prevent subversive action against the state or civil authorities. Instead, Paul's comment calls the Roman Christians to acknowledge the social reality of their relation to the Roman state – it is a call to consciously acknowledge their subjection, to awake from their sleep.



## **Subjection in Romans and the Market Economy: Revisiting the Contextual Frame**

In our contemporary context, we too have created an absolute reality out of our constructed relationship with the market economy (see chapter two). Therefore, Paul's comments in Romans 13:1-2 fit well as consequences for one's cooperation with or negligence of the market economy. After Paul's opening statement, he moves into a more detailed discussion describing the necessity and consequences of the community's voluntary, yet imposed subjection. "Every soul be subjected by and to governing authorities for there is no authority if not by God and the existing ones have been appointed by God. So that the ones to resist the authority resist what God has ordained, and those who resist shall themselves receive judgment" (vss 1-2). Paul has presented a reality made possible by the social acceptance of the people's perceived relation to governing authority. To resist subjection to the authority of the market economy, to resist understanding and participation in the free enterprise economic system (failure to gain prosperity is interpreted as a form of resistance) results in a person or a community receiving the wrath of God. In a market economy one is subject, therefore, free to pursue the aim of economic advancement: one is free to respond to the marketplace demand with the hope that one's response will afford one (as an individual or a group) the opportunity to enjoy wealth and dispose of it as one chooses; without regard for other human beings and independently of society.<sup>275</sup>

Moreover, according to Romans 13:2, systems of power are ordained by God. To resist the system is to resist God and live in a state of alienation from God. Alienation

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<sup>275</sup>.For an interesting discussion on the nature of competitive markets and Christian faith see Rebecca M. Blank, "Viewing the Market Economy Through the Lens of Faith" in *Is the Market Moral?: A Dialogue on Religion, Economics & Justice*, Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004, 11-56.

from God is manifested in misfortunes within the system of authority: “for if you do what is wrong or what is evil, fear, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain” (Romans 13:4, will discuss more in following chapter). In a market economy such alienation or misfortune, or the wrath of God often manifests itself in the forms of poverty and social, political and cultural disenfranchisement. The inevitable hand of free trade governs human events “with an omniscient logic ‘which cannot be interfered with’.”<sup>276</sup> Those loyal to this true faith will be rewarded with prosperity, perhaps immediately, or in some indeterminate time in the future.

On the other hand, those who resist its strict necessity suffer the “wrath of God.” The responsibility of failure rests on the shoulders of those under the doctrine’s rule and “no amount of human suffering or natural destruction exacted by the doctrine’s implementation can alter its prescriptions or prove it false because its truths are eternal and not subject to falsifying evidence.”<sup>277</sup> Salvation then, can only be gained by successful participation in the market system. And those who participate and for whom life grows more desperate, are characterized as sinners, undeserving or unworthy of the blessings offered by the market economy and its culture. Such an understanding of God’s wrath within the market economy promotes the theory that poverty is caused by individual defects not the result of a mismanaged economic system. People are poor or experience the wrath of God because of their inability to succeed within the economic system. Their poverty is the result of their sin.

By drawing such conclusions, I am forced to ask: Is salvation characterized by economic advancement? Have we transformed an ideology into a reality by accepting as

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<sup>276</sup>.McMurtry, “The Contradictions of the Market Doctrine,” 657.

<sup>277</sup>.McMurtry, “The Contradictions of the Market Doctrine,” 657.

absolute the “illusion” that we are in a righteous or unrighteous relationship with God based solely on our economic prosperity? Has the market economy become a subjection that blinds us to a faith reality of a higher order of humanity and human relationships that bring us into a more perfect relationship with God and each other?

## CHAPTER V

### DISCERNING AWARENESS: REFLECTION ON THE SUBJECTION

#### Introduction

“Has the market economy become a subjection that blinds us to a faith reality of a higher order of human relationships that bring us into a more perfect relationship with God and each other?” To raise this question pushes us beyond an interpretive space where people are unaware of their subjection. Those who raise this question are aware of their subjection by and to the market economy and are now capable of looking critically at its logic as a social and personal reality.<sup>278</sup> However, before offering an analysis of the ways in which Paul’s message in Romans helps contemporary readers think more critically about our 21<sup>st</sup> century context, one must first examine more closely Paul’s hermeneutical construction of the concept of discernment, especially as it pertains to reading Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14), as an empowering word.

According to Paul, subjection, even when one is aware of it, is an oppressive state. Therefore, acknowledging one’s subjection by the governing authority is not an end in itself; it simply represents a step in Paul’s three-dimensional process of empowerment. However, as evidenced in Romans 12:2, Paul goes beyond jolting readers out of an ideological sleep (Romans 13:1-7). He challenges the Christians at Rome to reflect upon the situation in which they live; he challenges them to engage in the process of careful

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<sup>278</sup>.It is this same challenge that we as contemporary readers face when reading Romans 12:2 as an empowering word for those who feel overwhelmed in their relationship with an oppressive authority.

examination that leads to the conviction that God dwells both in and beyond their “subjection to and by governing authorities.”

The current state of scholarship on Romans offers little analysis on the relationship between Romans 13:1-7 and its non-conformist heading (Romans 12:2). Certain scholars dismiss Romans 13:1-7 as a non-Pauline interpolation into the letter at the hand of a later scribe “anxious to invest with ‘Pauline’ authority a message of submission to state authority.”<sup>279</sup> More often they focus their reading on delineating the connection between Romans 13:1-7 and Romans 12:3-2<sup>280</sup>, primarily suggesting that Paul is advancing a policy of political quietism as a means of 1) securing the community’s physical survival, 2) securing the continuation of Paul’s mission, and 3) faithful obedience to God. However, beyond popular readings, Jan Botha’s sociological

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<sup>279</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 385.

<sup>280</sup>. For instance, Byrne maintains that relations “with the governing powers fit neatly into the overall tendency of the parenthesis from 12:3ff to work ‘outwards’ from the responsibilities and the demands of love within the Christian community (12:3-16), to those affecting relations with outsiders (12:17-21); in effect, it naturally extends and specifies the command to ‘live peaceably with all’ (12:18). . .” (Byrne, 386). Dunn, suggests that “the theme of quietist response and legitimate authority links 12:14-21 and 13:1-7 firmly together, and guidance on how to cope with opposition and hostility naturally leads into consideration of the political realities within which the Roman Christians had to live” (Dunn 38b, 759).

For Cranfield, the connection centers around the theme of “obedience to God.” According to Cranfield, chapter 12 emphasizes Paul’s perspective that humanity’s obedience to God must be an obedience both of principal and of “thought and attitude, of word and deed, wrought out in the concrete situations of life. . .” (Cranfield, V. 2, 394). In Romans 13:1-7, argues Cranfield, the Christians’ relationship with civil authorities represents such a concrete life situation where obedience to God is Paul’s central focus. Although the passage does not appear to have a christological theme, Cranfield maintains that it reflects an underlying Pauline conviction: “. . . A christological understanding of the state (in the sense of an understanding of it as in some way serving God’s purpose in Christ and lying within the scope of Christ’s lordship). . .” (Cranfield, V. 2, 654). Obedience to God then, is required of the community because the state serves God’s purpose and it also falls under the lordship of Christ. The state is an “instrument of righteousness.” Furthermore, according to Cranfield’s reading of Romans 13:1-7, obedience to God is also required of the state, even if the authorities choose not to adhere to their righteous charge as tools of the divine. The governments of this world, notes Cranfield, “were, even before the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, subject to divine control, . . . the fact that God’s claim over them, as over all other things visible and invisible, has been decisively and finally asserted, means that they fulfill their functions now under the judgment, mercy and promise of God in a way that was not so before” (Cranfield, 655).

analysis of Romans 13:1-7 suggests a direct interpretive connection between Romans 12:2 and Romans 13:1-7. Therefore Botha's sociological reading of Romans 13:1-7 remains my primary conversation partner. Although disagreeing with his ultimate conclusion about the relationship between Romans 12:2 and Romans 13:1-7, I find his analysis important and a helpful point of departure for explicating my position that Romans 12:2 is a call for the Christian community to reflect on its subjection. Romans 12:2, with its emphasis on non-conformity, transformation (through the renewing of the mind), and discernment is a reflective charge; it represents another step in a three-dimensional process which moves between subjection, reflection, and resistance, and empowers those who feel powerless in their relationship to the oppressive power of governing authorities.

### **Balancing the Eschatological Tension: Revisiting Botha's Sociological Reading of Romans 13:1-7**

Botha maintains that Romans 13:1-7 and its co-text, Romans 12:1-13:14, represent a call to partial conformity to the governing authority in order to secure the continuation of Paul's mission and the safety of the burgeoning Christian community. At the same time, Botha understands the paraenesis in Romans to be characteristic of a second stage of liminality (creating a new social reality) -- a paraenesis of conflict. Botha argues that according to Paul, however, the ideal of creating a new social reality is best realized through a strategy of conformity. So, Botha maintains that the intent of Romans is confrontation but the strategy in Romans, as evidenced in Romans 13:1-7, is conformity.

## A Confrontational Intent

Surrounding Paul's "strategy of conformity" are rhetorical pockets of paraenesis that reflect a social model of conflict. According to Botha, Romans 12:1-2 and Romans 13:11-14, represent passages that strongly support an order of conflict as the underlying vision of the cosmos and society. For instance, in offering an analysis of Romans 12:2, Botha explains that Paul's explicit exhortation to his readers not to conform to this age (μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ) speaks to Paul's conviction that both he and the adherents of his gospel are in a liminal state.<sup>281</sup> The τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, argues Botha, is "clearly a reference to the Gesellschaft within which the implied readers are pictured."<sup>282</sup> That is, Botha suggests Paul calls his readers to a non-conformist attitude against the values and behavioral norms emphasized by the Roman cultural system. This non-conformist behavior is then spelled out in the remainder of the section at different levels: 1) the behavior of the members of the Gemeinschaft (smaller community) within the Gesellschaft (dominant society -- 12:9 - 13:10) and 2) the behavior of the smaller community among themselves (13:13-14:1).

Botha then points out that the apocalyptic interjection directly following Romans 13:1-7 further supports reading the underlying vision of the cosmos and society in Romans as an order of conflict. In Romans 13:11-14, Paul exhorts and emphasizes non-conformist human behavior in typical apocalyptic terminology: ἀποθώμεθα οὖν τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκοτός (let us cast off the works of darkness) and ἐνδυσώμεθα δὲ τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός (let us put on the armor of light) (Romans 13:12). Botha concludes that the

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<sup>281</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 209.

<sup>282</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 207.

“radical action in the form of divine intervention will bring the value-system and conduct of the Gesellschaft in accordance with what is pictured as the ideal for the Gemeinschaft is at hand: h` nu . x proe , koyen ( h` de . h` me , ra h ; ggiken (‘the night is far gone, the day is at hand’ 13:12.”<sup>283</sup> Botha recognizes Romans 12:2 and Romans 13:11-14 as relaying a message of conflict against the prevailing social order. However, for Botha, these passages do not offset his reading Romans 13:1-7 as representing anything other than Paul’s conformist posture towards the *societas* (dominant society).

### **A Strategy of Conformity**

According to Botha, Romans 12:2 and 13:11-14 ( the co-text of Romans 13:1-7), when read in relation to Romans 13:1-7, hold in balance the eschatological tension Paul exhibits throughout Romans. In delineating this point, Botha again turns to Victor Turner’s structure - anti-structure sociological mode. As outlined in the previous chapter, basic to Turner’s model is a distinction between three temporal and spatial phases that accompany every transitional phase in society: 1) separation, 2) liminality, and 3) reincorporation. Botha, of course, argues that Romans reflects Paul’s conviction that he and his readers are in a liminal phase and are positing a new, though not fully realized social order which calls for its own code of behavior.<sup>284</sup> Following Turner, Botha also recognizes the structural nature of paraenesis where within liminal periods, the paraenesis can function as a tool of the dominant order to lessen the danger of resisting communities by preventing such new social realities from developing. Turner further argues, writes

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<sup>283</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 207.

<sup>284</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 206.



Botha, “that the great religions are those which harmonize structure (societas) and anti-structure (communitas) or hold them in a field of legitimate tension.” This dynamic, bipolar social model is, according to Turner, inherent to the human being. As such, “the great religions recognize that a human being ‘is both a structural and an anti-structural entity . . . .’”<sup>285</sup> According to Botha, the genius of Christianity is that “since its formative beginnings, of which the letter to the Romans is one testimony, Christianity has aimed at holding structure and anti-structure in tension . . . .”<sup>286</sup>

This structure - anti-structure sociological and anthropological struggle, according to Botha, is being played out in the eschatological tension of Romans. For instance, consider more closely a few of the exhortations Paul lists in Romans 12 which flesh out the non-conformist behavior he calls for in 12:2. Botha writes:

A number of the exhortations in Romans 12:9-21 are characteristic of anti-structural paraenesis, for example, *euvlogēi/te tou. j diw, kontaj ũma/jĐ* (‘bless those who persecute you,’ 12:14), *mhdēni. kako.n avnti. kakou/ avpodido, ntej* (‘repay no one evil for evil,’ 12:17), *mh. e`autou. j evkdikou/ntej* (‘never avenge yourselves,’ 12:19). These are exhortations to highly a-typical behavior, since it is in contrast to what would generally be expected from normal human behavior. The new *communitas* is therefore anti-structural. Amongst the members of the *communitas* harmony is emphasized. The brief exhortation, *to. avvto. eivj avllh, louj fronou/ntej* (‘live in harmony with one another,’ 12:16), is elaborated and argued extensively with reference to a number of specific issues in Romans 14:1 - 15:13 (for example, the significance of religious days and food purity customs).<sup>287</sup>

Botha views these exhortations as highly a-typical and non-conformist in light of what is normally expected from human behavior. These verses suggest an anti-structural sociological model. Yet, at the same time, they offer no direct threat to the *societas*, in

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<sup>285</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 208.

<sup>286</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 209.

<sup>287</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 209.

fact they seem to lessen the danger of the development of a new community and thus stabilize the existing social order. Housed in these verses is an example of the structural - anti-structural nature of paraenesis. However, in drawing his final conclusion about the rhetorical significance of these verses, Botha makes an interesting analytical choice.

Instead of reading Romans 12:9-21 in light of Romans 12:2 and its non-conformist heading, Botha reads these passages in light of Romans 13:1-7, a text he understands to represent a structural sociological model and supports a paradigm of order (recall previous chapter). Therefore, Botha suggests these verses reflect a “conformationist orientation.”<sup>288</sup> Botha writes about these verses in relation to Romans 13:1-7: “The fact that the conformationist oriented paraenesis of Romans 13:1-7 forms part of the letter to the Christians in Rome is an indication that the *Gemeinschaft*, within their situation as envisioned by the encoded author, condones and confirms obedience to the authorities within their own line of conduct. The norms of the *Gesellschaft* are taken over, not to maintain the *societas* but rather to benefit the *communitas* in the process of creation. . . .”<sup>289</sup> Essentially Botha argues that Romans 12:9-21 as paraenetic literature favors a conformationist structural sociological model and therefore supports a paradigm of order, with the intent to subvert the *societas* (dominant society).

### **Neutralizing the Power of Resistance: Summarizing Botha’s Argument**

But, the relevant question remains: how does Romans 13:1-7's “non-conformist” co-text, Romans 12:1-2 and Romans 13:11-14, factor into Botha’s interpretive conclusion about Romans 13:1-7? In answering this question, Botha argues that Romans 12:1-2 and

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<sup>288</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 210.

<sup>289</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 210.

Romans 13:11-14, which he regards as anti-structural passages, frame Romans 13:1-7. Moreover, as explained in the previous chapter, Botha understands Romans 13:1-7 and its rhetorical significance to support a structural and conformist social paradigm. Romans 12:1-2 and Romans 13:11-14 represent “paraenesis of a liminal experience in the second phase . . . the creation of new beings with new behavior patterns which are non-conformist to the previous social order.”<sup>290</sup> Romans 13:1-7 makes up a part of this paraenesis, but serves a pragmatic purpose which will secure success in the creation of the new *communitas*. “ . . . [O]n the point of conduct to authorities, however, the existing values operating within a paradigm of order converge with those envisioned by the encoded author for the new *communitas* . . . it is necessary that the Christian *Gemeinschaft* conform to some of the values of the *Gesellschaft*.”<sup>291</sup> Therefore, Botha maintains that the relationship between Romans 13:1-7 and its co-text exemplifies Paul’s struggle to balance the eschatological tension in which he and his readers live.

Romans 13:1-7 and its co-text function for each other as a type of magnetic or gravitational pull, limiting the other’s capacity to fully actualize the reality it advances. The problem with this inference however, is that throughout Romans, Paul’s argument addresses his concern that the reality espoused by “this world” is fully realized and ideologically absolute in the “minds” of his readers and therefore in their actions (recall previous chapter). Romans 12:1-2 and Romans 13:11-14, with their apocalyptic emphasis and focus on calling people to imagine themselves differently in relationship to “governing authorities”(Romans 13:1-7) is made impotent in Botha’s analysis. This interpretive impotency has both ideological and practical implications. For instance,

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<sup>290</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 211.

<sup>291</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 211.

from Botha's perspective, the paraenetic purpose of Romans chapter 12:1-2 and 13:11-14 in relation to Romans 13:1-7 is to function as a preventive prescription. The Christian community should function in such a way that ensures the *societas* does not interfere in the construction of the alternative society which the *communitas* is seeking to create. The goal, however, is not to imagine differently how one envisions oneself in relationship with the "governing authority." On the contrary, Botha argues that Paul (or the encoded author) advises the community to continue to imagine itself in a subjected and submissive relationship with the *societas*. Botha recognizes that "this age" in Romans 12:2 refers to the Roman *societas*, and that Romans 13:11-14 clearly possesses apocalyptic language that supports a conflict model of society. But, in his final analysis, the inference is that the Christian community should only alter how it imagines itself in relationship with its own members, that is, with members of the *communitas*.

### **From the Center to the Periphery: The Textual and Hermeneutical Limitations of Botha's Analysis**

The power of Romans 12:1-2 and Romans 13:11-14 is that this apocalyptic context do exercise influence on the meaning of Romans 13:1-7. But this effect is neutralized in Botha's analysis because he reads from the "center" to the "periphery." That is, instead of viewing Romans 12:1-2 and Romans 13:11-14, with their apocalyptic emphasis, as influencing the interpretation of Romans 13:1-7, Botha reads both Romans 12:1-2 and Romans 13:11-14 in light of his understanding Romans 13:1-7 as a structural sociological model that supports a paradigm of conformation. Therefore, instead of

Romans 13:1-7 having a “conflictual orientation,” Romans 12<sup>292</sup> and Romans 13:11-14 have a “conformational orientation.” For instance, Botha limits his discussion on Romans 12:2 in relation to Romans 13:1-7 to an analysis of Paul’s “negative” call to non-conformity. Botha makes no mention of the remainder of the verse where Paul “positively” calls for a transformation of the community, through the renewal of its mind, beyond the values and norms espoused by the *Pax Romana*. If the later section of Romans 12:2 is factored into the analysis of Romans 13:1-7, one necessarily questions reading Romans 13:1-7 as a pragmatic call to conformity which advocates the perpetuation of a domination-subjection relationship as the normative interaction between the *societas* and the *communitas*.

Moreover, Botha makes no mention that the Christian community’s ability to envision a reality and a pattern of human relationships beyond that advanced by the *societas* enables the community to discern or creatively discover ways of being in the world, ways of interacting with humanity and the natural environment, that are pleasing to God. In this light, the interpretive implication of Romans 12:2 on Romans 13:1-7 directly opposes the hermeneutical relationship Botha constructs between the passages. According to the logic of Paul’s argument and against Botha’s reading, if the Christian community at Rome continues to be partially “conformed to this world,” that is, continuing to imagine themselves in a domination-subjection relationship with “this world,” their conformity cripples the creation of the alternative society which Botha suggests is capacitated through their strategic conformity to “this world” or to the “governing authorities.”

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<sup>292</sup>.Although our emphasis is on Romans 12:1-2, Botha argues that the whole of chapter 12, because he reads it in light of chapter 13:1-7, ultimately bears a conformist orientation.

For my present concern Botha's analysis proves insufficient. Botha does not enable us to fully envision an interpretive approach that allows for reading the relationship between Romans 12:2 and 13:1-7 as paranesis which supports a social paradigm of conflict; Botha's analysis ignores the theological dimension of Paul's call for Christian non-conformity to "this world." For instance, according to Paul's theological economy, the willingness and ability to imagine ways of being in the world beyond those presented by "this world" enables the community to discern the will of God and therefore to create the alternative community or society about which Botha speaks. Without non-conformity to "this world" through a renewed and more open mind, the community lacks the ability to discern the will of God and therefore lacks the ability to live a life pleasing and acceptable to God. Botha's analysis fails to explore or rather views too narrowly the significance of the concept of discernment (in Romans 12:2) and the interpretive connection Paul draws between it and subjection in Romans 13:1.

Although not explicitly stated, one gathers from Botha's discussion of Romans 12:2 in relation to Romans 13:1-7 that Botha's notion of the community's "partial conformity" to "this world" rests on the community understanding conformity as discerning what is "good" about "this world" and subjecting themselves to these norms of the *societas*. The community's subjection to the norms of the *societas* is "not to maintain the *societas* but to benefit the *communitas* in the process of creation."<sup>293</sup> Commenting about the description of the community's relationship with the *societas* as presented in Romans 13:1-7, Botha writes:

Nothing is said about the possibility that the authorities themselves might do bad. To consider such a possibility would be out of the line within this line of

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<sup>293</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 210.

argumentation since it would presuppose that divine ordinations might do bad, which would put in question the values and characteristics attributed to God. That is unthinkable. . . .<sup>294</sup>

Botha's analysis does not create an interpretive space where the community's process of discernment – discerning God's will – involves considering or evaluating as negative the habits of thinking and patterns of behavior advanced by "this world" (as noted in Romans 13:1-7).

### **Beyond Botha: From the Center to the Periphery**

Reading Romans 12:2, with its emphasis on discerning God's will in relation to Romans 13:1-7 and its emphasis on subjection to governing authorities as an empowering word for those overwhelmed in their relationship with oppressive governing authorities requires a certain type of interpretive approach. Such an approach must invite readers to reflect upon both the life-affirming and life-negating aspects of their subjection. James C. Scott already reminds us in his description of public and hidden transcripts that although the public transcript of the dominant group functions as the ideology to which the disadvantaged group responds (their subjection), the subordinate group always creates a "hidden transcript" or a resistance text which discerns differently and draws different conclusions of the same events experienced by both it and the elite. The creation of this resistance text, this process which enables the less valued group to discern differently than the elite is, in Scott's analysis, reflection (see chapter three).

Scott considers the concrete factors of power relations inherently involved in the interpretive process of the shared event (s). He recognizes reflection, as expressed by the disadvantaged group, as a dysphoric moment between the subordinate and the elite.

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<sup>294</sup>.Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority*, 205.

Reflection represents a discerning moment of critique and challenge not, as Botha infers, acquiescence. It is this type of dysphoric reflection Paul means when he appeals to the Christians at Rome not to conform to or live after the pattern of the “public transcript,” not to conform to “this world.” Instead, they are to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. They are to create hidden transcripts that envision a faith reality beyond that defined by the domination-subjection relationship normative to the ideology advanced by the elite. In this way, the Christians at Rome are able both to discern and to demonstrate the will of God in the midst of “this world.” However, the point of reflection in this sense is not to end the subjection. Instead, reflection prevents the subordinate group from viewing the elite and their interpretation of reality as a natural, universal, and closed understanding of the world and how people relate to one another in this world. Therefore, discernment – knowing and living God’s will in each given circumstance – requires a type of interpretive freedom that can both embrace and critique, that can envision the presence, the power and the will of God within, but also beyond, the norms and values which appear natural and absolute.

Scott’s analysis of public and hidden transcripts and their ideological implications on human relations acknowledges that those overwhelmed in their relationship with governing authorities reflect upon and thus discern both the positive and negative aspects of their subjection. Scott, not only acknowledges that negative and positive reflection happens, he also specifies the necessity of this reflection. However, it is in James M. Gustafson’s understanding of discernment that we find an interpretive model for assessing these negative and positive reflections of one’s conditions of existence. In particular, Gustafson’s model provides a means for demonstrating how the



negative and positive reflections function in Paul's understanding of discernment throughout Romans and how it invariably relates to his understanding of subjection.

### **James M. Gustafson: Subjection-Reflection-Resistance and the Process of Discernment**

On the definition and character of discernment, Gustafson writes:

While to discern something sometimes means that we simply perceive what is difficult to behold, such as the profile of a human face in a natural rock formation, discerning normally bears a qualitative meaning. A discerning person is one who has a certain keenness of mind, hearing, sight and so forth. The discerning critic of literature, art, or music is one who can describe, interpret, and evaluate things in such a way that their reader's perceptions, understanding, and evaluations become keener and more discriminating. To discern is not merely to see or to hear; it is to discriminate.<sup>295</sup>

According to Gustafson, a discerning person judges the differences in and between objects, persons, places, concepts, events, and experiences. This definition and characterization of discernment applies to moral discernment as well. The process of moral discernment that enables us to better know what we ought to do and to be has, according to Gustafson, common elements with the governing themes of this project, subjection - reflection - resistance.

Moral discernment is a reflective process on a particular event, situation or circumstance which comes to our attention. However, in order to adequately reflect upon the particular event, situation or circumstance so as to decide a proper course of action, moral agents must acknowledge their subjection(s). Like Althusser's understanding of ideology and human existence and Gadamer's hermeneutical theory, Gustafson's understanding of discernment presupposes that moral agents enter the discernment

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<sup>295</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective Volume One*, 328.

process always already affected and influenced (whether consciously or unconsciously) by their moral convictions, political values and religious sensibilities, etc. Therefore, moral agents necessarily bring to the discernment process personal and societal “perspectives” (their subjection) that affect how we construe particular events or circumstances that come to our attention.

Gustafson notes that moral discernment starts with an “evaluative description of the occasion or circumstances that come to our attention.”<sup>296</sup> Knowing how best to respond to the problem or need encountered in the particular situation first requires that the moral agent(s) possess a critical awareness of the situation and circumstances at hand. That is, “excellence” in moral discernment requires that the moral agent “gather relevant information, test its accuracy, and not avoid any that might alter our initial moral feelings about things . . . evaluative descriptions involve an explanation of what has come to be . . .”<sup>297</sup> But, this evaluative description, is not a purely objective exercise; it is not a mere gathering of facts. Instead, the evaluative description is essentially reflective. The information about a particular situation we as moral agents gather and the facts we deem important for further assessment depend on our personal and communal perspective(s); they depend on our human values, affections and moral principles which are derived from the social institutions which shape our vision of that which is morally virtuous and that which is morally vicious.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>296</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective Volume One*, 333.

<sup>297</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective: Volume One Theology and Ethics*,

<sup>298</sup>.Institutions such as home and family, educational, religious, legal and economic and government structures.

For instance, argues Gustafson, “descriptions of the same ‘raw’ events or circumstances differ in part on the basis of persons’ perceptions and conceptions of what is morally at stake in them . . . .”<sup>299</sup> Consider, for example, the current war in Iraq. In debates about this war differences of moral judgments are critical and affect how people interpret the war. Whether it is viewed as a war of liberation from oppression for the masses who have been subjected to/by generations of tyranny under a “brutal” dictatorship or a war to restrain an “evil” political and military force from using its weapons of mass destruction against U.S. “interests” or a war to secure under U.S. control the Iraqi oil reserves makes a difference in people’s assessments of the morally relevant features of the conflict, and even the means that were justified in conducting it.<sup>300</sup> The issues are not resolvable, notes Gustafson, simply by taking account of the same facts; different information and the different weight given to various aspects of it are important depending on the moral and political perspective of the participants in the debate – the moral agents.<sup>301</sup> Therefore, in order for moral agents to offer an “explanation of what has come to be” we must reflect upon our own motives and desires and be clear about the human values and moral principles to which we are committed.<sup>302</sup>

Once an evaluative description has been furnished, a second level of the process of discernment is possible, namely the assessment of potential courses of actions which might best affect qualitative change in the situation that has come to our attention. Here too, moral agents engage in a reflective exercise where human values and moral

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<sup>299</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective: Volume One Theology and Ethics*, 334.

<sup>300</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective: Volume One Theology and Ethics*, 335.

<sup>301</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective: Volume One Theology and Ethics*, 335.

<sup>302</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective: Volume One Theology and Ethics*, 337.

principles to which people are always already subject affect their discernments. For instance, Gustafson explains,

“Person’s dedicated to the principle that individual liberty is to be maximized and protected from as many intrusions as possible will assess the moral relationship between . . . the state and its citizens in a way that differs from that of a person who believes . . . that the common good of the nation and particular groups within it justifies state intervention . . . A person with a deep sense of duty and obligation to others is likely to come to different judgments in particular cases than a person dedicated to individual self-realization as the primary goal of life.”<sup>303</sup>

Moreover, “perspectives” as various values and principles within the discerning process also set “boundary conditions that no course of action is permitted to violate. The boundaries are largely established aims or ends being sought by the agent.”<sup>304</sup> I will come back to this point later, but here it is enough to underscore that for Gustafson reflection on one’s subjection to/by these “perspectives” is a necessary exercise in moral discernment.

Finally, discernment is a reflective process -- reflection on both a particular event or occurrence that has come to our attention and reflection on our always already “perspectives” that affect our analysis of the causes that are operative in the event and the powers available to affect the course of events. As such, discernment as a reflective process necessarily leads to a type of resistant action. Discernment is not merely a theoretical exercise. One discerns so that one can thereby demonstrate. That is, when we as moral agents are faced with an ethical dilemma, we discern, we consider the best possible way to “think” about the situation so that we might in turn act (in words or gestures) in such a way that demonstrates our commitment to a certain value, affection or

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<sup>303</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective: Volume One Theology and Ethics*, 337-338.

<sup>304</sup>.James M. Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective Volume Two Ethics and Theology* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1984), 305.

principle. However, whatever action we take, as a consequence of our discernment, necessarily represents a resistant action because, by choosing or committing to one “perspective” and subsequent action, we reject and thus resist others. In addition, Paul’s construction of the discernment process in Romans requires his readers, seeking to understand God’s will in given situations, to look beyond the normative and customary values and perspectives out of which they may normally discern.

### **Discernment in Romans: Perspectives, Principles and Boundary Conditions**

Following Gustafson’s understanding of discernment, this section examines various passages in Romans and argues that Paul advises the community to which he is writing to engage in the process of discernment. That is, he encourages them to reflect on their subjection to a given “perspective” in order to come to the conviction that the will of God can and must be known and expressed both within and beyond the “perspective” they consider absolute. Yet, according to Paul, this is no simple task. Consider, for instance, Romans 1:28 (and its preceding texts – 1:18-32). Paul writes in 1:28a: “And because they were unwilling to discern ( *kai . kaqw . j ouvk evdoki , masan* ) [the will of God]<sup>305</sup> and to consider ( *e ; cein* ) God’s will as [real] knowledge ( *evpignw , sei* ),<sup>306</sup> God handed them over ( *pare , dwken* )<sup>307</sup> to a worthless mind

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<sup>305</sup>.δοκιμαζω can mean “test” or “approve” (as a result of testing), therefore “to discern” and negated (as here), ‘unwilling to discern.’ Considering Gustafson’s understanding of discernment as an act of discrimination, Dunn’s observations are on point when he argues that the implication of Paul’s use of δοκιμαζω here “is of a deliberate act of disqualification. It was not simply a case of humans being distracted by something else and losing sight of God; they gave God their consideration, and concluded that God was unnecessary to their living (that is, presumably God as Creator with rights over his creation” (Dunn, *Romans*. 66). As stated in the previous chapter, although *aware* of God as Creator and thus subjected by God, humanity refused to *subject* themselves to God and instead worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator (1:25).

<sup>306</sup>.evpi , gnwsij most often refers to religious or moral knowledge that reflects an appropriate way of perceiving one’s relationship with God and others (as in Rom 10:2; Phil 1:9, Col 3:10). Coupled with

(*avdo, kimon nou/n*)-- [a mind unable to discern the will of God]” (author’s translation). This passage summarizes the state of humanity and its relations to God and each other which Paul explained in 1:18-32. As described in the previous chapter, Paul attributes one’s capacity for sound reasoning and righteous living with one’s willingness to acknowledge or subject oneself to the power and presence of God. At the same time, Paul argues that one’s refusal to acknowledge one’s subjection by God leads to an existence guided by unsound reasoning. That is, when one does not subject oneself to God, one becomes unaware and incapable of envisioning and living out of a reality other than the one created from our idolatrous mind-set. This reality is what Paul describes as the “wrath of God” – a reality created out of humanity’s lack of discernment which brings about the destruction of all community relationships.

Romans 1:28 (and its previous co-text), the first of four instances where Paul uses the verb *dokima, zw* (to discern), sets the interpretive tone for how Paul imagines the human predicament as well as how he imagines the human-divine relationship. Essentially, Paul describes two possible ways of being in the world: one characterized by a conscious, discerning mind that is capable of apprehending manifestations of God. The other is characterized by unsound reasoning that not only refuses to acknowledge God, but because of its rejection of God’s divine authority, becomes enslaved to irrational

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*δοκιμαζω*, this verb refers to knowledge as deliberately acquired as the information source for the practical affairs of one’s life (with Dunn, *Romans*, 166 and Cranfield, *Romans*, 118).

<sup>307</sup> Paul uses this term four times in Romans and of the four, three are in the first chapter (1:24, 1:26, 1:28 and 8:32). In each of Paul’s usages of *paradi, dwmi* in the first chapter, the verb describes the consequence of humanity’s inappropriate imagining of their relationship with God. According to Paul, to imagine oneself improperly in relationship with God is to, in one’s discernment process, disregard the boundary conditions (Gustafson’s vocabulary) set by God (humanity knows these boundary conditions—God has revealed them, cf. 1:19). Paul, in effect, equates humanity’s disregard of God’s boundary conditions in their discernment with God’s “handing humanity over” to a “worthless mind” – a mind insufficiently qualified for its task of informing relationships with others and with the rest of creation” (Dunn, *Romans*, 66). Thus, a mind incapable of discerning the will of God.

thoughts and irreverent behavior. And as Romans 1:28 explains, people living out of this reality possess a mind that is incapable of discerning the will of God.

In chapter four, the discussion of this passage (and its co-text) centered around Paul's construction of subjection as a theological/hermeneutical category. Now, building on the conclusions drawn from chapter four and outlined above, our primary concern rests on understanding the way in which Paul constructs the concept of discernment (*dokima, zw*) as a hermeneutical tool for empowering those who may feel powerless in their relationship with the oppression of governing authorities. The remainder of the chapter focuses on Romans 2:18, Romans 14:22 and Romans 12:2, the three other instances in Romans where Paul uses the verb *dokima, zw*. Romans 2:18 and its surrounding verses (including 1:28), lay the textual foundation for understanding discernment in Romans as a process which includes the concepts of subjection, reflection, and resistance. I close this section with an analysis of Romans 14:22 (*dokima, zw*) and Romans 12:2 (*dokima, zw*). Following Gustafson's terminology, these passages highlight the "perspective(s)," "values and principles" and "boundary conditions" Paul advances as tools for properly discerning how the community ought to act and who we ought to be both in relationship to God and one another.

### **Romans 2:18: Discernment and the Christian Community**

Romans 2:17-18 reads: 17) But if you call yourself a Jew and rely upon the law and take pride in your relation to God 18) and know God's will and discern (*dokima, zeij*) what is best (*diafe, ronta*)<sup>308</sup> being taught out of the law (*kathcou, menoj evk tou/ no, mou*). . .<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>308</sup>. The verb *diafe, rw* (when used intransitively) can mean "be worth more than," "be superior to," "differ or differ from," or "what is best or right." Coupled with *dokima, zw* the entire phrase is probably best understood as "discriminate between the things which are essential in matters of reflection as well as to determine the proper course of behavior (as in knowing right from wrong – see NEB). Following Gustafson's vocabulary, the phrase connotes one being able to offer an evaluative description of a

These passages represent ideological claims (following Althusser). They introduce a section in Paul’s letter where he is addressing the role of the law and its capacity to negotiate how people imagine themselves in relationship with God and one another. In 1:28, Paul portrayed humanity’s lack of discernment as bringing the destruction of all community relationships (the wrath of God). Now, in 2:18 and its context, Paul emphasizes the importance of discernment for establishing appropriate communal relationships, which, in effect, reflect the justice of God. His focus here centers around the “Jews” inappropriate understanding of their relationship with the law and thus with God. The details of the argument are not central to our discussion at this point. What needs to be underscored here is the role Paul affords the concept of discernment (the discernment process) in either sustaining the destruction of or (re)establishing appropriate relationships between humanity (Jew and Gentile) and between humanity and God.

Three points are relevant for understanding Paul’s argument about discernment. First, in 2:18, *dokima, zw* expresses a relationship between one knowing the will of God (*ginw, skeij to. qe, lhma*), one discerning the will of God (*dokima, zeij*), and the law – that which provides the capacity for “knowing and discerning” God’s will. According to Paul’s argument, the law represents a “perspective” through which certain “Jews” measure what they ought to do and who they ought and are

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situation which has come to one’s attention and one being able to discern how one ought to behave in light of the evaluative description.

<sup>309</sup>.The participle *kathcou, menoj* (present, passive, nominative, masculine, 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular) should be understood with the two preceding verbs – *ginw, skeij* (present active indicative 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular) and *dokima, zeij* (present active indicative 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular). As such, the law provides the capacity for “knowing and discerning” the will of God (see Dunn, *Romans* 111; Cranfield, *Romans*, 166; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 317; Byrne, *Romans*, 100).



to be in relation to other human beings and to God especially as it pertains to circumcision and Jewish identity as the people of God (at this point circumcision as the determining factor for people of God represents the situation or circumstance that has come to the attention of Paul and his readers -- Romans 2:25-29).<sup>310</sup> The circumcision is the marker of the covenant between God and the chosen people, and therefore that marker of the vocation for which God has chosen the people. This vocation is commonly referred to as “the sanctification of God’s name” or as Paul states it in 15:6 and 9, glorifying God (that is bringing glory to God, making people who did not know God want to glorify God, “in order that the Gentiles [i.e. those who are not members of the chosen people] might glorify God for God’s mercy” (Romans 15:9). Therefore, fulfilling the law is not simply doing what is arbitrarily demanded by a capricious God. Instead, it is doing something for the sake of God, namely insuring that God will be glorified by

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<sup>310</sup>. *peritomh*, (circumcision) can have three meanings: 1) the act of circumcision; 2) the state of being circumcised; 3) the community of the circumcised (the Jews). Paul oscillates between meanings two and three in Romans 2:25-39 (see Byrne, *Romans*, 105 and Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.171-173). That Paul takes up the topic of circumcision as the contested point in his argument is no surprise. Circumcision served as the primary identifying factor for the Jew of Paul’s time. Genesis 17:9-14 makes this quite clear: “This is my covenant which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised . . . and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you . . . So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people, he has broken my covenant. Also see 1 Macc 1:48, 60-61; 2:46; and 2 Macc 6:10 for references to the central importance of circumcision as a test of covenant loyalty and mark of Jewish national distinctiveness. For Dunn, the topic of circumcision as a climatic focus of chapter two “is a measure both of the degree to which it marked out distinctive Jewish identity and of the danger to which the typical Jew was exposed by over-reliance on it. To set such a value on ethnic identity and outward ritual is of a piece with the presumptuous wisdom of 1:22 and so draws the interlocutor under the same indictment of impiety and unrighteousness (1:18)” (Dunn, *Romans*, 119). Byrne recognizes the suddenness of Paul’s discussion of circumcision but adds “within the Jewish frame of reference presupposed by Paul, so close was the connection between circumcision and being a Jew that the topic of circumcision had to come up in any discussion of the ‘real Jew,’ which is what this passage is ultimately about” [as he sets it within vv 17 and vv 28-29] (Byrne, *Romans*, 104). Moreover, Byrne highlights the possible danger of this passage as appearing anti-Jewish. He warns against not recognizing the passage for what “it originally was — an ‘inner-Jewish’ prophetic accusation in diatribe style . . . The indictment rests, not on anything specifically ‘Jewish,’ but upon failing to live out what one claims to be, a failing which applies to human beings generally and to any religious system in particular. Paul’s accusation fastens upon failure with respect to the Jewish law since that was the relevant measure of conduct in the case of Judaism” (Byrne, *Romans*, 102).

others. What needs to be discerned is what will bring glory to God – what will bring people who are separated from God to glorify God – to recognize God’s mercy.

Second, in coupling *dokima*, *zw* with *diagein*, *rw* Paul emphasizes discernment in the sense of arriving at a decision as a process of evaluation between various possible courses of action (see fn 304). Paul’s argument faults the moral agents he’s addressing in his comments here for human faults of rationality (Gustafson’s vocabulary), and being “futile in their thinking,” having “darkened” and “senseless minds” (1:21), being fools (1:22) and idolatry (1:23), and having a “hardened and obstinate heart” (2:5). The problem Paul raises is not so much a matter of errors in logic as it is in “misconstruing that realm of reality that engages us, it is a matter of the wrong depiction and interpretation of the particular “world” that attracts our attention and that evokes our activity.”<sup>311</sup> The problem is that the moral agents have misinterpreted the law and have done so primarily because they refuse to see or consider “certain aspects of the world to which [they] are attentive, [their] refusals to take into account relevant information and explanation, [their] refusals to be corrected in light of substantial evidence and persuasive arguments”<sup>312</sup> (see 2:12-16).<sup>313</sup> Moreover, the problem Paul

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<sup>311</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective: Volume One Theology and Ethics*, 300-301.

<sup>312</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective: Volume One Theology and Ethics*, 300-301.

<sup>313</sup>.Dunn maintains that the point of the argument in 2:12-16 is clearly to “puncture a Jewish assurance falsely based on the fact of having the law, of being the chosen people of God. His argument is that this assurance must be false simply because there are Gentiles who show more evidence in themselves of what the law points to than many Jews, just as there are Jews, members of the people of the law, who break the law (vv 17-24), Jews who keep the law at one level (circumcision) but who are not properly to be described as real Jews, as “doers of the law (vv 25-29)” (Dunn, *Romans*, 107). Byrne, however, offers two ways of viewing this pericope. On the one hand, one can read the passage with a more negative understanding, seeing v 12 as “determinative and sees the statements about Gentile performance of the law in vv 14-15 to be addressing the question as to how Gentiles, lacking the law, can justly be candidates for condemnation, since the law will be the instrument of judgment (G. Bornkamm; E. Käsemann; C. K. Barrett; J. Fitzmyer) . . . .” The second position, which Byrne supports, stresses v 13 and sees “Paul countenancing the possibility that some Gentiles at least ‘do what the law requires’ . . . . Vv 14-15 then explain how Gentiles can achieve this in their ‘law-less-

raises centers around their self-satisfaction with their intellectual capacities and with the “sufficiency of [their] partial perspectives and interpretations [of the law] that [they] do not submit them to criticism and correction by others”<sup>314</sup> [here, Paul’s interpretations] in considering the appropriate relationship between obedience to the law, circumcision and their role in determining Jewish identity and faithfulness to God (see 2:25-29).<sup>315</sup>

Finally, Paul’s admonition against his readers underscores the broader connotative dimension of *dokima*, zw. The intention of discernment is action.

Boasting (*καυκα, omai*)<sup>316</sup> in knowing God’s will and the ability to discern God’s will, but nevertheless failing to demonstrate God’s purposes in one’s personal and communal

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state.” Ultimately, Byrne agrees with Dunn that “Paul’s passing endorsement of the possibility that some Gentiles fulfill the law’s requirement is designed to highlight the failure on the Jewish side” (Byrne, *Romans*, 91). The point of this pericope for our discussion, however, is to highlight the absolute way in which Paul presents the knowledge held by the “Jews” through the law and its adverse affect on their discerning the will of God.

<sup>314</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective: Volume One Theology and Ethics*, 300-301.

<sup>315</sup>.Again, Paul’s argument here is ideological. He offers an alternative view of how one ought to assess Jewish identity. Paul does not discount the concept of circumcision as central to one being in a right relationship with God. Rather, he exposes the danger of absolutizing a system of thought whose adherents refuse to imagine other ways of understanding their relationship with others and with God.

<sup>316</sup>. “Boast” as Dunn notes, could have a negative force (boast without due cause, boast in an unworthy object); but it could also signify a justifiable boast (cf., e.g., Ps. 49:6 [LXX 48:7] with 149:5 and Sir. 11:4 with 30:2) . . . Paul of course makes no (implied) criticism of boasting in God. . . From the context, however, the implication is that such Jewish boasting tends to be nationalistically exclusive: Jewish boasting in God as theirs alone (cf. 3:27-29). Hence it gathers (by implication) the more negative force which Paul uses in criticizing boasting based on outward evaluation and physical relationship (2 Cor 5:12; 11:18; Gal 6:13; Phil 3:3)” (Dunn, *Romans*, 38a, 110). Cranfield also distinguishes between a “positive” boasting and a “negative” boasting. For him, the distinction rests in whether one offers the sort of boasting which “truly gives [God] glory, a truly humble boasting in His goodness and mercy” or “if it is the sort which is self-centered boasting in Him as a basis for one’s own self-importance” (Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.164). With Dunn and Cranfield, Byrne notes the positive and negative aspects of “boasting.” One boasts in that upon which one relies for security, recognition, justification or salvation. However, boasting is negative when it does not recognize God and positive when it “rests upon God or the achievement of God’s grace through human agents . . . Faith, which responds uniquely to God’s creative power (cf. Rom 4:17) excludes boasting in the first sense, particularly boasting in ‘works (of the law)’” (3:27). Byrne concludes, “[p]ossession of the law is a flawed basis for boasting, not because of keeping the law is in itself wrong (Bultmann) nor because it bolsters nationalistic pride at the expense of acceptance of the Gentiles (Dunn- [see above], but because human beings, unable to fulfill the law’s requirements, cannot find justification and salvation apart from God’s act in Christ (Rom 7:14-8:4)” (Byrne, *Romans*, 99).

life is, according to Paul, futile. For instance, Paul writes in 2:13: “For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified.”<sup>317</sup> In 2:19-23 Paul makes a series of statements that make clear how “knowledge [of the will of God] without performance is useless and perhaps even dangerous.”<sup>318</sup>

2:19) “and you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness 20) an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth 21) you then, that teach others, you do not teach yourself. You preach against stealing, [yet] you steal. 22) You say not to commit adultery, [yet] you commit adultery. You abhor idols, [yet] you rob temples. 23) You who boast in the law, through the transgression of the law, you dishonor God.”<sup>319</sup>

However, not only do those “Jews” who know the truth of the law and fail to act accordingly dishonor God, they cause others to dishonor and insult God: “For as it was written, the name of God is insulted among the Gentiles because of you” (2:24).

Knowledge of the truth makes the failure to practice the truth even more reprehensible . . .

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<sup>317</sup>.NRSV translation

<sup>318</sup>.Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 40.

<sup>319</sup>.With Byrne (*Romans*, 101) I read/translate the four sentences which make up verses 21 and 22 as statements although other scholars translate the sentences as “accusatory rhetorical questions” (Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.167; Dunn, *Romans* 38a, 108-109). Byrne writes about these passages: “The sequence contains three specific charges – stealing, committing adultery, robbing temples (vv 21b-22) – framed by more general accusations at the beginning (failing to teach oneself, v21a) and end (dishonoring God by transgression of the law, v 23). The accusation of failure to practice what one teaches or imposes upon others (v21a) parallels Jesus’ severe indictment of the Pharisees in Matthew 23 (cf Luke 11:39-52). Moreover, there is an impressive similarity between the sequence of specific charges with those leveled against backsliding Israelites in contemporary Jewish literature (cf. esp. *Pss. Sol.* 8:8-13; *T. Levi* 14; Qumran : CD 4:12-17; 8:4-10; *Philo Conf.* 163). This suggests that Paul is employing an established *topos* that may not have been so startling to his original readers. . . But Paul is not asserting that all Jews failed in the areas suggested or that the vices were characteristic of the nation as a whole. . . he is attempting to drive home the point that possession of the law has not prevented Jews from failing to abide by its key moral precepts as formulated in the Decalogue. What fatally undermines the possibility of “boasting in the law” (v 23) – something which its possession might otherwise seem to afford — is ‘transgression’ (*parabasis*) of its precepts, a phrase summing up the preceding catalogue of specific offenses. The end result is the ‘dishonoring’ of God, the very antithesis of the ‘boasting in God’ that was the original claim (v 17c)” (Byrne, *Romans*, 98).

...<sup>320</sup> Therefore, the point is that not fulfilling the law is not only failing to bring people to glorify God, it is bringing people to dishonor and insult God because people fail to appropriately act on God's will. Moral discernment (discerning the will of God) finds its fullest expression in the appropriate application of God's will. (We will see this further evidenced in our discussion of 14:22-23).

### **Rules of Engagement: Aspects of Discernment in Romans 14**

Paul's understanding of discernment and of the proper patterns of human relating within this Christian community is more fully expressed in chapter 14. In chapter 14, Paul provides the principles, values and boundary conditions he considers most effective for properly discerning the will of God and creating an environment that supports the realization of the kingdom of God (as we shall see when discussing 14:17).

Advising on dietary issues (whether or not to eat meat or drink wine), Paul encourages those in this community who believe in eating only vegetables/herbs to refrain from treating with disdain those in this community who believe in eating "all things." Likewise, Paul urges those who are comfortable in eating "all things" not to pass judgment on those who adhere to greater dietary restrictions (Romans 14:3). Counseling on the observance of holy days, Paul encourages the members of this community to respond to one another's difference with the understanding that underlying the other's motive is a genuine attempt to live in accordance to God's will (Romans 14:5-6). Paul goes on to advise those who believe in eating all things to abstain from eating meat if their doing so creates a spiritual dilemma for those who are convinced that eating meat is

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<sup>320</sup> Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 40.

wrong (Romans 14:15). Paul’s directive privileges peace and communal edification over what he considers trivial issues that distract from one experiencing the true gifts of the “kingdom of God:” righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). As such, the “kingdom of God,” according to Paul, does not exist apart from the community. Rather, the kingdom of God is a reality brought into existence because of the community’s service to Christ. The community’s service to Christ is its effort to create an environment that seeks the maintenance and (re)establishment of good relationships between its members: “therefore, let us press toward the ideas and actions that bring peace and mutual upbuilding ( author’s translation - Romans 14:19).<sup>321</sup> This however, is no simple task. It requires that one engage in the discerning process so that one is properly able to understand and work toward an appropriate relationship with God and with others in the community. Following Paul’s logic, discernment or arriving at a decision as a process of evaluation between various possible courses of action requires two points of deliberation: 1) Is one’s motive to give honor to God? (recall 1:28) and 2) Does one’s actions cause others to waiver in their convictions regarding their expression of thanks and honor to God? Consider, for example, Romans 14:5, Paul’s counsel regarding the observance of holy day(s). He writes: “for one person judges (kri , nw) one day to be better than another, while another judges (kri , nw) all days to be alike. Let each person be fully convinced in one’s own mind.”<sup>322</sup> In the first half of the verse, Paul lays out the two possible courses of action that must be evaluated. That Paul expects his readers to engage or have engaged in reflection and discernment is evidenced

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<sup>321</sup>.a;ra ou=n ta. th/j eivrh,nhj diw,kwmen kai. ta. th/j oivkodomh/j th/j eivj avllh,loujÅ

<sup>322</sup>.e[kastoj evn tw/| ivdi,w| noi> plhroforei,sqwÅ

in his use of the verb *kri, nw*. As used here, *kri, nw* suggests that a selection has been made from two or more possible options.<sup>323</sup> But, as it turns out, the choice to be made is not between these two possible courses of action. Instead, as the second portion of the verse explains, the choice to be made is between a (fully) convinced mind (*e [kastoj evn tw/ | ivdi, w | noi > plhroforei, sqwÅ*) or a doubtful mind (*diakri, nw* Romans 14:23) – that is a mind still in the process of “discerning” in an inappropriate way.<sup>324</sup> The essential element in the service of Christ or communal edification is a fully convinced mind that results from a process of discernment. However, the point is not that one must merely be convinced or have a good conscience about the observance of one day over another or be fully convinced that it is appropriate to view all days alike. This position represents a totally selfish posture that would only further agitate relations between the different factions within the community. A convinced mind that results from real discernment, argues Paul, is a mind that acts toward a specific purpose -- a mind that acts out of a will to honor God and a commitment to secure life-giving relationships with others (Romans 14:4-5; 14:13-19). In order to understand Paul’s use of *dokima, zw* in Romans 14:22 (and 23) as an attempt to further describe the Christian community’s appropriate pattern of relating with one another, we must keep in mind this sense of a “convinced mind or a fully convinced mind.”

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<sup>323</sup>.*BDAG* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p 567.

<sup>324</sup>.*diakri, nw* belongs to the same semantic field as *dokima, zw* according to Louw and Nida’s dictionary. Right now, Paul’s juxtaposition of the choice between a convinced mind and a doubtful mind is implied or implicit. It will become explicit as the analysis continues, especially in the discussion of Romans 14:22-23. However, Paul has already made this same juxtaposition (between a fully convinced mind and a doubtful mind) in 4:20-21 where he describes Abraham’s ability to envision the power and presence of God within and beyond his present circumstance or subjection.

## **Inappropriate Boundary Conditions: Reflecting and Acting Out of a Convinced Mind**

The faith that you have, keep it to yourself before God. Blessed is the person not judging oneself in what one discerns.<sup>325</sup>

In this light, Paul's use of *dokima*, zw in Romans 14:22 reflects his attempt to further describe the Christian community's appropriate pattern of relating with one another. He reinforces the point made in 14:21 where he reminds his readers that it is "good not to eat meat nor to drink wine or to do anything that makes your sister or brother stumble." 14:21 functions as a "boundary condition" that must guide how members of the community determine their proper modes of action.<sup>326</sup> Therefore, in 14:22, Paul advises his readers who believe "all things are clean" to "keep that conviction to [themselves] before God" (14:22a). That "all things are clean" is a "valid conviction that should guide her or him whenever one scrutinizes one's conduct in the sight of God."<sup>327</sup> However, according to Paul's argument, whether or not "all things are clean" is not an appropriate principle or value as a basis for discerning the actions needed to realize the end Paul seeks -- actualizing the kingdom of God that is manifested in the peace between its participants and mutual upbuilding (14:16-19).

Recognizing one's subjection to the conviction that "all things are clean" is, however, a necessary step in the discerning process. Throughout chapter fourteen Paul calls to the attention of his readers that they are always already in subjection to the

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<sup>325</sup>.su. pi,stin Îh]nD e;ceij kata. seauto.n e;ce evnw,pion tou/ qeou/Å  
maka,rioj o` mh. kri,nwn e`auto.n evn w-| dokima,zei

<sup>326</sup>.This position is opposite Cranfield, for instance, who argues that 14:22 does not build on 14:21, but simply reflects a description of the "strong Christian as being truly possessed of the inner freedom to do those things which he approves and therefore untroubled by the scruples which afflict the weak Christian . . ." (Cranfield, *Romans* 2.722).

<sup>327</sup>.Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 698.



principle “all things are clean.”<sup>328</sup> Again this is not a wrong conviction; it is simply inappropriate for the given situation which Paul is seeking to address. It is only through the acknowledgment of this conviction that one can properly reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of holding this position as the determining value or principle for discerning the appropriate action in a given situation. Once people are aware of their subjection, they are capable of having their vision enlarged, capable of hearing alternative arguments and evaluating different positions that help agents see more clearly the given situation to which they must respond. Therefore, having made the agents aware of their subjection to their conviction that “all things are clean” and even validating that belief as an appropriate value for a particular time, Paul moves his argument deeper into the reflective process. He encourages his readers to use a different set of boundary conditions for determining how best to imagine themselves in relationship with other members of the community. By accepting a different set of boundary conditions, they in effect enlarge their understanding of how they imagine their relationship with God (and the kingdom of God) from a merely personal experience to a communal responsibility of securing life-giving relationships with others.

Building on Romans 14:21-22a, Romans 14:22b relays the central message Paul is conveying about discernment when it states: “Blessed is the person not judging [condemning] herself or himself by what she or he discerns.” Paul bestows a blessing on

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<sup>328</sup>.I am indebted to Daniel Patte’s discussion on the “systems of convictions” that characterizes Paul’s faith in *Paul’s Faith and the Power of the Gospel*. Patte explains that convictional patterns represent “‘self-evident’ truths that impose themselves on us and have power over us – they cause us to act and think in certain ways. . . We do not generate [convictions] . . . they are perceived as having their origin outside of us. They transcend us. Traditionally, believers have viewed convictions as revealed, as having their origin in the divine (a view which is consistent in that they are perceived as absolutely true. . . Convictions motivate, orient, and thus structure all the believers’ activities, their behavior, their way of thinking, their way of speaking or writing” (pp 15-16) (see Introduction in *Paul’s faith and the Power of the Gospel* for a full discussion on Patte’s analysis of Paul’s faith as a convictional pattern).

those who hold the conviction that all things are clean. People who are not judging and condemning themselves are blessed because they have kept their conviction private, a matter between them and God (14:22a). Byrne argues that Paul's primary concern here is to present "the basic principle of human moral action" whereas one is to always "act with firm conviction."<sup>329</sup> While this principle is important for Paul, it is not his primary concern at this juncture.

Instead, Paul's immediate concern is to persuade the "strong" that if they enlarge their vision and move from the appropriate principle -- where their actions (in words or gestures) are determined by whether or not their behavior causes another to stumble and therefore destroys the work of God (14:20-21) -- they stand in a state of blessedness. That is, people are blessed for having an appropriately convinced mind (with Byrne). But, a mind that discerns out of the belief that "all things are clean," is, according to Paul's logic, is an inappropriately convinced mind. An appropriately convinced mind, as presented in Paul's rhetorical argument, is a mind convinced of a specific purpose -- a mind that acts out of a will to honor God and a commitment to secure life-giving relationships with others. Therefore, a mind that discerns out of the belief that "all things are clean," and therefore exercise their "strength" at the expense of the weak, misreads the boundary conditions Paul establishes (realizing the kingdom of God, mutual upbuilding); it employs inappropriate values or principals for discerning the

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<sup>329</sup>.Byrne does not apply the statement closely to the "strong" but understands Paul as formulating "a general principle (completed by a negative counterpart in v 23a) about the necessity of (happiness / non-happiness?) of always acting with a convinced conscience ('faith'): a person who acts with a clear conscience (literally, 'not condemning himself or herself') is happy" (Byrne, *Romans*, 421-422).



now expresses negatively the connection he constructs between conviction or faith and discernment. This process of discernment requires that one possess an appropriately (fully) convinced mind. An appropriately (fully) convinced mind determines the will of God based on the principal of whether or not one's actions causes another to stumble. A doubting mind, on the other hand, determines the will of God, within this Christian communal context, from the perspective that "all things are clean." Paul's point in 23a then emphasizes that not recognizing the appropriate values and principals for discerning the will of God within this Christian communal context, and "eating all things," blatantly disregards those who believe in a more restricted diet, and leads not to a blessed state but to condemnation. Therefore, Paul states, and I paraphrase: those who continue to act out of the conviction that "all things are clean" and eat, destroy the work of God and are therefore condemned (*katakri, nw*).

Thus, in 23b, Paul argues that such actions do not proceed out of faith (*evk pi, stewj*), but are acts of sin (*a`marti, a*). Paul establishes an opposition between a "doubtful mind" (*diakri, nw*) – a mind still in the process of discerning in an inappropriate way and discernment that proceeds "out of faith" (*evk pi, stewj*)-- which is another way of speaking about an appropriately (fully) convinced mind. Actions (in words or gestures) that proceed "out of faith" reflect a person who appropriately imagines herself or himself in relationship with God and others. Yet, for those who act out of "doubtful discernment," for those who act out of willful pride and intemperate arrogance, for those who flaunt their freedom or liberty in Christ as an end in itself or as a means of promoting their individual initiative, instead of understanding Christian

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'condemn' themselves but render themselves liable to a more fundamental condemnation, that of God. . ." (Byrne, *Romans*, 418).

freedom as a way to participate in Christ's renewing of the world and to build the kingdom, their action (in words or gestures) is sin.<sup>333</sup>

Paul's understanding of sin here is two-fold. On the one hand, sin simply means a wrong-doing that is offensive to God. A *ἁμαρτία*, *ama* refers to a "sinful act (s)."<sup>334</sup> Beyond understanding a *ἁμαρτία*, *ama* merely as sinful actions, Paul also understands sin in the sense of a personified power.<sup>335</sup> Paul does not merely suggest that "doubtful discernment" makes the person sinful by leading them to sinful acts. Rather for him, "doubtful discernment" is sin. It is a destructive force that wields power and influence over people, circumstances and events. Paul has come full circle in his construction of discernment. For instance, in Romans 1:28 the lack of faithful discernment leads not only to humanity performing sinful acts, faithless or false discernment also becomes a power and force by which humanity is subjected. Likewise here, in Romans 14:23 and its context, "doubtful discernment" as a conviction or a faith works as a coercive power over people<sup>336</sup> and necessarily creates relationships characterized by injustice, hostility and sadness<sup>337</sup>-- relationships that negate the work of God.

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<sup>333</sup>.Patte writes in *Paul's Faith and Power of the Gospel*, that when considering the hermeneutical potential of Romans 13:1-7 one might argue (with Paul's logic – though absent from Paul's rhetoric) that "this political power [Roman Empire] might itself become a power of sin by being absolutized because of the self-asserting desire. Such was the case when the Romans viewed the emperor, who represented the Roman political order, as god. Such is the case when a people perceives its political authority (or order) as an absolute (the only true and good political order) . . ." p. 291.

<sup>334</sup>.See Byrne, *Romans*, p. 422; Dunn, *Romans V. 38b*, pp 828-829; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.729.

<sup>335</sup>.See Romans 3:9; 5:12-13; 5:20-21; 6:12; 6:14; 7:7-20.

<sup>336</sup>.Patte's understanding of faith is helpful here. Patte defines faith as "nothing other than holding to a system of convictions or, better, being held by a system of convictions" (Patte, *Paul's Faith and Power of the Gospel*, p 11). In other words, faith or conviction is a power that has power over subjects.

<sup>337</sup>.Injustice, hostility and sadness represent human patterns of relating opposite those Paul suggests comprise the kingdom of God (justice/righteousness, peace and joy see Romans 14:17).

## **In Summation**

The power and purpose of Paul's instructions here rest not in a universal statement on people constantly subjecting their behavior to the "weaknesses" of others as evidence of spiritual maturity. Neither are Paul's comments about the passive accommodation of one group in order to pacify a less spiritually sophisticated group. Instead, Paul's instructions reflect his understanding of the discernment process. He reminds his readers that the discernment process is a contextual exercise. Therefore, when seeking to discern what God requires of us in a given situation, we are to recognize that we enter the process with preconceived convictions and presuppositions. Therefore, not only is this community to reflect upon the particular event in question, but they are also to reflect upon the values, perspectives and boundary conditions that fuel their discernment process.

The challenge, as Paul describes in chapter fourteen, is what psychologist call "to differentiate" – the need to balance our two basic urges for self-direction and communion,<sup>338</sup> for individual Christian freedom and mutual upbuilding. Paul's response to this challenge is that in given situations, we best preserve our individual Christian freedom through our willingness and ability to think beyond our personal goals for the service of others. Yet, what is most significant for our reading, is the point Paul continuously emphasizes throughout the chapter: people cannot discern the will of God, especially concerning communal well-being, if they absolutize their own personal convictions and refuse to consider the intellectual convictions, spiritual dispositions and physical restrictions of others. Paul understands Christian freedom, as will be outlined

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<sup>338</sup>.Schnarch, David, *Passionate Marriage: Keeping Love and Intimacy Alive in Committed Relationships*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997. p. 392.

below, to be a gift from God that enables believers to recognize the value others bring to the experience of worship and to realize the kingdom of God.

### **Romans 12 and Discernment: Non-Conformity, Transformation and Renewal**

In Romans 12:2 Paul explicitly charges his readers to acknowledge an alternative “perspective” to serve as the basis for discerning the will of God. Paul writes:

Do not be conformed (*suschmati, zesge*) by/to this world, but allow yourselves to be transformed (*metamorfou/sge*) by the renewing of your mind (*th/| avnakainw, sei tou/ noo. j*) so that you may discern (*dokima, zein*) what is the will of God – the good and acceptable and complete (Romans 12:2).

Paul’s comment expresses to his readers the inappropriateness of the current ideological claims of “this world” as effective principles and values for their realizing the kingdom of God and serving as effective members of the body of Christ (12:4). Essentially this is a reflective charge that moves in three phases. First, Paul advises his readers against accepting as absolute the apparent order of “this world.” Second, Paul challenges his readers to be transformed in their fundamental attitudes about and perspectives on how they envision their relationship with one another and with traditional institutions of power (as emphasized in 1:18-28). And finally, Paul maintains that when people are no longer mentally beguiled by an uncritical acceptance of the norms and values which govern “this world,” they are now capable of discerning the will of God. People now possess, as Dunn states, “the capacity of forming the correct Christian ethical judgment at each given moment. . . .”<sup>339</sup> However, a fundamental element to people forming the correct ethical judgment in their everyday lives is the intellectual ability and will to seek out and to

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<sup>339</sup>.Dunn, *Romans Volume 38b 9-16*, 715.

recognize the power and presence of God beyond those traditional ideas, laws, values, social customs, and ideological norms to which they have grown accustomed.<sup>340</sup>

**Do Not be Conformed to This World.** In his reflective charge, Paul advises the Christian community against accepting as absolute the apparent order of “this world.” Hence, Christians are not to be conformed by/to this world. They are to recognize the prevailing norms of the society in which they live and resist an uncritical and absolute fashioning of their personal and communal behavior by these norms. Therefore, Paul uses *suschmati, zw* in an ideological sense; the term references both how people understand themselves in the world and subsequently, how they fashion their way of life.<sup>341</sup> But at this point, Paul’s primary goal is to emphasize the ideological influence “this world” possesses over the lives of people. Paul does not dismiss or trivialize the power of “this world.” Therefore Dunn rightly notes that *suschmati, zesqe* (be conformed), in the passive, connotes Paul’s “recognition of a power or force which molds character and conduct. Paul in effect recognizes the power of social groups, cultural norms, institutions, and traditions to mold patterns of individual [and group] behavior.”<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>340</sup>.In Romans 12:2, Paul resumes a line of argumentation that weaves throughout the letter where he describes two mind-sets (φρόνημα) or ways of thinking about and engaging the world. Paul maintains that people either live their lives under the influence of the “flesh,” which he understands as a corrupt and distorted perception of the world and as a system of social actions that are incapable of pleasing God or people live their lives under the influence of the “spirit,” a way of thinking about the world that is capable of pleasing God and thus promotes healthy and productive human relationships and ensures that humanity fulfills its stewardly duties to the creation. Now in Romans 12:2, instead of admonishing his readers not to live “according to the flesh,” he warns them against being “conformed to this world.” Paul uses the phrases interchangeably.

<sup>341</sup>.Coupled with *aiwv, n, suschmati, zw* refers to one being conformed to or guided by the normative ideas and values which lay at the root of a particular society at a certain period in history. Moreover, *suschmati, zw* is a compound verb. The *συν* - element adds the sense of attachment to and control by something both foreign and external (here the present age). And *σχῆμα* connotes the functional aspect of something – a way of life. See *BDAG* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. pp 979 and 981.

<sup>342</sup>.Dunn, *Romans Volume 38b 9-16*, 712.



However, as outlined in the previous chapter, with an awareness of one's subjection and emboldened by the Spirit, people are capable of resisting holding as absolute the normative values of "this world" and thus patterning their behavior after the norms it prescribes. What is presupposed here is the *σχῆμα* or the "way of life" seen throughout Romans where the present life of humanity is lived in overlap of the ages.

Byrne explains:

The new age inaugurated by the resurrection of Christ has become palpable in the experience of the Spirit, attesting a new relationship with God (cf. 5:5; 8:23). But the conditions of the sin-laden old era endure for the time being . . . In their bodies believers feel and suffer the onslaughts of the old era. They have to live out the values of the new — especially in relation to God and fellow human beings — in the conditions of the old. . . their 'worship' involves a constant resistance to the 'pull' of the passing age upon their bodily existence.<sup>343</sup>

Therefore, *συσχηματισμοῦ* as a present imperative observes Dunn, "indicates that human responsibility is also involved – that the individual can accept or resist such power structures, can acquiesce in or resist such behavior patterning." In this light, Cranfield's translation of Romans 12:2 is helpful: "stop allowing yourselves to be conformed to this age."<sup>344</sup> Ultimately, Paul's call for non-conformity represents his continuing effort to persuade the Christian community at Rome to reorient how they imagine themselves in relationship with the traditional institutions of power governing the world in which they exist.

**Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind.** As the second phase in his reflective charge, Paul positively echoes his call for non-conformity to/by "this world" stating: "but

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<sup>343</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 364.

<sup>344</sup>.Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 2.607.

be transformed (metamorfou/sqe) by the renewing (avnakainw, sei) of your mind.” The renewing of the mind represents, for Paul, a transformation in people’s fundamental attitudes about and perspectives on how they envision their relationship with one another and with traditional institutions of power. In this way, the transformation is an inward experience. Yet, at the same time, the transformation is external. The transformation affects how people present themselves to the world, and consequently how they are perceived by the world. The transformation of the mind is evidenced through a visible transformation of the self -- a transfiguration in behavior – a non-conformity to “this world.”<sup>345</sup>

As described in Romans 1:21, human beings are entrapped by a way of thinking and understanding that prohibits rational and righteous behavior. Therefore, before offering his vision of righteous and productive patterns of human relationships (12:3-21), Paul maintains that his readers must experience a renewal of the mind. According to Paul then, the mind is the seat of conformity. Therefore it is the people’s power of thought and reason that must be tweaked and encouraged to recognize the presence of God both within, and most importantly for Paul’s argument, beyond the ideological parameters established by the Jewish law and/or the *Pax Romana* as ideological constructs. But, how does a renewing of the mind take place? The renewing of the mind happens through both the workings of the Spirit and the workings of humanity. Consider

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<sup>345</sup>. Interpreters have claimed that a significant distinction is to be made between *suschmati, zesqe* and *metamorfou/sqe*. The former, it is argued, refers to outward form only and so indicates something external and superficial, whereas the latter refers to inward being and so indicates a profound transformation. See Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.605-608 for a detailed discussion on the history of scholarship on this matter. Cranfield argues however, that no distinction should be made here between the two words – they are synonymous, expressing the same meaning from a negative and positive stance. But, Cranfield does maintain that the grammatical construction of the terms allows for significant rhetorical differences here (see ff. 343).

for example, Cranfield’s discussion on Paul’s grammatical construction of *suschmati, zesqe* and *metamorfou/sqe* and the rhetorical significance it has on Romans 12:2.

The use of the passive imperative *metamorfou/sqe* is consonant with the truth that, while this transformation is not the Christians’ own doing but the work of the Holy Spirit, they nevertheless have a real responsibility in the matter — to let themselves be transformed, to respond to the leading and pressure of God’s Spirit. We may bring out the force of the tense by translating: ‘stop allowing yourselves to be conformed . . . continue to let yourselves be transformed . . .’.<sup>346</sup>

However, only a mind that has been awakened or made aware of its subjection by an oppressive governing authority or to “this world” can in turn consciously respond to the “pressure of God’s Spirit” – can envision realities of human relating beyond those advanced by the current dominant ideology under which it exists (recall previous chapter). According to Paul, the Spirit effects change in the minds of people, not simply through a mysterious interpersonal experience, but through the persuasive speech and actions of emboldened and awakened human beings (Romans 10:14-17; cf. Ephesians 1:13; the Christ-event). The renewing of the mind is evidenced by one’s rational discrimination. Therefore, Paul argues that people are able to discern the will of God because their way of thinking and attitudes are renewed and no longer fashioned by the ideological norms of “this world” – people are no longer of a mind-set of the flesh.

Gustafson’s translation of Romans 12:2 expresses this point well:

. . . Do not be conformed to (*suschmati, zesqe*) the immediate and apparent possibilities or requirements of either your desires or the circumstances in which you live and act. But be enlarged (*metamorfou/sqe*) in your vision and affections (*th/| avnakainw, sei tou/ noo.j*), so that you might better discern (*dokima, zein*) what the divine governance enables and requires you to be and to do, what are your appropriate relations to God, indeed, what are your

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<sup>346</sup>.Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.607.

appropriate relations of all things to God. That you might discern the will of God.<sup>347</sup>

Gustafson begins the final chapter in *Ethics From a Theological Perspective VI*, with the above translation of Romans 12:2. He does not provide an exegetical analysis of this text, but offers this translation as an introduction or point of departure for his discussion on the process of discernment, especially as it pertains to the Christian life. According to Gustafson, the central question (s) in the Christian community's life is "what is God enabling and requiring us to be and to do?"<sup>348</sup> In a general sense, Gustafson answers this question (s) in his translation of Romans 12:2: "we are to relate ourselves and all things in a manner (or in ways) appropriate to their relations to God." In a more particular sense, Gustafson argues, as Christians we come to know (or to know better) what God is enabling of us and requiring of us to be and do through discernment. Essentially these are ideological claims (in Althusser's sense of the term). The discernment process

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<sup>347</sup>.Gustafson, *Ethics From a Theological Perspective V. I*,

<sup>348</sup>.These questions carry specific meaning for Gustafson. Consider, for instance, the definitions and subsequent connotative explanations Gustafson offers for the concepts comprised (by, in) his relevant question (s). Gustafson understands God as the "ultimate ordering power in the universe" (Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, V. 2, 1). Throughout his works he refers to God as the "divine governance." Gustafson uses the term *enabling* because it emphasizes that the "occasions for activity and the capacities for action arise 'prior' to human interventions and choices. This is not to suggest, however, that human beings, through their actions and choices do not consequently create "occasions for activity" or situations to which they must respond. Gustafson is simply acknowledging that people are always already subject to and dependent upon " 'forces' we do not create or fully control" (v.2, 2). On the term *requiring*, Gustafson notes that its purpose is not simply to highlight ethics as a prescriptive exercise, involving obligations and duties. Instead, argues Gustafson, the term references the divine governance's demand for "some conformity to it; failure to consent to these demands is perilous both to human well-being and to 'nature.' The 'content' of what we are to be and to do is grounded in part in the requisites of the divine governance" (v. 2, 1).

The term *us* highlights the communal quality of moral activity. Gustafson writes, "moral activity is engaged in not only by individuals facing choices in a restricted set of circumstances but by communities collectively making choices and engaging in actions" (v.2, 2). On the question of being/*to be* Gustafson presents the view that "the divine governance enables us to be certain kinds of persons and certain kinds of communities . . . because certain qualities of individual life and states of affairs in communities display an appropriate ordering of life" (v.2, 2). Finally, the phrase *to do* reflects Gustafson's conviction that life is the "exercise of powers and capacities. Morality pertains to actions, individual and collective . . ." (V. 2, 2)

enables us to know how better to imagine ourselves (and all things) in appropriate relations to God and to one another, and to therefore act accordingly.

In this light, reflection is a process of discernment. Walter Wink's comments on discernment are worth noting here. Wink writes, "discernment does not entail esoteric knowledge, but rather the gift of seeing reality as it really is. Nothing is more rare, or more truly revolutionary, than an accurate description of reality."<sup>349</sup> Although I agree with Wink's position on the importance of discernment as an accurate description of "reality," I add, following Althusser's understanding of ideology and Gustafson's explanation of an "evaluative description," that every description of reality is clouded by an ideological presupposition which must be made explicit. People's descriptions of reality are largely based on their relationship to their conditions of existence. Nevertheless, reflection, the renewal of the mind, empowers those oppressed by their relationship with "governing authorities" with the ability to discern that subjection to "this world" or to "living according to the flesh" is not absolute.

Instead, the standard for Christian conduct is measured by a "knowledge" of what God desires. One does not "know" what is "right" or "wrong" through the normative values of "this world" whether it be Roman values or Jewish Law. Paul understands these visions of the world as absolute perspectives for discerning the will of God to be compressed visions of faith.<sup>350</sup> Therefore, Paul suggests that it is in fact the

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<sup>349</sup>.Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*. (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1992), 89.

<sup>350</sup>.See Patte, *Paul's Faith and Power of the Gospel*. ch. 7. Offering an analysis of Paul's faith in Romans, Patte explains how both the Jewish Law and the Roman political system serve as systems of convictions or [ideological constructs] which properly viewed are manifestations of the presence and power of God, but if absolutized by the community (which Patte suggests occurs) become expressions of sin.

renewal of Christians' mind(s) beyond these prescribed norms which allows them to discern God's will. The significance of reflection, however, is not to end the subjection. Instead, reflection prevents the Christians at Rome from making absolute the Roman political authority, thus worshiping it instead of God (see Rom. 1:19-23). Or as Wink states, "the seer's gift is not to be immune to invasion by the empire's spirituality, but to be able to discern the internalized spirituality, name it, and externalize it."<sup>351</sup> The subjection remains, but not as an absolute reality within the life of the "seer."<sup>352</sup>

Consequently, humanity in a state of reflection stands in direct opposition to the state of humanity described in Romans 1:21: "for though they knew God, they did not honor God or give thanks to God, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened." Reflective humanity, on the other hand, is compelled to consciousness by the divine will and our activities mirror relationships that are necessary and proper for the measure of human self-fulfillment and communal edification required as members of the body of Christ (Romans 12:3-18). As such, reflective humanity

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<sup>351</sup> Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 89.

<sup>352</sup> Expounding on Paul's grammatical construction of *suschmati*, *zesqe* and *metamorfou/sqe* and the rhetorical significance it has on Romans 12:2, Cranfield makes a similar point about the relationship between *subjection*, *reflection* and *resistance* within the human experience. Though, of course, he does not use this language: "... The present imperative may be used to indicate that an action already happening is to continue indefinitely, and in a prohibition to indicate that an action which is happening is to stop. So here the [conforming] is to stop, the [transforming] is to go on indefinitely. The transformation is not something which is brought about in an instant; it has to be continually repeated, or, rather, it is a process which has to go on all the time the Christian is in this life. . . The good news, to which the imperative *μη suschmati, zesqe* bears witness, is that they are no longer the helpless victims of tyrannizing forces, but are able to resist this pressure which comes both from without and from within. . . And this *μη suschmati, zesqe* is something which he needs to hear again and again. It must ever be a great part of the content of Christian exhortation, so long as the Church is 'militant here in earth'. For the pressures to conformity are always present, and always strong and insidious — so that the Christian often yields quite *unconsciously* (emphasis mine). . . Instead of going on contentedly and complacently allowing himself to be stamped afresh and moulded by the fashion of this world, he is not to yield himself to a different pressure, to the direction of the Spirit of God. He is to allow himself to be transformed continually, remoulded, remade, so that his life here and now may more and more clearly exhibit signs and tokens of the coming order of God, that order which has already come — in Christ." Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.607-608.

possesses the capacity to discern, to see anew, to envision and understand realities of the power and presence of God beyond their immediate subjection by governing authorities.

### **Summarizing the Reflective Charge: Positive and Negative Space**

Comparing God with the artistic concept of negative space offers a powerful example of Paul's call for Christians to reflect upon their subjection in order to reach the conviction that God dwells both in and beyond the structure or the ordering of relationships that we deem absolute. Artists refer to the hollow, empty area surrounding the edges and contours of an object as "negative space." For instance, draw a circle on a sheet of blank paper and fill the circle with a solid color, the outer white space defines the edge of that circle. The white area is negative space because it is not recognizable. It is nothingness. Without this negative space, however, the viewer would not be able to identify a solid blue circle. The blue circle represents "positive" space because it occupies an area of the negative space and is defined by that negative space.

At the same time, "positive" objects possess the capacity to partially frame negative space. Although positive space partially frames negative space, negative space cannot be transformed into positive space. A brief interactive exercise will help further clarify this point. Take your hands (positive space) and bring them together into a praying posture. Slowly release your hands, allowing only your finger tips to touch, including your thumbs. Adjust your hands so that you create an upside down heart. Your eyes tell you that you see a heart. If you now completely pull your hands apart, however, do you see a heart? No. Your eyes really saw your two hands coming together to create a heart shape. Negative space always define your hands, regardless of the shape they take.

In the same way artists discuss negative and positive space, I argue that Paul speaks of God and human relationship. Like negative space, God is infinite and indefinable. Similar to the way negative space circumscribes the reality of the solid circle and the hands, God circumscribes and defines finite humanity. God reminds us that we are creatures within the boundaries of our finite existence precisely because we are able to construct more than a “heart,” or a “circle,” - negative space reveals many revelations of itself through positive space. Likewise, God engages our humanness and offers other possible revelations of itself beyond what we presently see. According to Paul, reflection represents freedom. We argued in the previous chapter that “freedom,” within the public transcript rests in one’s participation within the governing structure as absolute. On the contrary, freedom as reflection involves participation in the governing structure with the discerning awareness that it represents one, but not the absolute way of being in the world.

**Conclusion: Reading Romans 12:2 with Romans 12:1:  
Discernment as a Call to “Lived-Resistance”**

The overall thesis of this chapter is that Romans 12:2 represents a call for the Christian community at Rome to reflect upon its subjection to governing authorities (particularly as related to Romans 13:1-7). Therefore, in light of the previous discussion on Paul’s usage of *dokima*, zw throughout Romans, it is clear that he understands the term to signal an ideological refashioning of foundational “perspectives” on the part of those seeking to “know” what God enables them to do and who God requires them to be. Paul employs the term *dokima*, zw to express people’s capacity to form correct ethical judgements in their everyday lives and their intention to demonstrate or apply these



judgements to situations that come to their attention. In Romans *dokima, zw* is a reflective term that requires acts of resistance. That is, whereas one dimension of *dokima, zw* is reflection which makes obvious the subjection, and allows one to envision other possibilities of God's reality beyond subjection, the other dimension of the term is resistance which represents the state of transformation. It represents those acts that a person or a community demonstrates, based on reflection, which places both their minds and bodies beyond the given subjection. Resistance is about acting and speaking in such a way that reflects commitment against conformity both to and by this world.

*Δokima, zw* as a term which connotes discernment that seeks both to know and to demonstrate the will of God is understood more clearly if we read Romans 12:2 with Romans 12:1:

I appeal (*Parakalw/*) to you therefore brothers [and sisters] by the mercies of God, to offer (*parasth/sai*) your bodies (*ta. sw, mata u`mw/n*) as a sacrifice (*qusi, an*), living (*zw/san*) holy and well-pleasing to God, which is your rational (*logikh. n*) worship. Do not be conformed by/to this world, but allow yourselves to be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may discern what is the will of God – the good and well-pleasing and complete (Romans 12:2).

The offering of one's pattern of living to God is rational worship; it is a type of discernment. Rational worship, understood in relation to "non-conformity," (12:2) "renewal of mind" and "discernment of God's will" (12:2) is a rhetorical charge; it is a call to "lived-resistance." In essence, Paul suggests that "worship" of God happens only as a consequence of resisting conformity to "this world." Because believers engage the process of reflection, they are able to offer their bodies as a sacrifice. That is, believers are able to engage in speech and action which move beyond the boundaries established by societal norms, and therefore live a life holy and well-pleasing to God.

Consider more closely the construction of Paul’s argument in 12:1. For instance, there is general agreement that with the use of the verb παρακαλῶ Paul strongly urges his readers/hearers to take a certain stance<sup>353</sup> – to act and discern (as we see in 12:2) in a way different from the logic espoused by “this world.” Moreover, παραστήμι not only references a technical term with the meaning “to offer” (as a sacrifice), but the term also evokes a sense of will. That is, Paul emphasizes “worship” to God as a voluntary human activity.<sup>354</sup> Read within the context of the entire verse and within the spirit of the entire letter, παραστήμι reinforces Paul’s call for his readers to place themselves at the disposal of God and in service to God’s will.<sup>355</sup>

Scholars also agree on interpretations of σωμα. Σωμα is not used here, as Cranfield notes, “in the limited sense which it has, for example in 1 Cor 6:20; 2 Cor 5:10, but as in Phil 1:20; Eph 5:28 . . . in the sense of ‘self.’ The Christian is to offer to God himself entire – himself in the whole of his concrete life . . . .”<sup>356</sup> Or as Dunn states,

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<sup>353</sup>. παρακαλῶ can denote a strong appeal for a certain cause. see *BDAG*, 764. παρακαλῶ can express varying connotative emphases. For instance, Cranfield interprets the verb as “exhort” (against reading the verb as comfort, request, beseech or invite). Cranfield understands the verb to represent a technical term for Christian exhortation, “the earnest appeal based on the gospel, to those who are already believers to live consistently with the gospel they have received (it can also be addressed to the unconverted, to receive the gospel, repent, and believe).” According to Cranfield, the significance of the verb rests in its reference to “the note of authority. It denotes the authoritative summons to obedience issued in the name of the gospel . . . The apostle is not by any means pleading for a favor (beseech), he is claiming in Christ’s name an obedience which his readers are under an obligation to render . . .” (597). Dunn, on the other hand, translates the verb as “appeal” and understands the term as a regular feature in the “correspondence of the age, being a natural formulation in the direct personal address of a letter (ask, beseech, urge). Since it is such a natural formula, too much should not be made here of its use also in diplomatic correspondence . . . it is not an ‘apostolic exhortation’ – language not a subtle means of exercising extra leverage; the imperative follows from the logic of the gospel . . . rather than from Paul’s apostolic commission as such” (708).

<sup>354</sup>. “. . . The Christian, already God’s by right of creation and by right of redemption, has yet again to become God’s by virtue of his own free surrender of himself. And this self surrender has, of course, to be continually repeated” (Cranfield, 599-600).

<sup>355</sup>. παραστήμι denotes one putting someone or something at another’s disposal. see *BDAG*, 778.

<sup>356</sup>. Cranfield, *Romans* 2.599.

“soma denotes not just the person, but the person in his corporeality, in his concrete relationships within this world; it is because he is body that man can experience the world and relate to others . . . It is not to be thought of in contrast to an ‘inner-consecration’ . . . but as the physical embodiment of the individual’s consecration in the concrete realities of daily life . . . It is as part of the world and within the world that Christian worship is to be offered by the Christian.”<sup>357</sup> The worship of God is an expression of the ‘self’ as both a physical and rational being (as expressed in 12:1c and 12:2), as both an individual and relational experience; worship of God requires the offering of one’s life and body.<sup>358</sup>

Yet divergent interpretations of  $\kappa\upsilon\sigma\iota, \alpha$  are found.  $\Theta\upsilon\sigma\iota, \alpha$  can denote the act of offering a sacrifice as well as that which is being offered.<sup>359</sup> With the use of the participle “living,” here,  $\kappa\upsilon\sigma\iota, \alpha$  references the material of the sacrifice. That is, it is the Christian ‘self’ which is thought of as being offered as a sacrifice. Cranfield summarizes this point nicely:

. . . Paul is not connecting  $zw/san$  specially closely with  $\kappa\upsilon\sigma\iota, \alpha$  and then qualifying the combined  $\kappa\upsilon\sigma\iota, \alpha$   $zw/san$  by  $a`g\iota, \alpha$  and  $eu\upsilon\alpha, reston$   $\tau\omega/| \quad \rho\epsilon\omega/|$  ( but rather indicating that this sacrifice is 1)  $\zeta\hat{\omega}\sigma\alpha$ , 2)  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\alpha$ , 3) and  $\tau\hat{\omega} \theta\epsilon\hat{\omega} \epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ , we shall probably be inclined to conclude that Paul meant to indicate by  $zw/san$  not that this sacrifice does not have to be killed (a rather too obvious point to be worth mentioning? – and it should anyway be remembered that the animal victims were always alive when they were offered), nor even that the Christian is to offer his concrete daily living to God (though this is of course true), but that this sacrifice, the Christian himself freely surrendered to God, is to be ‘living’ in a deep theological sense – living in that ‘newness of life’

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<sup>357</sup>.Dunn, *Romans* 38b, 709.

<sup>358</sup>.I realize the underlining danger in such a statement for those “accustomed to patterns of submission to the desires of others and of denying their own worth” (Gaventa, in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 319). However, Paul’s call for the community to present their whole selves as a “living sacrifice” challenges those limited by societal norms to seek the liberative power and presence of God **beyond** the confines of their present relationship to their conditions of existence.

<sup>359</sup>.see *BDAG*, 462.

(*kaino, thti zwh/j*, 6:4), with reference to which the verb ζῆν has already been used a number of times in this epistle (e.g. 1.17; 6.11, 13; 8.13b).<sup>360</sup>

While Cranfield is right to focus Paul's comments on the theoretical or theological dimension of living in the "newness of life," he misses the fullness of Paul's rhetorical argument when he draws a dichotomy between the theological and practical dimension of Paul's statement. Paul does not give more weight to the theological aspect over the practical aspect of his exhortation. According to the logic of Paul's argument, to live in the "newness of life" is to offer one's concrete daily living to God. Therefore, the reading that most highlights the rhetorical force of Paul's thought in this section of Romans 12:1 is that believers should offer their bodies as a sacrifice, living holy and well-pleasing to God. To offer oneself as a sacrifice is to offer oneself to the service of God (to be at God's disposal) and consequently, to live a life that is holy and acceptable to God.

The final section of 12:1, "which is your reasonable (*logikh.n*) worship (*latrei, an*), anticipates 12:2, Paul's call for Christians knowing God's will through their discernment process (see previous chapter). Some interpreters translate *logikh.n* as "spiritual," emphasizing worship as the movement of one's inward being. For instance, Barrett maintains about the adjective: "Paul means a worship consisting not in outward rites but in the movement of man's inward being. This is better described as 'spiritual worship' than as 'rational', for Paul is not thinking of what is meant in modern English by 'rational', . . ." Against Barrett, Cranfield observes about Paul's use of *λογικός* in 12:1: ". . . here the contrast in mind is not that between internal and external,

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<sup>360</sup>.Cranfield, *Romans* 2.600.

immaterial and material, but that between rational and irrational — that the true opposite to λογικός here is ἄλογικός . . . ”<sup>361</sup>

But for Paul, argues Cranfield, “true worship is rational not in the sense of being consistent with the natural rationality of man . . . but in the sense of being consistent with a proper understanding of the truth of God revealed in Jesus Christ – being consistent with the Word of God.”<sup>362</sup> Dunn however, maintains that Paul understands λογικός simply as being “proper for man the creature – the logical expression of his creatureliness properly understood and lived out (in contrast to 1:21, 25).”<sup>363</sup> Therefore, Dunn reads the theological importance of Paul’s characterization of this community’s worship to God as spiritual or reasonable as emphasizing that “it was not a matter of ‘both . . . and’ (observe sacrificial system, but recognize that God wants something more), but rather of encouraging the idea of a different kind of community, marked by self-giving without an accompanying sacrificial cult . . . ”<sup>364</sup>

However, Byrne’s comments best explain the denotative range of the phrase *th.n logikh.n latrei*, an *u`mw/n* as well as its rhetorical significance for Paul’s argument. Byrne translates the phrase “the worship you owe as rational beings” and writes about its meaning:

. . . The Greek *latrei*, a word denotes the action of worshiping and hence implies the sense of a continual offering of believers’ entire selves. As regards the adjective λογικός, two possible meanings emerge from the rich background provided by Greco-Roman literature and philosophy: 1. ‘spiritual’ in the sense of ‘inward’ as opposed to the external, physical and material: so that Paul would be

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<sup>361</sup>.Cranfield, *Romans* 2.604.

<sup>362</sup>.Cranfield, *Romans* 2.604-605.

<sup>363</sup>.Dunn, *Romans* 38b, 711-172.

<sup>364</sup>.Dunn, *Romans* 38b, 717.

mounting a contrast with the material sacrifices of ordinary cult (Jewish or pagan) or else drawing attention to the sense of proper interior disposition that alone validates cultic action; 2. 'rational' in the sense of that which is distinctive of humans as rational, reflective beings (as particularly stressed by the Stoics . . .). The former meaning (spiritual) does not agree with Paul's insistence upon the bodily aspect of the new Christian worship. *The second accords well with the stress upon the renewal of mind and rational discernment in the following sentence and is to be preferred ( emphasis mine ).*<sup>365</sup>

So, with Dunn and against Cranfield, Byrne highlights 'worship' constituted by Christian life in the body as 'spiritual,' "not in the sense of being opposed to the physical, but in the sense, . . . of proceeding from that which is distinctive of human beings as rational, reflective creatures whose highest powers are engaged in the homage they bring to their Creator (just as sin correspondingly involved the misuse of such powers: 1:21-23)."<sup>366</sup> Yet, Byrne finds it irrelevant whether Paul is suggesting that a "fully integrated Christian life obviates the need for the kind of sacrificial ritual still practiced by Jews in the Temple at the time of writing."<sup>367</sup> Instead, what Byrne finds most important about the concept of "rational worship" is that it characterizes faith in God as finding expression through "bodily obedience." In other words, one properly imagines oneself in relationship with God and others through "rational worship." Therefore, the worship or service one offers to God is a rational experience that finds its fullest expression through one's embodied service to God in the daily activities of one's life with others.

Romans 12:1 (with 12:2) represents Paul's call to this community for a "lived-resistance" to "this world." Paul calls the Christian community to a mutual discernment, asking them to distinguish what really matters (Romans 14), to resist conformity to this

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<sup>365</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 366.

<sup>366</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 364-365.

<sup>367</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 364-365.

world, to offer their bodies as a sacrifice, living holy, acceptable and well-pleasing, so that they might, in this world, know and demonstrate the will of God (Romans 12:1-2).

This passage makes prominent the apocalyptic dimensions of Paul's rhetoric and influences the reading of Romans 13:1-7. That is, in light of Paul's emphasis in Romans 12:1 on a life of "lived resistance" to the governing authorities as expressed in the ideology of the *Pax Romana* (see chapter 2), Romans 13:1-7 represents more than a simple prescriptive demand encouraging submissive behavior to "governing authorities."

Elliott states it well:

The letter's message to the Roman congregation is clear: The justice of God is not what the empire calls justice. Those who have been baptized into Christ are to understand themselves as 'demobilized' from the Roman order, having left the 'dominion of sin' behind. While others suppress the truth in the service of injustice and violate one another's bodies in unspeakable acts, Christians are to yield their bodies to God 'as instruments [hopla, 'weapons'] of justice' (6:13-14). They must practice an ideological intifada, refusing to be coerced into conformity with the world and allowing their minds to be transformed (12:1-2).<sup>368</sup>

In other words, Romans 13:1-7 becomes an invitation to resistance – an invitation for one to offer one's body, one's lived-actions, as a sacrifice, as a reasonable worship to God.

And through this lived-resistance we participate in the righteousness of God -- we resist the absolutism of our subjection to the order of "this world."

To discern God's will and therefore manifest the kingdom of God, the community must necessarily envision a reality beyond that defined by a domination-subjection pattern of human relating. Paul's call to reflection on one's subjection is ultimately a call to resist one's subjection as an absolute perspective for imagining how one should appropriately relate to God and others. Paul challenges this community of believers to stretch their imaginative yearnings beyond their conventional modes of existence in order

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<sup>368</sup>.Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 195.

to more fully know and more faithfully exercise the will of God. Ultimately, when read in light of this call to discern, Romans 13:1-7 can no longer be understood as a simple command to submit to the order of “this world,” to the order of the “governing authorities.” Instead, Romans 13:1-7 becomes an invitation to reflection and resistance — an invitation for one both to reflect on and offer acts of resistance (in words, gestures or deeds) against absolute subjection to the normative values of “this world” and the way these values shape how we imagine ourselves in relationship with God, nature and one another.



## CHAPTER VI

### RESISTANCE: HOW MUCH DO I OWE YOU

#### **Introduction: Public and Hidden Transcripts- Reading Romans 13:1-7 as Resistance Literature**

Reading Romans in light of its resistance features is not a common mode of interpretation. But, neither is it a novel one. William R. Herzog argues that Paul's exhortation in 13:1-7 to the Christian community at Rome represents "dissembling" speech. Paul's comments "feign [s] obedience and loyalty to the colonial overlords while pursuing its own hidden agenda."<sup>369</sup> Herzog's study suggests that Romans 13:1-7 alone, functions as resistance text. He builds his thesis around Paul's usage of διάκονός (13:4) and λειτουργοὶ (13:6), arguing that rulers, as "servants" stood diametrically opposed in the Roman world. Therefore, Paul's description of the rulers as servants is a "hidden transcript."<sup>370</sup> Paul specifies that the military, as servants of God, be used solely to suppress anarchy and wrong behavior. In reality however, the military and its sword functioned more as a "means of intimidation and brutality that ensured that subjected populations would quietly endure the so-called *Pax Romana*."<sup>371</sup> Thus, by using this coded term, Paul suggests loyalty to a non-existent empire while actually critiquing it for not following the will of God.

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<sup>369</sup>.Herzog, William. "Dissembling, A Weapon of the Weak: The Case of Christ and Caesar in Mark 12:13-17 and Romans 13:1-7" in *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 341.

<sup>370</sup>.Herzog, "Dissembling, A Weapon of the Weak", 356.

<sup>371</sup>.Herzog, "Dissembling, "Dissembling, A Weapon of the Weak," 356.

Similarly, Paul characterizes the authorities as λειτουργοὶ, a variant on δίακονός. These figures carried out the public and bureaucratic functions of the state. Thus, “just as the military devotes itself to physical control, the financial bureaucrats devote themselves to economic control.”<sup>372</sup> So, Paul writes: “Pay to all what is due 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” (vs. 7). Financially, this implies resistance to conceding to the finance ministers, who were obsessive about extracting from the population everything but the barest necessities, more than is their due.<sup>373</sup> Likewise, Christians are to offer respect (*phobon*) and honor (*timen*), not as enthusiastic support of the empire. Instead, “Paul most likely means that Christians should always display the public deference that the oppressed show their masters.”<sup>374</sup> Paul offers allegiance to empire that does not exist while using the “weapons of the weak to reinforce the survival skills of the fledgling community.”<sup>375</sup>

Herzog analyzes significant words within Romans 13:1-7 in comparison with the historical-cultural background out of which the letter was written. Employing Scott’s notion of public and hidden transcripts enables Herzog to make sense of the contradictions between the words’ meaning(s) and the actual behavior of those to whom they refer. However, like the conclusion Botha draws about the meaning of Romans 13:1-7, Herzog concludes that the passage’s “hidden transcript” allows, on the one hand,

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<sup>372</sup>.Herzog, “Dissembling, “Dissembling, A Weapon of the Weak,” 358.

<sup>373</sup>.Herzog, “Dissembling, “Dissembling, A Weapon of the Weak,” 358.

<sup>374</sup>.Herzog, “Dissembling, “Dissembling, A Weapon of the Weak,” 359.

<sup>375</sup>.Herzog, “Dissembling, “Dissembling, A Weapon of the Weak,” 360.

a means for Paul to critique the Roman authorities (through the irony of words) while simultaneously assuring the safety of this burgeoning Christian community.

This project moves beyond Herzog's analysis on two levels. First, this project rejects the claim that Romans 13:1-7, as a hidden-transcript, primarily serves as a means for securing the life of this Roman Christian community against possible threats from the Roman government (the point of resistance). Instead, I propose that Romans 13:1-7 (in light of its co-text, Romans 12:1-2 and 13:8-14) also functions as the public transcript. The passage (s) affirms subjection and Paul's mentioning it reminds the Christians at Rome to acknowledge it as the ideological system in which they live because by not recognizing the system, they are not only subjected by it, but they also subject themselves to it. As such, a second difference between Herzog and this project's analysis of Romans 13:1-7 is the presumed literary context of the passage. That is, my interpretation broadens the textual range for examining the interaction between public transcripts and hidden transcripts, and thus subjection and resistance. The clues for understanding Romans 13:1-7 to function as both a public and a hidden transcript surfaces not so much in 13:1-7 itself (although Herzog has proven this to be a possible reading). Rather, I want to argue that Paul's concept of "debt of love" as expressed in 13:8-10 as owing love to neighbors is the rhetorical key that reveals the hidden transcript of both our text (Romans 13:1-7) and our context (market economy).

In this light, the remainder of this chapter, following Scott's understanding of resistance literature, argues that Paul offers in Romans 13:8-10 resistance language that denies the absolute authority of the Roman system of authority and (re)-defines love as "debt of love" -- a commitment one makes to addressing the physical and spiritual needs of both self and others. I begin by considering two contemporary positions on the proper

relationship between humanity and the market economy. After which, I outline each argument's limitations and offer a counter argument based on what I interpret as Paul's understanding of the phrase *ovfei, lete avgapa/n* as referring to "indebted love." Finally, centered around Paul's concept of "indebted love" and Amartya Sen's understanding of freedom and human development in relation to the market economy, the analysis offers a way of assessing poverty and imagining patterns of human relating that moves both within and beyond the popular models of analysis.

### **Paul and Indebtedness: The Power of God Manifested in Others**

In order to clarify Paul's distinctive understanding of love as "indebted love," we must clarify the common views of love we bring with us to Paul's text, a construct that might prevent us from recognizing that Paul presents a very different view. This is most apparent when we think of love for the poor. A popular contemporary Christian notion about the relationship between faith and poverty suggests that the greatest challenge and disconnection between economic models of human behavior and a Christian model of human behavior is summed up in the Christian's mandate to a concern for the poor. The foundation of Christian faith-in-action is, according to this perspective, a concern for the poor. This position maintains that Christian teachings "put special value on choices that enhance justice for the poor and that address their economic needs."<sup>376</sup> For instance, economist Rebecca Blank, writes about the contrast between the value Christian teachings places on the poor with that of market values:

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<sup>376</sup>.Blank, Rebecca, "Viewing the Market Economy Through the Lens of Faith" in Rebecca Blank and William McGurn's *Is the Market Moral? A Dialogue on Religion, Economics & Justice*. Brookings Institutions Press: Washington, D.C., 2004, 25.

Unlike the market, which values people according to their resources and the productivity they bring to the market, Christian teachings on poverty ascribe value to a group that has no resources. In fact, it is precisely because this group is without resources in the market that its members are valued and given a special place among Christians. At best the market ignores the poor because they are not participants, while Christianity brings them into the center of community concern.”<sup>377</sup>

Unfortunately, these conclusions about the appropriate Christian model of human behavior prove too simplistic. In fact, they perpetuate the very pattern of domination-subjection model of human behavior they seek to critique.

Consider, for instance Amartya Sen’s discussion on the relationship between the concepts of “well-being” and “agency.” When assessing and establishing policy on issues of poverty and human development, argues Sen, those suffering under impoverished conditions are traditionally viewed as “passive recipients of welfare-enhancing help” (well-being). However, Sen suggests that in order to adequately foster environments that provide people with the capabilities to live a life they have reason to value, people must be seen as active agents of change: “the dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter lives . . .”<sup>378</sup> While there are times when the well-being aspect of human development is dominant, to limit one’s perception of people and situations to a type of “patient” status is to restrict the view of the personhood of those individuals.

Human development, argues Sen, calls for a more participatory, agent-oriented approach that values each individual as a “member of the public and as a participant in economic, social and political actions.”<sup>379</sup> Policies established out of a mind-set that a

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<sup>377</sup>.Blank, “Viewing the Market Economy Through the Lens of Faith,” 26.

<sup>378</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 189.

<sup>379</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 191.

certain person or group of people is bringing aid or development to a “supposedly inert [and inept] population” sometimes eliminates but always diminishes the range of capabilities a person (and a community) has to live a life she has reason to value.

Unfortunately, as expressed in Blank’s quote, too often Christian responses to poverty and human development appreciate situations of poverty, but overlook the agency aspect of the impoverished. Sen explains the need for recognizing all people’s agency on issues of poverty and human development. He even draws a profound distinction between the concepts of sympathy and commitment (as rational–self-interested behavior) that, when unrecognized, limits our efforts to fully appreciate the agency of others. His comments are worth quoting at length:

In departing from narrowly self-interested behavior, it is convenient to distinguish between two different routes of departure, viz., “sympathy” and “commitment.” First, our conception of self-interest may itself include our concern for others, and sympathy may thus be incorporated within the notion of the person’s own well-being, broadly defined. Second, going beyond our broadly defined well-being or self-interest, we may be willing to make sacrifices in pursuit of other values, such as social justice or nationalism or communal welfare (even at some personal cost). This kind of departure, involving commitment (rather than just sympathy), invokes values other than personal well-being or self-interest (including the self-interest involved in promoting the interests of those with whom we sympathize).

The distinction can be illustrated with an example. If you help a destitute person because his destitution makes you very unhappy, that would be a sympathy-based action. If, however, the presence of the destitute does not make you particularly unhappy, but does fill you with the determination to change a system that you think is unjust (or more generally, your determination is not fully explainable by the unhappiness that the presence of the destitute creates), then this would be a commitment-based action.

There is, in an important sense, no sacrifice of self-interest, or of well-being, involved in being responsive to our sympathies. Helping a destitute may make you better off if you suffer at his suffering. Committed behavior may, however, involve self-sacrifice, since the reason for your attempt to help is your sense of injustice, rather than your desire to relieve your own sympathetic suffering. . . More important, even though committed behavior may or may not be conducive to the promotion of one’s personal advantage (or well-being), such a pursuit need not

involve any denial of the person's rational will.<sup>380</sup> (we see this in the previous discussion on discernment in Romans 14).

But, there is one dimension of a Christian model of human behavior, as expressed in Romans, that neither Sen nor Blank recognize in their arguments on poverty and human development. In assessing poverty and human development in this age of globalization and global market economies, Paul's concept of an "indebted love of neighbor" requires that we not only see the agency aspect of individuals and communities, but that we understand our relationship to our "neighbor," to "others" as one of indebtedness. Imaging ourselves in relationship with others as a type of indebted love requires that we not envision the "destitute" as those who simply invoke our sympathy or induce our personal or communal commitment against injustice. Such a perception about our relationship with others may very well include the concepts of sympathy and commitment (as defined by Sen), but it also moves decidedly beyond them.

To recognize another person's aspect of agency is to recognize that people can participate as agents of change (rather than passively benefit) for themselves and in doing so can perhaps meet the needs of others as well. But, the concept of indebtedness, as presented by Paul in Romans, carries a different emphasis. The concept of indebtedness requires those who envision themselves as someone who acts and brings about change, to recognize what others are doing for them, that is, how others enable them to function as an "agent." Paul makes this clear in the framing of his letter to the Christian community at Rome as expressed in Romans 1:14 (in 1:11-15) and Romans 15:1-2. For instance,

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<sup>380</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 270.

through his self-designation in Romans 1:14 as *ovfeile, thj*, debtor, his first use of the terms of the family of *ovfei, lw*, Paul introduces himself as one indebted to the “civilized and uncivilized” to the “learned and the unlearned.” Therefore, Paul’s thought in Romans on the appropriate pattern of human relating (and human-divine relating) as one of mutual indebtedness is established at the letter’s inception.

1:11) For I am longing to see you so that I might share a certain spiritual gift (*ca, risma pneumatiko.n*) to strengthen you 12) or rather, that we might be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine. 13) I want you to know, brothers [and sisters] that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been hindered) so that I might reap some fruit among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles. 14) I am indebted (*ovfeile, thj*) both to the Greeks and the non-Greeks, to the learned and the unlearned. 15) Thus, my eagerness to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome (Romans 1:11-15).

Paul longs to physically visit the group at Rome so he can impart some spiritual gift for their strengthening. There are a number of explanations about Paul’s desire to pass on a “spiritual gift.” For instance, Byrne understands this “spiritual gift” as “God’s grace and power individual believers communicate to others through the exercise of the particular gift bestowed upon each one personally by the Spirit.”<sup>381</sup> Paul’s particular “spiritual gift” that he hopes to communicate or share in Rome would presumably flow, argues Byrne, “from his apostolic office.”<sup>382</sup> But, as Byrne infers, and Fitzmyer makes especially clear, the spiritual gift mentioned by Paul is not to be understood as one of the gifts mentioned in 12:6 or in 1 Corinthians 12:4-10. Neither is Paul seeking to assert apostolic authority. Instead, Paul’s eagerness to impart a spiritual gift to an already formed Christian community represents a way of “discharging his apostolic and

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<sup>381</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 49.

<sup>382</sup>.Byrne, *Romans*, 50.



missionary obligation, as he writes this letter. He is sharing the gospel, as he says in 1 Thess 2:8, and in due time he will share himself.<sup>383</sup>

Against Byrne and Fitzmyer, Dunn does not dismiss the idea that Paul's "spiritual gift" might very well be akin to those mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:4-10. However, what is most important for Dunn is Paul's emphasis on "sharing" (μετὰ δω/) his spiritual gift. That is, Paul's "gift" is "spiritual" because it is shared:

a characteristic of a spiritual gift for Paul is that it is not for oneself, but for sharing (cf. 1 Thess 2:8), for the common good (1 Cor 12:7); the very act of sharing (one's means) is itself a charism (Rom 12:8) . . . χάρισμα denotes an embodiment of grace (χάρις), the concrete expression of God's generous and powerful concern for his human creation, so that it can be used of any act or utterance which is a means of divine grace, a medium through which God's graciousness is experienced, whether the thought is of the totality of what God has given by means of Christ (5:15-16; 6:23; cf 11:29; 2 Cor 1:11), or more often of particular ministries, occasional or regular (12:6; 1 Cor 1:7; 7:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30-31; cf. 1 Pet 4:10) . . . What Paul has in mind here is not specified, nor could he be sure how God would bring his grace to expression through him. But clearly he has sufficient confidence in God's grace working in and through him (1:5) that he can hold out the firm promise that God will use him in some way for their benefit (not necessarily in a specifically 'apostolic' way; and the 'gift' is not necessarily 'the gospel' . . . .<sup>384</sup>

But, whatever the specific "gift" Paul has in mind, that he qualifies it as "spiritual" forces us to read the phrase as essentially ideological. That is, it forces us to understand the phrase to function as a reflection of how Paul imagines himself in relationship both with God and his fellow Christian brothers and sisters.

As explained in 1:12, Paul longs to see the community at Rome, not simply to impart his "gift" but to also receive the "gifts" they have to share – he will have something to receive as well as to give. Paul calls this reciprocity in the sharing of gifts: being mutually encouraged (συνπαράκαλε, w) by each other's faith. However, beyond

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<sup>383</sup>.Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 248.

<sup>384</sup>.Dunn, *Romans 38a*, 30.

the sharing and receiving of gifts with his fellow Christian community, Paul expresses another reason for longing to visit Rome. He comments in 1:13 on his desire to reap some “fruit” in Rome as he had done in other Gentile areas. Two interrelated points are important here. First, Paul relates in 1:13 the missiological intent of his overall ministry (cf 1:5) and his desire to visit Rome. As a missionary (with apostolic authority), who acts as an “agent” in offering concrete manifestations of God’s “generous and powerful concern” for God’s creation, Paul ultimately seeks to offer what he considers to be qualitative and transformative “change” in the life of those he will encounter. “The missionary’s ministry is the locus where people are put in the presence of transformative manifestations of God’s presence and thus brought to the ‘obedience of faith’”<sup>385</sup> (cf 1:5). Yet, as a second point, Paul, in order to realize the agency aspect of his ministry, and offer concrete manifestations of God’s “generous and powerful concern” for God’s creation, must recognize both the agency of others and his indebtedness to others.

Already in 1:12, Paul acknowledges, affirms and upholds the agency of other believers and recognizes that their “gifts” enable him in his efforts to bring people to the “obedience of faith.” But, in 1:14 Paul recognizes that he is also indebted to all those to whom he brings his “spiritual gift (s),” be they the learned Greeks or the unlearned barbarians. For most biblical scholars this is not plausible; Paul cannot have meant this. Thus, Paul’s debt is toward God, from whom he has received much, and only indirectly toward the Greek and the barbarians. Cranfield writes about 1:14 and Paul’s understanding of  $\text{ovfei}, \text{lw}$  in this passage:

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<sup>385</sup>.Patte, Daniel. “Thinking Mission with Paul and the Romans: Romans 15:1-33.” *Mission Studies*, Fall, 2005, forthcoming.

Paul knows himself to be a debtor, that is, having an obligation to them in the sense that God has laid upon him a duty toward them. His debt to them is constituted by the fact that God has appointed him ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος . . . .<sup>386</sup>

Thus, Cranfield discounts the notion that Paul is thinking here that he is obligated or indebted to someone because of a benefit received from that person.<sup>387</sup> Instead, according to Cranfield, the benefit received for which Paul is under obligation is “God’s gift in Christ, not anything conferred by the Gentiles.”<sup>388</sup> The persons with whom Paul shares his “gifts” are not perceived as also sharing “gifts” with Paul, that ultimately place him in their debt. Unfortunately, Cranfield’s position perpetuates the Christian pattern of relating that sees “others” as simply “patients” instead of recognizing them also as “agents.”

With Cranfield, Dunn acknowledges that Paul has received the benefit of God’s gift in Christ and is therefore under an obligation to God to perform apostolic duties to the Gentiles. But, beyond Cranfield, Dunn also recognizes Paul to be a “truly cosmopolitan man of his age (Jew, Hellenist, Roman citizen), who had already traveled widely through the northeastern quadrant of the Mediterranean countries (15:19), [and therefore] it is possible that he also include the sense of how much he owed to all sorts and conditions of people, uncultured as well as sophisticated (cf. 1 Cor 1:26-28).”<sup>389</sup> Though Dunn does not explicitly draw this conclusion, one might conclude from his statement that essentially, Paul is saying he received and continues to receive from others

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<sup>386</sup>.Cranfield, *Romans* 1.85.

<sup>387</sup>.Cranfield, *Romans* 1.85.

<sup>388</sup>.Cranfield, *Romans VI*, 85, fn. 2.

<sup>389</sup>.Dunn, *Romans 38a*, 33.

valuable gifts from God, gifts that enable him to fulfill the purpose God placed on his life— actually the more literal reading of these verses.

Similarly toward the end of the letter, in 15:1-2, Paul also uses the concept of indebtedness as a key for defining how people are to imagine themselves in relationship with God and one another. Attempting to negotiate the relationship in the community between those he refers to as the “weak” and those he refers to as the “strong,” Paul writes in Romans 15:1a: “we who are strong, are indebted (οὐφείλω) to uphold (βαστάζω) the weaknesses of the weak . . .” However, in 15:1b, Paul quickly qualifies his definition of “the powerful:” the powerful are those who discern and act, not out of arrogance for selfish gain – not to affirm ourselves (μη. εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἰσχυροῦσθαι). Rather, each of us must affirm our neighbor for (with respect to) the good our neighbor has, in order to build up the neighbor (Romans 15:2). Just as Paul makes clear in 1:14 that he is indebted to all those to whom he brings the gospel or some “spiritual” gift, he emphasizes this same point in Romans 15:1-2. That is, the “weak,” in their weakness, bring to us a gift from God for which we are indebted to them.

Our confusion is soon overcome when we remember what Paul says elsewhere about weakness, for instance when he writes, thinking about the “thorn in his flesh”: “I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with my weaknesses . . . for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:9-10). Thus, Paul maintains that both he and the “strong” must uphold the weaknesses of the weak. But this is not in the sense of condescending to patiently bear with the failings of the weak (an understanding expressed, for instance, in the NRSV translation of Romans 15:1: “We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak”). Rather it is in the sense that we should

discern in the weak and their weaknesses “what is good and acceptable and perfect” (12:2) – or, in other words, the gifts of God they bring to us and for which we are indebted to them. Therefore, rather than flattering ourselves by affirming the “good” we bring to others, we should affirm others by pointing out what God has done in them and the gift they bring to us from God.<sup>390</sup>

Having established a pattern in Paul’s usage of *οφειλω* as an indebted love that enables believers to recognize the power of God manifested in and through others, we can now examine Paul’s understanding of debt as presented in Romans 13:1-7 (with 13:8-10).

### **The Ideological Dynamics of Debt: Reading Romans 13:1-7 with 13:8-10**

In his summary statement on the Roman Christian community’s relationship to governing authorities, Paul writes: “owe (*οφειλετε*) no one anything, except to love (*ἀγαπᾶν*) one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law” (13:8). Paul has just described in 13: 7 that according to the public transcript of the Roman empire, giving all (military and financial bureaucrats) their expected dues (*οφειλη*,) is a service to both humanity and God. But in 13:8 Paul encourages his readers to discharge all debts except the debt of love. Herein lies Paul’s resistance language, where the hidden transcript imposes itself upon the public transcript. Before offering an analysis of 13:8, let us further explore Paul’s utilization of *οφειλω* in Romans.

*Ὁφειλή* or one of its derivatives appears seven times in Romans as a key concept defining relationships among members of a community or among Paul and people whom

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<sup>390</sup>.Patte, “Thinking Mission with Paul and the Romans: Romans 15:1-33.”

he (or other missionaries) will encounter on his missionary journeys: 1:14 (in 1:11-15); 4:4; 8:12; 13:7, 13:8, 15:1, 15:27.<sup>391</sup> New Testament scholar Revelation Velunta clarifies Paul's usage of ὀφείλω. Explaining the notion of debt from a Filipino perspective, Velunta notes that there are three kinds of debt: 1) debt voluntarily incurred, 2) imposed debt, and 3) and debt of "the heart." Regarding debts one can repay, Velunta rights:

A debt incurred voluntarily arises either from the asking of a loan or favor. If the loan or favor is paid back in equivalent terms or with the margin agreed on, both parties can consider themselves discharged. Involuntary debts would occur when a loan or favor is offered or done without having been preceded by a formal request. Even here both loan or favor could be repaid in equivalent or with profit in order to be absolved of the debt.<sup>392</sup>

These are the types of debts about which Paul writes in Romans 4:4 and 15:27. For instance, Romans 4:4 describes one incurring a monetary debt to the one who performs a service for hire. The employer "owes" the employee for the work he has performed on behalf of the employer. Romans 15:27 describes a debt incurred out of an obligation to repay one group for what they have done for another. Gentiles are indebted to share their material resources with the saints at Jerusalem since the Jerusalem saints shared their "spiritual blessings" with the Gentiles.

The subjection listed in Romans 13:7 concerning the payment of dues represents a type of imposed debt. Velunta rightly argues that involuntary debts, like taxes and tribute are exactly what Paul wants everyone to cancel. The problem for Paul is that one's continued indebtedness to the structures described in 13:7 forces one to remain a "debtor

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<sup>391</sup>.I will look more closely at Romans 1:14 and 15:1 in the section below entitled "Revisiting the Contextual Frame: Resistance and the Market Economy."

<sup>392</sup>.Revelation Enriquez Velunta, "EK Pisteôs Eis Pistin and the Filipinos' Sense of Indebtedness (*Utang Na Loob*)" pp. 234-255 in Yeo Khiok-khng (K.K.), ed. *Navigating Romans Through Cultures: Challenging Readings by Charting a New Course* Romans Through History and Cultures Series (New York & London; T & T Clark International, 2004). I quote from p. 243.

to the flesh,” therefore living “according to the flesh” (Romans 8:12). Yet, Paul maintains that those empowered by the Spirit of God are no longer *ὀφειλέται τῇ σαρκὶ*. More importantly, Paul associates indebtedness with subjection. He suggests that if one is indebted to the “flesh” then the “flesh” possesses the authority to create the ideological presuppositions under which one must live. Paul is concerned here with right actions (including gestures and speech). The world created by the flesh forces one to engage nature and other human beings in a manner that results in death (see 8:13). But, those no longer indebted to the flesh, no longer *κατὰ σαρκὰ ζῆν* (live according to the flesh) (8:12). In light of 8:12, one sees clearly how Paul’s usage of debt (*ὀφειλω*) speaks to his call to resistance; he employs the language most indicative of Roman social, political, and economic structure<sup>393</sup> to describe how Christian’s ought not engage in relationship with each other.

Surprisingly, Paul returns to *ὀφειλω* as a means of discussing human love for other human beings. Velunta suggests that there is yet another way of understanding *ὀφειλω* which he calls *utang na loob*. *Utang na loob* refers to a debt of “the heart” which one can truly never repay.

*Utang na loob* is a unique kind of debt: however it may have been incurred, no matter how insignificant the debt, there is no way by which one is absolved of the debt except perhaps by having the ‘lender’ him/herself incur a similar *utang na loob*. The debt goes beyond the legal-juridical framework; it creates an extra-legal but even more binding debt because it involves a personal debt, one that can only be paid back not only in person but with one’s person . . . one is bound no longer by a single compensating act but binds him/herself voluntarily to be committed beyond repayment.<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>393</sup>.See Horsley, *Paul and Empire*. Pp. 96-97.

<sup>394</sup>.Velunta, 243.

Debt as a “debt of the heart” sheds new light on Paul’s use of what Fitzmyer calls oxymoronic language: “Paul states it strangely, speaking of love as something owed like a debt. Love does not constitute one being under an obligation to pay or repay another for something received.”<sup>395</sup> Yet, debt is an appropriate representation of people’s responsibility to one another. Paul moves beyond the traditional ideas of indebtedness and challenges the community to understand their debt to one another as an essential component of love. The two terms in the injunction, *ovfei, lete avgapa/n* actually redefine each other. Paul equates debt with love and love with debt. That is, Paul equates the recognition of indebtedness with love and love as a response to the recognition of indebtedness as the voluntary commitment to love. The Roman state often characterized human relationships asymmetrically, associating “debt” with parties of an unequal status (= debtor to the flesh) (feeding off the classic patron-client dynamics).<sup>396</sup> Paul, on the other hand, offers a more horizontal, reciprocal model of human relationships in 13:9 where he summarizes proper human relationships as “love your neighbor.” The aim now focuses on wholesome relationships amongst people with a commitment to use their talents and skills to effect qualitative good in the community rather than on relationships guided by selfish motivations for social status (12:3-21).<sup>397</sup>

Ultimately, debt as a recognition of indebtedness that expands into a voluntary commitment functions as resistance ideology in the midst of Paul’s seemingly pro-

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<sup>395</sup>.Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 677.

<sup>396</sup>.See Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, chapter 5.

<sup>397</sup>.It is this recognition of and commitment to love that Paul speaks about in chapter 14 (see previous chapter). Also see Mark Reasoner’s *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14:1-15:13 in Context*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1999, chapter 10 for a discussion on the concept of obligation in Romans 14.



empire language. Paul’s hidden transcript offers a supreme critique of “secular authority,” suggesting that true servants or ministers of God occupy themselves with addressing the physical and spiritual needs of the citizens, not in exacting burdensome taxes and forced military might to maintain control of the masses of people for the benefit of the governing elite. Thus, Paul’s juxtaposition of *ovfei, lete avgapa/n* challenges the Roman social structure as an absolute authority and offers “debt of love” as an alternative system of authority, as a measuring stick which gauges the actions and intentions of both individuals and governing institutions.

Chapter 13 reaches its climax in 11b; subjection-reflection-resistance is made purposeful as Paul exclaims: “for now is nearer our salvation (*σωτηρία*) than when we (first) believed.” The community of believers having acknowledged their subjection by the governing authorities and reflected upon their subjection, are now confronted with their conviction (*εινδο, τεj*) – they know that God exists both within and beyond their subjection. As such, they are called to resist their subjection by allowing the concept of an “**indebted** love” to have dominion over their lives. In this way the community has stepped into the process of salvation--it has come near.<sup>398</sup> Paul’s understanding of salvation as a process which includes subjection-reflection-resistance is best summarized in Romans 6<sup>399</sup> where he explains that, on the one hand, salvation was made possible (in the past) through the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. However, salvation continues (the fruits of salvation) in the lives of those dedicated to the worship of God through their voluntary commitment to seek and serve the good of others (in the present

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<sup>398</sup>.Paul does not say this is full revelation--indebted love of neighbor--it just brings it closer to realization.

<sup>399</sup>.Romans 5, especially 5:9-10, discusses Paul’s concept of salvation. However, for the purpose of this project, Romans 6, with its emphasis on action, in the sense of lived-resistance, better supports the point being made in this section.

and future). Paul begins his explanation of salvation in chapter 6, describing it as “walking in the newness of life” (6:4). We are unable to grasp the fullness of his soteriological argument until chapters 12 and 13 (particularly 13:9- indebted love of neighbor as fulfillment of law). But, Paul’s argument reflects his expectation that the Christian community, in their process of salvation, would change (through the grace and power offered by God through the Holy Spirit) both their habit of thinking and their habit of living. He explains:

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider (logi, zomai)<sup>400</sup> yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey its passions. No longer present your bodily parts as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your bodily parts to God as instruments of justice (6:9-13) (see also 8:10-11).

The language and the implications of this passage are reminiscent of what we have already discussed regarding the community of Christians at Rome being “transformed-nonconformist.”<sup>401</sup> But, what is central here is that like in 12:1 and 8:12 and 13:9, Paul’s concern is resistance. He wants the community of believers to act in a manner that gives priority to personhood in God, not to the judicial or legalistic prescriptions of the law or the hierarchal and exploitive social relations of the Roman state. Being raised from the dead, raised from a death-sleep--a state where **indebted** love of neighbor is not a vigorous, operative power--speaks to the essence of Paul’s

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<sup>400</sup>.logi, zesqe (logi, zomai) means to give careful thought to a particular matter in order that one may hold a belief or be of a particular opinion about the matter (*BDAG*, 598). The expectation is that if one holds a particular view she will ultimately manifest actions that reflect that the view she holds. So this term functions here much like “discern” functions – to evaluate in order to demonstrate.

<sup>401</sup>.I borrowed this phrase from King, Martin Luther, Jr. *Strength to Love*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1981, p. 2.

soteriological stance. It reemphasizes the connection he establishes between people's relationship with God and their relationship with one another. Ultimately, "salvation comes near" in the process of subjection-reflection-resistance, empowering the Christians at Rome to break through the idolatries of "worldly" structures and build a community and an ideological stance grounded in offering their minds and bodies to the worship of God through the recognition of an indebtedness to neighbors and to "indebted love of neighbor."

### **Salvation as Freedom and Freedom as Indebted Love**

In this way, salvation (as lived-resistance), according to Paul, represents a certain type of freedom. Consider his concluding remarks in chapter 6:

6:16) Do you not know that when you place yourselves in a situation of slavery with its implied obedience, you become slaves of the one to whom you have made yourselves obedient -- whether of sin, which leads to death, or of [appropriate]<sup>402</sup> obedience, which leads to justice. 17) Thanks be to God -- because you were once slaves to sin, but you have given obedience from the heart to the pattern of teaching to which you were handed over 18) and having been freed from sin, you have become enslaved to justice. 19) I speak in human terms on account of your natural limitations. For just as you have presented your bodily parts as slaves to impure motives and to lawlessness and wickedness, so now present your bodily parts as slaves to justice for holiness. 20) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from living a just life. 21) So what fruit did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. 22) But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the fruit that you have is for holiness. The end is eternal life (zwh.n aivw, nion).<sup>403</sup> 23) For the compensation (ovyw, nion)<sup>404</sup> of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our lord. (Romans 6:15-23)

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<sup>402</sup>.I add the term "appropriate" with obedience and use it in the same sense in which I used it in the previous chapter when coupled with "discernment." That is, appropriate obedience refers to actions that are not limited to self edification but actions that seek and serve the common good.

<sup>403</sup>.I understand Paul to use this phrase as a reference to a quality of life rather than of a time.

<sup>404</sup>.This term carries a similar connotation as  $\sigma\upsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron\gamma\epsilon$ ,  $\lambda\omega$  in that it refers to something paid to another for services rendered. It is the payment of a debt.

Paul contrasts two images in this section, slavery and freedom, with the concept of obedience functioning as the common thread between the two images. Paul argues that to be a slave means to be obedient to the demands of the slave-owner. Slavery necessarily requires certain actions. For Paul, we can be enslaved to sin and when obedient to the actions demanded by sin, the result is death. However, Paul is not speaking here simply of a personal death associated with mortality. Rather, Paul is referring to those actions, that proceed from a “darkened/unaware mind-set,” that lead to degenerate social relationships (recall Romans 1:18-31). Or, Paul argues, we can be enslaved to an appropriate obedience. Appropriate obedience proceeds from an awakened mind-set, it is an obedience from the heart, an obedience from conscience (Romans 13:5) that is manifested by righteous or just actions – actions that lead to communal edification (for instance, analysis of chpt. 14). Communal edification, however, is not simply the end that justice seeks, it is also the means by which justice is achieved. Paul makes this clear, for instance, both in chapter 14 and chapter 12 (see above) when he calls for communal discernment and the edification of one’s neighbor for accessing and demonstrating the will of God in the situations which come to their attention – such behavior is justice.

Paul maintains that the Christians at Rome have been freed from sin, and are therefore now enslaved to justice. Paul recognizes the difficulty in his “slavery” terminology and quickly adds that he is speaking in human terms because of certain natural limitations (perhaps having to do with language or simply cultural experience). But, the point here is that, according to Paul, freedom for justice calls for action, but a different type of action than does freedom for sin. As slaves to sin the community

offered its bodily parts to thoughts and actions that resulted in wickedness. They were free from discerning and demonstrating the will of God in the world. However, now that they are enslaved to justice, they are free to pursue holiness through actions that liberate and empower people to live lives that are well-pleasing to God.

In 6: 23 Paul plays on the concept of indebtedness. That is, Paul reminds the community at Rome that the compensation or wages of sin is death. In other words, sin is indebted to those who present their bodies to its service and sin pays its debt in the currency of death. Again this death about which Paul speaks is a death not simply limited to mortality but also represents a quality of life which disrespects both individual and communal well-being (see Romans 1: 28-31). When speaking about God's relationship to humanity, however, Paul alters the language and calls that which humanity receives from God (through Christ Jesus) for offering their bodies to the fulfillment of justice in the world, a gift. The gift of God is "eternal life." In other words, the gift that we receive from God through Christ Jesus is freedom -- it is the opportunity to live into a quality of life that advances and perpetuates human and natural well-being rather than limiting or destroying it. Ultimately, as explained in the discussions above, Paul challenges the community at Rome to live into the promise of God's gift of eternal life, to live into the experience of the nearness of salvation, to live into freedom. They do so by offering their bodies as a sacrifice (living holy and well-pleasing to God) or by offering their bodies as instruments of justice or by living a life of **indebted** freedom through the **owing** of love to neighbors.

## **Revisiting the Life-Context: Resistance and the Market Economy**

Having established Paul's concept "debt of love" as the key that allows us to read Romans 13:1-7 as a type of hidden transcript or as resistance literature, we can now offer an analysis of the way(s) in which Paul's message in Romans helps contemporary readers think and act more critically about our 21<sup>st</sup> century context where the market economy and its logic functions as public transcript. This same concept, "debt of love" allows us also to uncover the hidden-transcript in our contemporary context -- the market economy. Paul's understanding of indebtedness as a "debt of love" owed to neighbors, challenges contemporary readers of Romans, struggling with issues of poverty and human development to not imagine themselves as merely "patients" or "agents." Rather, we are challenged to imagine ourselves as indebted neighbors who owe to the other their talents and gifts in the effort to extend the range of capabilities a person and/or community has to live a life she and/or they have reason to value.

The problem we face as Christians is not should there be a market economy, but what are the limits to the market economy as an organizing structure for economic life? Throughout this project, I have described the market economy as an organizing principle for human development in terms of wealth accumulation and the growth of gross national product and other income-related variables. However, Paul's "debt of love" requires that when considering human development and patterns of human relating, we not only value the importance of economic growth, but we must look well beyond it. There are human needs that cannot be met by the market. Hence, the remainder of this chapter will address the question: how might we imagine a way of understanding human development and human patterns of relating beyond the "maximization of income or wealth?"

## **Amartya Sen On Human Development, Freedom and the Market Economy**

Amartya Sen answers this question by shifting the focus of development from one where the emphasis is primarily on economic questions to an evaluative analysis where development is understood in terms of “freedom(s).” When thinking about the fullness of the market economy, the concept of freedom needs to be rethought as Sen explains in his book *Development as Freedom*. Freedom is a reality that encompasses more than the economic dimension of human existence. That is, the environment needed to advance the “general capability of a person” moves beyond one’s participation in the market economy. Instead, as Sen notes, the creation of an environment that fosters human capabilities and substantive freedoms must include interrelated instrumental freedoms: 1) political freedoms; 2) social opportunities; 3) transparency guarantees; 4) protective security and 5) economic facilities.<sup>405</sup> In this light, freedom in the market economy represents more than the freedom to participate in the advancement of economic gain. Rather, freedom must be understood as the underlining concept of the market economy, as both a means and an end. That is, for freedom, for the development and enhancement of what people can positively achieve, we have the gift of the market economy.

Such a perspective expresses a radical ideological shift in how people imagine themselves in relationship with the market economy, as well as how they imagine themselves in relationship with one another: It maintains that the economy is embedded in society rather than society being embedded in the economy. The first position holds that human development must be considered as a human right (as a freedom) and that economic and social policy should work directly toward that end. The other position

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<sup>405</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 10.

contends that the creation of wealth is the road to human development and advocates the global economic policies of a market system. Sen calls this second position on development a “hard-knocks” attitude and writes about this perspective:

. . . it demands calculated neglect of various concerns that are seen as ‘soft-headed’ . . . Depending on what the author’s favorite poison is, the temptations to be resisted can include having social safety nets that protect the very poor, providing social services for the population at large, departing from rugged institutional guidelines in response to identified hardship, and favoring — ‘much too early’ — political and civil rights and the ‘luxury’ of democracy. These things, it is argued in this austere attitudinal mode, could be supported later on, when the development process has borne enough fruit: what is needed here and now is ‘toughness and discipline. . .’<sup>406</sup>

Sen favors an alternative approach that sees human development as essentially a “friendly” process: “. . . the congeniality of the process is seen as exemplified by such things as mutually beneficial exchanges . . . or by the working of social safety nets, or by political liberties, or of social development – or some combination or other of these supportive activities.”<sup>407</sup> Yet, Sen’s position on human development is better stated by a quote cited earlier, which states:

. . . Of course, economic growth and sound macroeconomic policies are critical to poverty reduction [human development], but growth alone is insufficient. Effective poverty reduction [human development] requires sound and *pro-poor* (emphasis mine) institutions, effective governance, and action to deal with high levels of inequality in assets such as land and education. Poverty reduction [human development] also requires safety nets to mitigate the impact of personal and national calamities. And it necessitates actions to confront problems of gender and ethnic discrimination.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>406</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 35.

<sup>407</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 35-36.

<sup>408</sup>.Brklacich, Mike and Leybourne, Shona. “Food Security in a Changing World” in the 2001 World Food Day Teleconference Study/Action Packet. Edt. Winthorp P. Carty. pg. 12.



## **The Capability-Approach: Rethinking Poverty and Making Broader Evaluative Descriptions**

Just as Gustafson argues that moral discernment starts with an evaluative description of the occasion or circumstances that come to our attention, Sen maintains that in order to discern how best to foster an environment that enables an individual the capability and thus the “freedom to achieve various lifestyles,”<sup>409</sup> one must also begin with an analysis of the “informational bases” (what information is – or is not – taken to be directly relevant) critical for making evaluative judgments. For instance, once an occasion or a circumstance comes to a person’s attention, and she gathers the relevant information needed in order to engage in moral discernment, the decision ultimately made as an appropriate course of action rests on what “information is given the most weight.”<sup>410</sup>

Sen outlines and critiques the informational bases of three common approaches to the evaluation of justice, in particular utilitarianism, libertarianism and Rawlsian theory of justice. Sen writes, “. . . the real ‘bite’ of a theory of justice can, to a great extent, be understood from its informational base . . . They [theories of justice] go in different directions, largely driven by what information they respectively take as being central to judging the justice or acceptability of different social scenarios.”<sup>411</sup> However, it is beyond the scope of this argument to investigate Sen’s critique of the respective advantages and disadvantages of the three normative approaches listed above.<sup>412</sup> Rather,

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<sup>409</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 75.

<sup>410</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 55.

<sup>411</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 57.

<sup>412</sup>.See *Development as Freedom*, pp. 54-86 for a full discussion of Sen’s critique of the informational bases on utilitarianism, libertarianism and Rawlsian.

for the purpose of this project and our concern with the absolutism of the market economy as an organizing principle for human development, I focus on Sen's construction of an alternative approach to evaluation (especially in regards to poverty) which "focuses directly on freedom, seen in the form of individual "capabilities to do things that a person has reason to value."<sup>413</sup>

The relevant question(s) when considering the issue of poverty and how we imagine ourselves in relationship with the market economy are: how do we conceive poverty and how does this perception factor into the informational bases of our evaluative description? The normative, and indeed valid understanding of poverty is that "poverty is simply a shortage of income . . . The inadequacy of income is often a major cause of deprivations that we standardly associate with poverty, including starvation and famines. In studying, there is an excellent argument for beginning with whatever information we have on the distribution of incomes, particularly low real incomes."<sup>414</sup> But, Sen argues, the informational base cannot, when making evaluative judgements on poverty, end with income analysis only.

Instead, Sen suggests a broader informational base must inform the decisions we make and the policies we create in order to confront issues of poverty and human development. Sen names his strategy for evaluating human development (particularly when assessing issues of poverty) the "capability-approach." A few terms and phrases must be identified and defined before continuing: 1) substantive freedoms: the capabilities to choose a life one has reason to value; 2) functionings: reflects the various things a person may value doing or being; 3) capability: a person's capability refers to the

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<sup>413</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 56.

<sup>414</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 72.

alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve. Capability then is a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or less formally put, the freedom to achieve various lifestyles).<sup>415</sup> Sen offers the following simple example in further explicating how he understands “capability:”

. . . an affluent person who fasts may have the same functioning achievement in terms of eating or nourishment as a destitute person who is forced to starve, but the first person does have a different “capability set” than the second (the first can choose to eat well and be well nourished in a way the second cannot).<sup>416</sup>

In other words, the destitute person lacks the “freedom” to achieve the functioning she values. And so, in regards to poverty and human development, Sen argues that poverty and the information one gains about poverty and its affects on human development, “must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes, which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty.”<sup>417</sup>

Sen does not deny that low-income is a major cause of poverty. Lack of income can be a primary cause for a person’s “capability deprivation.” Nevertheless, three basic reasons influence Sen’s conviction that a broader approach is needed (capability approach) when assessing poverty and human development:

- 1) Poverty can be sensibly identified in terms of capability deprivation; the approach concentrates on deprivations that are intrinsically important (unlike low income, which is only instrumentally significant).

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<sup>415</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 74-75.

<sup>416</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 75.

<sup>417</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 87.

- 2) There are influences on capability deprivation—and thus on real poverty—other than lowness of income (income is not the only instrument in generating capabilities).
- 3) The instrumental relation between low income and low capability is variable between different communities and even between different families and different individuals (the impact of income on capabilities is contingent and conditional).<sup>418</sup>

Sen's discussion of the third factor listed above summarizes his position on all three. He notes five distinct variations between one's income and the well-being or freedom we get out of them. When evaluating poverty, with income levels, analyst must also assess 1) personal heterogeneities; 2) environmental diversities; 3) variations in social climate; 4) differences in relational perspectives; and 5) distribution within the family. When measuring poverty and human development, the income and financial resources people possess must be considered along with conflicting physical characteristics connected with disability, illness, age or gender. These make both their needs and the real life conditions in which they exist diverse. Consider a few examples. Sen writes,

an ill person might need more income to fight her illness – income that a person without such an illness would not need; and even with medical treatment the ill person may not enjoy the same quality of life that a given level of income would yield for the other person. A disabled person may need some prosthesis, an older person more support and help, a pregnant woman more nutritional intake . . . The 'compensation' needed for disadvantages will vary, and furthermore some disadvantages may not be fully 'correctable' even with income transfer.<sup>419</sup>

On the issue of environmental diversities, climatic circumstances (temperature ranges, rainfall, flooding, etc.), can also influence the benefits or advantages of a given

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<sup>418</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 87-88.

<sup>419</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 70.

income. “Heating and clothing requirements of the poor in colder climates cause problems that may not be shared by equally poor people in warmer lands. The presence of infectious diseases in a region . . . alters the quality of life that inhabitants of that region may enjoy. So do pollution and other environmental handicaps.”<sup>420</sup> Variations in social conditions also play a role in the relationship between one’s income and resources and one’s quality of life. Examinations of social conditions such as educational arrangements, and the absence or prevalence of crime and violence, argues Sen, are critical factors here. The most provocative variations noted by Sen in the relationship between incomes and resources and quality of life are those of conventions and customs. These conventions and customs may vary between communities and therefore may affect what Sen calls the “commodity requirements of established patterns of behavior.” Sen notes:

. . . being relatively poor in a rich community can prevent a person from achieving some elementary ‘functionings’ (such as taking part in the life of the community) even though her income, in absolute terms, may be much higher than the level of income at which members of poorer communities can function with great ease and success. For example, to be able to ‘appear in public without shame’ may require higher standards of clothing and other visible consumption in a richer society than in a poorer one . . . The same parametric variability may apply to the personal resources needed for the fulfillment of self-respect. This is primarily an intersocietal variation, rather an interindividual variation within a given society, but the two issues are frequently interlinked.<sup>421</sup>

Finally, Sen argues that intrafamily distribution of income must be considered when assessing the relationship between income levels and well-being or freedom(s). “Distributional rules followed within the family (for example, related to gender or age or perceived needs) can make a major difference to the attainments and predicaments of

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<sup>420</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 70.

<sup>421</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 71.

individual members.”<sup>422</sup> For instance, Sen explains, “If the family income is used disproportionately in the interest of some family members and not others (for example, if there is a systematic ‘boy preference’ in the family allocation of resources), then the extent of the deprivation of the neglected members (girls in the example considered) may not be adequately reflected in terms of family income . . . .”<sup>423</sup> Ultimately, Sen’s capability perspective is significant for poverty analysis because it shifts the primary attention away from means (and one particular means that is usually given exclusive attention – income) to ends “that people have reason to pursue, and, correspondingly, to the freedoms to be able to satisfy these ends.”<sup>424</sup> As such, the capability approach enhances the understanding of the nature and causes of poverty and deprivation.

For Sen, the purpose of making broader evaluative descriptions on poverty is not simply to accumulate wealth or to advance markets throughout the world. Rather, it is to advance human development, to advance human “freedom (s).” According to Sen, development is a “process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy.”<sup>425</sup> Freedom, argues Sen, is what development advances, and it is to the expansion of substantive freedoms that “directs our attention to the ends that make development important . . . .”<sup>426</sup> But, what are these “substantive freedoms” and how are they essential to human development? Substantive freedoms are freedoms that enables an individual

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<sup>422</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 71.

<sup>423</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 88-89.

<sup>424</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 90.

<sup>425</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 3.

<sup>426</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 3.

the capability and thus the “freedom to achieve various lifestyles.”<sup>427</sup> These freedoms include the capacity to avoid such “deprivations as starvation, undernourishment, escapable morbidity and premature mortality, as well as the freedoms that are associated with being literate and numerate, enjoying political participation and uncensored speech and so on.”<sup>428</sup> Therefore, when we measure human development (or human deprivation), when we measure the welfare of an individual, a community or a country, and attempt to discern how best to foster an environment that values freedom, development as the expansion of these substantive freedoms must inform our consideration. In other words, the process of development, when judged by the enhancement of human freedom, has to include the removal of deprivations of freedoms.

### **Resistance as Removal: Establishing Instrumental Freedoms**

Removing deprivations of freedoms necessarily involves assuring certain interrelated “instrumental freedoms:” 1) political freedoms; 2) economic facilities; 3) social opportunities; 4) transparency guarantees; and 5) protective security. I sited these freedoms earlier in the chapter, it is now appropriate to give some attention to explaining how Sen understands them to contribute to the general capability of a person to live more freely and how they complement one another.

1) Political freedoms (including what are called civil rights), notes Sen:

refer to opportunities that people have to determine who should govern and on what principles, and also include the possibility to scrutinize and criticize authorities, to have freedom of political expression and an uncensored press, to enjoy the freedom to choose between different political parties, and so on. They include the political entitlements associated with democracies in the broadest sense (encompassing

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<sup>427</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 75.

<sup>428</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 36.

opportunities of political dialogue, dissent and critique as well as voting rights and participatory selection of legislators and executives).<sup>429</sup>

2) Economic facilities as a freedom that is central to human development, writes

Sen:

refers to the opportunities that individuals respectively enjoy to utilize economic resources for the purpose of consumption, or production, or exchange. . . . Insofar as the process of economic development increases the income and wealth of a country, they are respected in corresponding enhancement of economic entitlements of the population. . . . in the relation between national income and wealth, on the one hand, and the economic entitlements of individuals (or families), on the other, distributional considerations are important . . . .<sup>430</sup>

3) A third instrumental freedom vital for human development is what Sen calls social opportunities.

Social opportunities refer to the arrangements that society makes for education, health care and so on, which influence the individual's substantive freedom to live better. These facilities are important not only for the conduct of private lives (such as living a healthy life and avoiding preventable morbidity and premature mortality), but also for more effective participation in economic and political activities. For example, illiteracy can be a major barrier to participation in economic activities that require production according to specification or demand strict quality control (as globalized trade increasingly does). Similarly, political participation may be hindered by the inability to read newspapers or to communicate in writing with others involved in political activities.<sup>431</sup>

4) Transparency guarantees represent the fourth instrumental freedom Sen identifies as necessary for human development. Transparency guarantees reflect a community's commitment to shared information that not only provides participants with the data to make informed decisions, but also creates an atmosphere of trust in the professional honesty between parties involved in different transactions and exchanges.

Sen observes:

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<sup>429</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 38.

<sup>430</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 39.

<sup>431</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 39.



Transparency guarantees deal with the need for openness that people can expect: the freedom to deal with one another under guarantees of disclosure and lucidity. When that trust is seriously violated, the lives of many people – both direct parties and third parties – may be adversely affected by the lack of openness . . . These guarantees have a clear instrumental role in preventing corruption, financial irresponsibility and under-hand dealings.<sup>432</sup>

5) The final instrumental freedom that Sen names is protective security. Sen recognizes the inadequacy of the market to meet the needs of all people and that it can in fact subject many people to poverty and destitution. Protective security is needed, maintains Sen:

to provide a social safety net for preventing the affected population from being reduced to abject misery, and in some cases even starvation and arrangements such as unemployment benefits and statutory income supplements to the indigent as well as ad hoc arrangements such as famine relief or emergency public employment to generate income for destitutes.<sup>433</sup>

These instrumental freedoms are significant because they function as means for assessing human development and therefore broaden our conception of poverty. At the same time, these instrumental freedoms function as the ends of human development and therefore prevent us from viewing poverty in the “narrow terms of income deprivation . . .”<sup>434</sup>

But, for Sen, the critical aspect of the capability-approach in assessing human development is that it provides a fundamental shift in how people imagine themselves in relationship with the market economy and with one another. According to Sen, the purpose of human development is to advance the instrumental freedoms described above, not to advance the reduction of income poverty (solely or primarily). Therefore, Sen rejects the normative logic that justifies “investment in education, health care and so forth

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<sup>432</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 39-40.

<sup>433</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 49.

<sup>434</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 92.

on the ground that they are good means to the end of reducing income poverty.”<sup>435</sup>

Rather, Sen’s capability-approach requires that we assess poverty and deprivation “in terms of lives people can actually lead and the freedoms they do actually have.”<sup>436</sup>

Therefore, advancing the instrumental freedoms that allow people to live lives they have “reason to value” is both a human right and a human responsibility. The accumulation of wealth, the maximization of profit and other income variables may very well enhance human lives. These factors (alone) however, cannot “**possibly be the ultimate motivation** [emphasis mine] of antipoverty policy.”<sup>437</sup> Simply stated, when considering poverty and human development, Sen shifts the primary emphasis from a focus on fiscal policies to a focus on human freedoms. As such, the ultimate motivation for antipoverty policies and human development is commitment to the advancement of the social and communal well-being of humanity. In this way, Sen understands the economy to be embedded in society rather than envisioning society as embedded in the economy.

### **In Summation: The Limits of the Market Economy**

The previous sections outlined Sen’s conclusion that we must look both within and beyond the market economy and its logic for the advancement of humanity’s well-being. As described above, he advocates combining the use of markets with social opportunities and instrumental freedoms. What is clear from Sen’s position on human development, is that in order to advance the human capabilities that a person enjoys, we

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<sup>435</sup>. This point goes against Friedman’s position in *The World is Flat*, that we should adopt policies that advance education, health care and so forth for precisely the reason of reducing income poverty.

<sup>436</sup>. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 92.

<sup>437</sup>. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 92.

must inquire about the limits of the market mechanism for providing the best solution for every economic problem humanity encounters. In achieving both efficiency and equity<sup>438</sup> in the advancement of the capabilities people enjoy, we must pay particular attention to the limits of the market in the area that is called “public goods.” A primary assumption about the efficiency of the market economy is that everything on which our welfare depends can be bought and sold in the market. “It can all be marketed (if we want to place it there), and there is no ‘nonmarketable’ but significant influence on our welfare.”<sup>439</sup> But, as Sen makes clear, “some of the most important contributors to human capability may be hard to sell exclusively to one person at a time . . .”<sup>440</sup> Public goods, those which people consume together rather than separately are, according to Sen, beyond market manageability.

On issues such as environmental protection and preservation, public health care, national defense and basic education, Sen argues that these goods are priceless and must be viewed beyond market manageability. Sen offers as an example:

I may be willing to pay for my share in a social program of malaria eradication, but I cannot buy my part of that protection in the form of ‘private good’ (like an apple or a shirt). It is a ‘public good’ – malaria-free surroundings – which we have to consume together. Indeed, if I do manage somehow to organize a malaria-free environment where I live, my neighbor too will have that malaria-free environment, without having to ‘buy’ it from anywhere.<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>438</sup>.Sen discusses the issues surrounding “equity” in the market economy, in relation to social opportunities in chapter 5. The issue of equity must be factored into the valuational debates in public policy forums on poverty and human development. The “equity” of the market is as much a concern as the “efficiency” of the market. Also see Ackerman and Heinzerling’s *Priceless*, chapter 2.

<sup>439</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 128.

<sup>440</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 128.

<sup>441</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 128.

The market functions as a tool for managing private (shirts and apples) goods rather than public goods (malaria-free environment). Therefore, we must think and act beyond the market economy and its logic for the provisioning of public goods. We cannot allow public policy on issues of poverty and human development to be guided solely by an algorithm created to assess the cost-benefit ratio for how we prioritize and distribute resources that promote instrumental freedoms and public goods needed to advance the capabilities people need to live a life they have reason to value.<sup>442</sup>

In other words, beyond market forces and cost-benefit analyses couched in abstract (or precise - depending on your perspective) mathematical formulas, we must discern and create public policies on poverty and human development grounded in and guided by certain imperatives that include “protecting human life, health, and the natural world around us, and ensuring equitable treatment of rich and poor, and of present and future generations . . . [these values and priorities] are not sold in markets and cannot be assigned meaningful prices.”<sup>443</sup> We must discern and meet human needs not simply and not primarily on the basis of costs and benefits and the monetization of resources. Rather, when thinking about and creating public policies on poverty and human development we must also (and often primarily) make decisions on the basis of “rights and principles” that promote establishing the instrumental freedoms people need for living a life they have reason to value.

Yet, proposing the expansion of the evaluative framework for assessing poverty and human development, and promoting an increased investment in institutions that

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<sup>442</sup>.See Ackerman & Heinzerling, *Priceless*, for a discussion on the disadvantages of limiting the analytical tools for evaluating poverty to mathematical formulations.

<sup>443</sup>.Ackerman & Heinzerling, *Priceless*, 207.

advance a commitment to fostering an environment that broadens the capabilities people have to live a life they have reason to value, is not an affirmation of social responsibility that replaces individual responsibility. This is not a call for a “nanny” state or a naive and selfless communal orientation toward “welfarism.” Rather, a capability-approach to assessing and responding to poverty and human development creates, as Sen notes:

more opportunity for choice and for substantive decisions for individuals who can then act responsibly on that basis . . . The bonded laborer born into semislavery, the subjugated girl child stifled by a repressive society, the helpless landless laborer without substantial means of earning an income are all deprived not only in terms of well-being, but also in terms of the ability to lead responsible lives, which are contingent on having certain basic freedoms. Responsibility requires freedom.<sup>444</sup>

People are more completely their individual selves and better able to promote their individual interests and fulfil their personal responsibilities when they are socially committed to expanding each individual’s substantive freedoms.

Sen opens the final chapter of his book by raising an age-old question: how can an all-powerful, benevolent God, with a compassionate nature have created or allow for a world order where so many people are afflicted by acute misery? As a self-proclaimed “nonreligious” person, Sen shies away from offering a theological response to this question. Nevertheless, he does take a position. Sen writes:

. . . I can appreciate the force of the claim that people themselves must have responsibility for the development and change of the world in which they live. One does not have to be either devout or nondevout to accept this basic connection. As people who live—in a broad sense—together, we cannot escape the thought that the terrible occurrences that we see around us are quintessentially our problems. They are our responsibility—whether or not they are also anyone else’s. As competent human beings, we cannot shirk the task of judging how things are and what needs to be done. As reflective creatures, we have the ability to contemplate the lives of others. Our sense of responsibility need not relate only to the afflictions that our own behavior may have caused (though that can be very important as well), but can also relate more generally to the miseries that we see around us and that lie within

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<sup>444</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 284.

our power to help remedy. That responsibility is not, of course, the only consideration that can claim our attention, but to deny the relevance of that general claim would be to miss something central about our social existence. It is not so much a matter of having exact rules about how precisely we ought to behave, as of recognizing the relevance of our shared humanity in making the choices we face.<sup>445</sup>

Sen is right to suggest that our shared humanity should inspire us to reasonably and responsibly address the “poverty” that permeates so much of the world in which we live. Sen’s capability-approach for assessing poverty and human development offers a framework that allows us to imagine human patterns of relating and humanity’s relationship with the market economy as one where the economy is embedded in society and not vice versa. However, as Christians or as those who hold the Bible as Scripture, it is important to move beyond Sen. We must more directly address what this project argues is an appropriate Christian model of human behavior that allows us to better respond to the promise of Scripture – that through an indebted love to neighbors, we in fact live into the nearness of God’s salvation power. Thus, we are enabled to participate in empowering those who may feel overwhelmed or powerless in their relationship with their “governing authorities.”

### **Conclusion: If They Had Known They Were Slaves**

Paul’s message in Romans helps contemporary readers think more critically about our 21<sup>st</sup> century context. His understanding of the concept of “indebted love” allows us to see the hidden-transcript in the market economy and challenges us to make decisions and take actions based not on the minimization of costs and the maximization of profits, but on how we can best maximize our service in helping to feed the hungry,

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<sup>445</sup>.Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 283.

clothe the naked, heal the sick, and educate the illiterate.<sup>446</sup> An indebted love of neighbor as resistance ideology disrupts policies and ideologies that promote the (inalienable) “freedom to consume,” yet deny this freedom to those unable to afford it. Without critical reflection on the absolutism of the market economy and its logic, the system increasingly becomes an unethical structure, or in Paul’s words, a body of death. Ultimately, an indebted love of neighbor calls us to “internalize the externalities.” That is, love of neighbor as indebted love insists that in assessing poverty and human development, we consider factors that are traditionally overlooked or discounted in the evaluative process because they are not recognized as business costs. Social responsibility as indebted love must accompany “the aim of economic advancement.” Indebted love resists the market economy as a transcendent power upon individuals through the recognition of our “debt” of love as the love of neighbor evidenced in our voluntary commitment to the service of humanity. Yet, “indebted love ” cannot be manifested in a simple appendix welfare system. Instead, it must be incorporated into the fabric of our society, allowing, inviting even, an indebted love of neighbor to dominate our hearts and minds. We must subject ourselves to love, so that we are subjected by love. In this way, humanity pays homage to God. In this way, we experience the nearness of salvation.

Reading Romans 13.1-7 in light of subjection-reflection-resistance is my way of entering into the dialogue that deals with the abuse of the world economic order. Creating a language and a focus to address the economic displacement and dysfunction of the

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<sup>446</sup> Thomas Friedman’s latest work, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York, 2005, speaks about a type of “compassionate capitalism.” He argues that globalization or the “flattening” of the world makes it absolutely necessary, if America wishes to maintain its position as the world’s leading nation, to become more deliberate about securing adequate healthcare, education and retirement benefits for its citizens (see especially chapters 5-8).

dominant economic system, market economy, is vital. We have become immune to the old language (socialism, marxism, communism have become demonized). Entering into the 21st century Christian believers face the wondrous challenge of identifying, acknowledging and resisting our subjection to the notion that salvation is reflected in economic prosperity. Although Sen's approach offers one way of re-envisioning our relationship with the market economy, the means of resistance are not yet fully clear, and will only become more clear as we prioritize the concept of an indebted love of neighbor, in light of our subjection.

Finally, reading Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) as an empowering word for those who may feel overwhelmed in their relationship with oppressive governing authorities requires that the interpreter feature the ideological dimensions of the text. In doing so, it becomes clear that one can reasonably argue that Paul's comments in Romans 13:1-7 are descriptive rather than prescriptive. Paul is acknowledging and forcing his readers to acknowledge, how they imagine themselves in relationship with the *Pax Romana* (subjection). He is jolting his readers out of an ideological sleep. And once they are awakened to the social reality of their relation to the Roman state (an essential part of the existence of life in the Christian community), Paul commences in convincing them of alternative ways of imagining (reflection) themselves in relationship with the Roman state (the *Pax Romana* or "this world"). In so doing, he challenges them to act -- in words or gestures -- in ways that stand over and against the normative pattern of relating advanced by "this world" (resistance). Therefore the pattern of paraenesis we find in Romans moves between the categories subjection-reflection-resistance. However, the relevant point is that Romans 13:1-7 functions not as a "strategy of conformity" as and other scholars argue (see chapter 4). Instead, as I argue at the end of chapter four, Paul's



comments in Romans 13:1-7 is a call for the Christians at Rome to consciously acknowledge their subjection to the Roman state (*Pax Romana*), to awaken from their sleep.

The conclusions I draw in chapter four regarding Paul's understanding of subjection in Romans 13:1-7 are worth repeating here. They remind us of the challenge Paul understood himself to face in writing to the Christian community at Rome, who seemed to be entrapped by a "darkened mind-set." But the conclusions I draw also remind us of the challenge we face today as world citizens subjected *by* and *to* the ideological system of the market economy - a "blind" subjection that often inhibits our ability to envision a faith reality beyond the normative patterns of relating it espouses. I quote them at length:

The pattern of understanding "subjection" as both an act of volition and imposition is maintained when reading Romans 13:1. For instance, *πάσα φυγή ὑποτάσσέσθω* can be translated either as an imperative middle or an imperative passive. If translated as a middle imperative, the phrase reads "every person subject her or himself" to governing authorities. On the other hand, if translated as a passive imperative, taking into account the dative of means (*ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις*), the phrase reads "be every person subjected" by governing authorities. The first reading suggests that people possess the power to socially situate themselves within the order of their environment. "Subjection" then, is a matter of will only. The second translation, on the other hand, suggests that the "governing authority" is a structure in which people are placed or already exist and it acts upon the person's existence. The Christian then, cannot but live within a preexisting social system that limits how one can best express one's Christian faith within the parameters of the "governing" structure. That people are subject both as an act of imposition and will is made clear in the ambiguity of Paul's "subjection" language throughout Romans. Moreover, Althusser's understanding of ideology and its claim that an ideological construct becomes reality when people accept this perceived ordering of society as natural becomes apparent in Paul's comment on subjection in Romans 13:1. For instance, if we take seriously the ambiguity embedded within the imperative mood as both middle and passive we see that Christians act as agents, tolerating and perpetuating their subjection to the "governing authority" because of its power upon them.

Essentially, Christians subject themselves to the governing authority (middle imperative) because they are subjected by the governing authority (passive

imperative). However, the power that the governing authority wields over people is beyond that of physical exertion. Paul is equally concerned with an ideological power of conscience (see 13:5); the people accept the governing authority's ordering of society (domination-subjection) as natural and absolute. The people are in an ideological bondage or sleep, therefore they cannot but subject themselves to the governing authorities because they are unaware that they are subjected by the governing authorities. In the end, we subject ourselves to (imperative middle) the governing authorities, because we failed to acknowledge that we are subjected by (imperative passive) the governing authorities. . . .

With these comments, we are again reminded of Harriet Tubman's journey to freedom.

As in the beginning of this project, where her words set the tone for the analyses that followed, here, at the close of the project, Tubman's words again offer insight into the rhetorical significance I find in my exegesis of Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14).

### **The Paul in Tubman: Convincing the Enslaved to Live into Freedom**

When asked **how** she felt about the success she experienced in leading so many enslaved men, women and children to the free North, Tubman is reported to have replied: "I freed a thousand slaves, I could have freed a thousand more if only they knew they were slaves."<sup>447</sup> Another source quotes Tubman as saying: "I freed a thousand slaves. If I could have convinced more slaves that they were slaves, I could have freed thousands more."<sup>448</sup> Like Paul, Tubman struggled with the power that ideology (how people imagine themselves in relation to their conditions of existence) has over the lives of people. The greatest challenge Tubman encountered was not the event of escape from the South to the North. The greatest challenge was not the enslaved men and women's fear of capture or death during the process of escape. Rather, according to Tubman's statement(s), the greatest challenge she faced was one of ideology. The enslaved men

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<sup>447</sup> .\_\_\_\_\_, www.afroamhistory.about.com

<sup>448</sup> .\_\_\_\_\_, www.answers.com

and women understood the institution of chattel slavery as natural and absolute.

Therefore, they understood their role in society, as slaves, as natural and absolute. It is the ideological dynamic of slavery that the enslaved men and women could not conceive.

Therefore, when Tubman states that she could not convince the enslaved men and women that they were slaves, the inference is that she could not convince them that the concept of slavery was an ideology. It was a “representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (the institution of chattel slavery). Their enslavement was not the result of the natural course of history or the ordained will of God. However, the ideological construct was not that the institution of chattel slavery possessed power. Rather, the ideological construct was the manner in which the owners, through the institution of chattel slavery, influenced the enslaved men and women’s perception of their relationship with the white Southerners and to other enslaved people. The construct was the imaginary relationship of domination-subjection which became a real condition of existence of people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century American South. Because the people accepted the ideology as a natural ordering of human relations, the imaginary became reality.

Moreover, Tubman could not **convince** the enslaved men and women that they were in fact a “neglected weed – ignorant of liberty, having no experience of it.”<sup>449</sup> The enslaved men and women did not know that they were slaves, because they had no experience of freedom. To know that you are a slave is to recognize that you are worthy of freedom and expected to live into freedom. Freedom, according to Tubman, was one

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<sup>449</sup>. \_\_\_\_\_, [www.afroamhistory.about.com](http://www.afroamhistory.about.com)

of the two things to which everyone had a right and for which everyone must fight.<sup>450</sup>

Therefore, if the enslaved men and women, who Tubman so desperately wanted to help escape to the North, were ignorant of their right to freedom and lived outside of the expectation of living into freedom, they were essentially unable to recognize the ideological ethos of the institution of chattel slavery. They were ultimately unable to recognize that they were slaves (their subjection), and therefore Tubman was unable to convince them of any other possible ways of envisioning (reflection) and creating (resistance) a faith reality beyond their slave experience.

Romans 13:1-7 (in 12:1-13:14) speaks to Paul's concern that the Christian community at Rome is unable to recognize that they are slaves to "this world." His goal, like Tubman's goal, was to **convince** a community of disenfranchised people or a minority community within a larger society that they were enslaved to a mind-set and a pattern of relating that perpetuated destructive and life-negating expressions of the human experience. Romans 13:1-7 represents the dominant ideology under which the Christian community at Rome exists and has become unrecognizable as a construct because it has been internalized as the natural order of society. As such, the rhetorical significance of Romans 13:1-7 as a descriptive signal is to awaken the Christian community from its ideological sleep so that it is capable of envisioning and living a life different from that advanced by the dominant ideology, which appears natural but is in fact idolatrous. In this light, Romans 13:1-10 is not a "strategy of conformity" but a call to *freedom*. It is an empowering word for those who feel overwhelmed in their relationship with "governing authorities."

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<sup>450</sup>.Bennett, *Before the Mayflower*, 166.

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