

Engaging with *Wirkungsgeschichte*: Romans 13:1-7 as a Case Study

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Introduction

An interesting and stimulating development in biblical studies is a method called *Wirkungsgeschichte*¹ – a German compound term difficult to pronounce, difficult to spell and nearly impossible to translate. This term was originally coined by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his philosophical work *Wahrheit und Methode (Truth and Method)* published in 1960.² This new discipline which has won gradual recognition aims at reading a text while being conscious of the different ways in which it has been interpreted in the course of time. It is a technique of analyzing the history of a text's influences and effects. It examines the way the Bible had been interpreted in different historical eras under the influence of the concerns readers have brought to the text. In the English world, *Wirkungsgeschichte* has been rendered by at least three names: "Reception History", "history of influence" or "history of effects." All these names attempt to describe the sum total of varied interpretations and appropriations of a text which have been made through history. The Pontifical Biblical Commission's document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993) translates *Wirkungsgeschichte* into English as "history of the influence of the text" and considers it as one of the approaches based on tradition, alongside Canonical approach and recourse to Jewish traditions of interpretation.³

This approach to the text which we call *Wirkungsgeschichte*, although not entirely unknown in antiquity, was developed in literary studies between 1960 and 1970 at a time when literary criticism became interested in the relation between a text and its readers. As the 1993 PBC document confirms:

The mutual presence to each other of text and readers creates its own dynamic, for the text exercises an influence and provokes reactions. It makes a resonant claim that is heard by readers ... The reader is in any case never an isolated subject. He or she belongs to a social context and lives within a tradition. Readers come to the text with their own questions, exercise certain selectivity, propose an interpretation and, in the end, are able to create a further work or else take initiatives inspired directly from their reading of scripture.⁴

Wirkungsgeschichte reminds us that a text has history – a history that begins after it has left the hands of its author. Hence, biblical studies should not only be focused on the hypothetical reconstruction of events that led up to the writing, for instance, of the New Testament, but likewise pay attention to the varied ways on how the texts have been handled in history. It is widely recognized that the person responsible for pushing this way of reading biblical texts is the Swiss scholar Ulrich Luz as exemplified in his three-volume commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. Writing this commentary, Luz realizes that he consistently found greater inspiration in the attempt to understand Matthew by going to Luther, Calvin and the like, than he did when he delved into the morass of historical-critical works of scholarship of the last century or so. For Luz, the study of a text's reception history can also shed light on the origins of a document.⁵ This approach (of *Wirkungsgeschichte*) has likewise been the focus and intention of the new Blackwell series of bible commentaries. In its Preface the Series Editors declare their aim: "readers should be given a representative sampling of material from different ages, with emphasis on interpretations which have been especially influential or historically significant."⁶ Certainly, the growing number of commentaries recently published on the history of interpretation of various books of the Bible reflects the increasing interest in *wirkungsgeschichtliche* studies in the field of biblical hermeneutics.

It is in this light that I wish to employ this method called *Wirkungsgeschichte* to a controversial text such as Romans 13:1-7 as a case study.

1. The passage itself

In this self-contained literary unit, the Apostle Paul shows that the Roman Christians have an inescapable political responsibility towards the imperial Rome, as he

exhorts them to be subject to the imperial authorities affirming that civil authority is divinely instituted (vv. 1-2), and claiming that rulers reward good and punish evil (vv. 3-4). Part and parcel of what it truly means to be subject is to pay taxes (vv. 6-7).

This exhortation to the Roman Christians to be subject to the political “powers that be” is unique in several ways: (a) It is the clearest passage in the whole New Testament dealing with the relationship of the Christian to the civil authority; (b) It is the only one of the kind in his genuine letters in respect to form and subject matter; and (c) Specifically, Romans is the only extant letter of Paul where the issue of taxes is raised. This text can be considered the most significant text from the emerging church dealing with the Roman empire. Being so, the passage has received the careful attention and analysis of exegetes and commentators throughout the history of Christianity. Its exegesis and hermeneutical implications are among the most discussed in the history of NT interpretation. No biblical text has received more attention in public debate and church-state conflict than Rom 13:1-7. Take a brief glance at how some NT scholars have described Rom 13:1-7, a veritable *crux interpretum*:

“[Rom 13:1-7 is] perhaps the strangest and most controversial passage in the entire letter” (Brendan Byrne⁷);

“Rom 13.1-7 is arguably the most historically influential paragraph Paul ever wrote.” (Robert Morgan⁸);

“Chapter 13:1-7 ... became perhaps the most influential part of the New Testament on the level of world history. This happened in spite of the fact that the interpretation of the passage has never been found easy and is nowadays more disputed than ever before.” (Ernst Bammel⁹);

“These verses have caused more unhappiness and misery in the Christian East and West than any other seven verses in the New Testament by the license they have given to tyrants ...as a result of the presence of Rom 13 in the canon.” (J.C. O’Neill¹⁰);

[Rom 13:1-7 has] “caused perhaps the greatest perplexity on the part of exegetes of Romans.” (A. J. Guerra¹¹).

“Ich hoffe ja immer noch im Innersten meines Herzens, daß Paulus Röm 13,1-7 nicht geschrieben hat...” (E. Schweizer¹²).

Throughout the centuries, the text of Rom 13:1-7 has provided “a foundation for the discussion of church-state relations and of Christian obedience even to non-Christian rulers, and it has placed a limit on the Christian conception of the right of resistance.”¹³ Ecclesiastics and political leaders have used this passage to justify various political orders, be they benevolent or oppressive in practice. In the Middle Ages, for instance, vv. 3-4 of Rom 13 were often combined with Luke 22: 38-39 (“Lord, look, here are two swords.”) to justify the medieval church’s exercising political power. Against John of Salisbury (*Policratus* 8) and St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica* II, 2, 42, art. 2), the Council of Constance (1415) decided that Rom 13:1-7 forbade tyrannicide.¹⁴ During the time of the Reformation, Martin Luther used this text in his *Lectures on Romans* in 1515 as a springboard for a systematic functional division between church and state as he criticized the temporal affairs of the contemporary Roman Catholic Church.¹⁵ This passage has likewise served as a justification for unquestioned obedience to the Third Reich in Germany and the subjection of Christians to the atheistic communist regimes in Eastern Europe during the Cold War.¹⁶ These are just a few examples of the use and misuse of Rom 13:1-7 in history where Paul’s voice has sometimes been pressed to serve the ungodly and inhumane forces.

2. The *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Rom 13:1-7

For a biblical text that has a remarkably wide realm of influence, which includes areas of religion, law, political philosophy, public administration, education, among others, a knowledge and appreciation of its *Wirkungsgeschichte* is crucial – for only a retrospective glance into the past will provide us the necessary background for the understanding of the origins and development of the varied trends or tendencies of interpretation of this text.

Yet not wanting to be thoroughly exhaustive in our present treatment, this paper limits its focus on the history of the influence of the effects of Rom 13:1-7 on writers during the Patristic Period.

A. The New Testament Period

Only occasionally did NT writers reflect upon Christian responsibility towards secular powers. Living in an empire ruled by one man and struggling for their survival as a church, NT writers were ambivalent about political matters. Depending on the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the document and the particular problem to which the author wishes to respond to, the NT demonstrates a wide range of attitudes and responses towards civil authority. One of such responses is Paul's exhortation in Rom 13:1-7 – a passage claimed to be the most important NT document from the early period next to Mark 12:17 (“Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s”). The other later NT passages which give guidance on the proper attitude of Christians towards the secular authorities (e.g., 1 Tim 2:1-2; Tit 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13-17) were considered by scholars as the earliest commentaries of Rom 13:1-7.¹⁷ In spite of the different attitudes towards civil authority that we find in the NT – from subordination (e.g. Rom 13:1-7), critical distancing (e.g., Mark 12:13-17), to resistance (Revelation 13) – “on the whole, Christian interpreters have tended to find the norm in the response of subordination to the state.”¹⁸ This does not, however, claim that submission to civil rulers is not without limits since it ceases when the line between honor and worship is transgressed (cf. Acts 5:29).

B. Apostolic Fathers

While none of the so-called Apostolic Fathers explicitly cited Rom 13:1-7, yet allusions of the Pauline exhortation can probably be detected in their writings. Scholars, for instance, have noticed certain similarities between *1 Clement* (96 C.E.) and Rom 13.¹⁹ In writing to the Corinthians after successive periods of persecution during the reign of Domitian, Clement of Rome included a beautiful and famous prayer which forms a concluding part of his letter on behalf of secular rulers:

You, Master, have given them the power of sovereignty through your majestic and inexpressible might, so that we, acknowledging the glory and honor which you have given them, may be subject to them, resisting your will in nothing. Grant them, Lord, health, harmony,

and stability, that they may blamelessly administer the government which you have given them.²⁰

This part of the prayer has been termed ‘a grand testimony’ to the profound conviction of early Christianity that the authority of the civil rulers is from God (cf. Rom 13:1). Clement does not go beyond the Apostle Paul’s conception of the sanctity of government. The late bible scholar Raymond Brown is convinced that the author of *1 Clement* was familiar with the Pauline exhortation.²¹ Hence, the statement in *1 Clement* is viewed as the earliest allusion to Rom 13:1-7.

Polycarp of Smyrna reveals another example of second century Christian attitude with respect to civil authority. In his *Epistle to the Philippians* (ca. 135 C.E.), Polycarp urges his readers to pray for emperors, authorities and rulers, including their persecutors (12:3).²² In the work *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (ca. 156-160 C.E.) there is a dialog between Polycarp and the political rulers where he said, “You, I should deem worthy of an account; for we have been taught to render honor, as is befitting, to rulers and authorities appointed by God.”²³ It is difficult to ascertain whether this statement is an allusion to Rom 13:1-7.

In general, there is little that we know about Rom 13 during the period of the Apostolic Fathers, yet their writings generally reflect the tradition of respectful submission to political power and their divinely established rule. This is despite of the fact that Christianity was denounced as a *religio illicita* from about 118 C.E. onwards, which brought about sporadic, and on occasions, severe persecutions. They resisted the state unto death when it required the *kuvrio~kai`sar* of them.²⁴ Their only fear was idolatry, that is, when the Roman authorities demanded from Christians the acknowledgment of the divinity of the Emperor. There is probably another reason for the apparent absence of Rom 13:1-7 in the period of the Apostolic Fathers. No Christian writer before 150 C.E., or even before 180 C.E., ever refers to it or quotes it.²⁵ In fact, in Marcion’s text of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, the pericope was apparently omitted or deleted since his chapter 13 starts immediately with verse 8b. Bruce Metzger reminds us that, “[t]he Apostolic Fathers seldom make express citations from New Testament writings.”²⁶ Why? The answer is aptly given by Robert Badenas who states, “During the

first 150 years of our era, the greatest part of Christian exegesis was that of the Old Testament. Its main concern was to prove that the Hebrew Scriptures have been fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah.”²⁷

C. The Apologists

Realities gradually changed during the period of the Apologists in the second half of the second century. Because the eschatological belief had largely faded, the early church had to reckon with the world. During this period, Christianity was perceived by many Roman officials as a movement that contributed to political unrest, and hence a movement to be wary.²⁸ As the apologists began to argue with the Graeco-Roman world they defended Christianity against false teachings and representations. They tried to convince the Romans that the Christians were no anarchists and revolutionaries; but were in fact good citizens, if not the best citizens of the emperor. They appealed to the emperors for recognition or, at the least, toleration.²⁹ Yet, except for Theophilus of Antioch, none of the second-century apologists directly quoted Rom 13:1-7 as an apologetic argument to demonstrate the loyalty of Christians to the Roman empire. It must have been difficult for the early Christians to wrestle with the idea that even pagan and sometimes persecuting rulers derive their authority from God.

Writing to his friend Autolytus (ca. 181 C.E.), Theophilus of Antioch states:

Accordingly, I will pay honour to the emperor not by worshipping him but by praying for him. I worship the God who is the real and true God, since I know that the emperor was made by him. You will say to me, ‘Why do you not worship the emperor?’ Because he was made not to be worshipped but to be honoured with legitimate honour. He is not God but a man appointed by God [cf. Rom 13:1], not to be worshipped but to judge justly. For in a certain way he has been *entrusted with a stewardship* [1 Cor 9:17] from God. ... Similarly worship must be given to God alone.³⁰

That the emperor is no God but a person appointed by God reflects Rom 13:1. When synthesizing the Christian teaching on secular rulers, Theophilus laid emphasis on Rom 13:

jEti mh;n kai; peri; tou` uJpotavssesqai ajrcai`~ kai; ejxousivai~ kai; eu[cesqai uJpe;r aujtw`n kelevvei hJma~ oJ qei`o~ lovgo~, o{pw~

h[remon kai hJsvucion bison diavgwmen. Kai; didavskei
ajpodidovnai pa`sin ta; pavnta, tw`/ th;n timh;n th;n timh;n, tw`/ to;n
fovbon to;n fovbon, tw`/ to;n fovron to;n fovron, mhdevni mhde;n
ojfelei`n h] movnon to; ajgapa`n pavnta~.³¹

tw`/

The words uJpotavssesqai ajrcai`~ kai; ejxousivai~ are probably an allusion to Rom 13:1-3. The passage tw`/ th;n timh;n th;n timh;n, tw`/ to;n fovbon to;n fovbon, tw`/ to;n fovron to;n fovron, mhdevni mhde;n ojfelei`n h] movnon to; ajgapa`n pavnta~ is almost literally taken from Rom 13:7-8a.³² This explicit citation of Rom 13:7 (-8a) by Theophilus seems to be the oldest extant quotation of Rom 13 in its political sense in patristic literature at the end of the second century.

D. Anti-Heretical Literature

The second century is also characterized by Christianity defending itself not only against the enemies from *without*, but also from enemies from *within*, namely Gnosticism and Montanism. For instance, in its fondness for dualistic thought, Gnostic heresy teaches that humanity is enslaved under hostile, cosmic powers. This world lies under the bondage of the a[rconte~ ('rulers') whose god is Satan. It is in this context that the Greek Church Father Irenaeus extensively referred to Rom 13:1-7 in his *Adversus haereses* to discuss the origin of government, of the circumstances which made the government necessary, and the purpose which it is intended to serve. He was the first ecclesiastical writer to clearly quote Rom 13:1-7 against the Gnostic demonological interpretation of the text by illustrating that power over the kingdoms of this world belongs to God, and not Satan.³³ In *Adversus haereses* he emphatically denies the Gnostics' claim that the government/state is a creature of Satan, but of God. Irenaeus strongly argues that "the powers that be" referred to by Paul in Rom 13 are human authorities, not as demonic or angelic powers, or invisible rulers, as some Gnostics claimed.³⁴ Furthermore, Irenaeus argues that a demonological interpretation of Rom 13 is mistaken since Paul in v. 6 tells his readers to pay taxes: "Propter hoc enim et tributa praestatis, ministri enim Dei sunt in hoc ipsum deservientes."³⁵ One does not pay taxes to angelic powers, but only to human authorities. Irenaeus was also the first among the Fathers to express the view that the state is a necessity because of human sin and is a divinely appointed remedy to it. Government, according to Irenaeus, became necessary

because humans departed from God and hated their fellowmen and fell into confusion and disorder of every kind. Irenaeus further explains,

Earthly rule, therefore, has been appointed by God for the benefit of nations... so that under the fear of human rule, men may not eat each other up like fishes, but that, by means of the establishment of laws, they may keep down an excess of wickedness among the nations.³⁶

By implication, Irenaeus is saying that had humanity not sinned, there would have been no government. A perfect society has no need for civil rulers. Political authority has been developed in order to oppose savagery and crime. Hence, the origin of authority lay in sin, and not as a natural consequence of human nature as such.

E. The Church of the Third Century

The Christians heeded Paul's advice to submit to the divinely-bestowed secular powers as long as it did not conflict with the commands of God. The Roman empire, however, was not contented with a qualified obedience. Consequently, persecutions of Christians became worse during the third century.³⁷ The pagan rulers persecuted the Christians because they would not venerate the gods, upon whose good will the empire's well-being depended. These rulers interpreted the refusal of Christians to acknowledge the divinity of the emperor as political disloyalty.³⁸ In the description of Luise Schottroff, "... the accused Christians made a declaration of loyalty in the sense of Rom 13:1-7, and in spite of this they were executed."³⁹ The writings of Tertullian and Origen, for instance, mirror the antagonism that Christians experienced in their dealings with the empire and society during this period.

Tertullian (ca. 160-230 C.E.), a Latin Church Father and a patriotic Roman citizen who lived in Africa, loved and admired the empire, but detested its religion. "Of all the writers of the early period, Tertullian shows the greatest reserve towards the state," Kurt Aland writes.⁴⁰ He labored to make a case for pacifism and fought for Christians' religious freedom. He wrote at length to debunk the allegation that Christians were a subversive society: "A Christian is an enemy to no man – certainly not to the Emperor, for he knows that it is by his God that the Emperor has been appointed. He is bound

therefore to love him, to revere him, to honour him....”⁴¹ In effect, Tertullian is saying that there is no incompatibility between the Christians and the emperor. In fact, he regards the emperor as human being next to God and without any rival on earth. In his other writing, *Scorpiace XIV*, Tertullian loosely quotes Rom 13:1-4 to emphasize that the political order must be respected and that temporal power is a minister of God for their good.⁴² Since Tertullian was writing against the background of actual persecution, the virtue of martyrdom becomes a strong force in his interpretation of Rom 13. He saw in the Pauline exhortation a providential guarantee and justification of his own patriotism.⁴³ Like Irenaeus, Tertullian “had to find a compromise acceptable both to themselves and to the emperor – if only to stop the persecutions that were depleting their ranks.”⁴⁴ Yet, he never conceded to the divinization of the imperial power. Finally, history will remember Tertullian for his famous saying, “The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians.”⁴⁵

In his *Commentary on Daniel* (III. 23), Hippolytus of Rome (who died as a martyr in 235 C.E.) identifies Rome with the fourth beast, permitted to rampage, yet doomed to be destroyed by the fifth empire of Christ and his church. In that same commentary he mentions Rom 13:1-4 in order to exhort obedience to all governing authorities so long as they do not ask Christians to disown their faith.⁴⁶ In the meantime, while they are awaiting the downfall of “Babylon”, Christians should continue to “subsidize it [Roman empire] by their taxes and obey its laws and magistrates unless there was direct conflict with obedience to God.”⁴⁷

At a time when the pagan Romans deified the secular order and even identified it with the religious, how should Christians relate to the secular, temporal order? Should they completely withdraw from the secular perceived to be evil, and cling to the religious exclusively? These were the pressing concerns of the Christian church at the time of Origen. Born in Alexandria of Christian parents, Origen (ca. 185–254 C.E.) is often regarded as the greatest and the most learned of the early Greek Fathers. He devoted himself to a systematic explanation of the Scriptures. In his exegesis of Matt 22:21 (“Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s”), Origen gives a completely new interpretation: Caesar refers to the

Prince of this world, the devil, and before we can come to God, we must divest ourselves of all that is of this world, handing it over to its possessor, the devil.⁴⁸ For Origen, this text never meant at all that we are to obey the secular powers as we obey God. Thus, when he comes to Paul's exhortation in Rom 13:1-7 (of which he is considered as its earliest commentator⁴⁹), he is confronted with a real difficulty. What does he do with the text? Origen interprets Rom 13:1 with Matt 22:21 as background so that for him the Pauline text becomes an authority for the radical distinction between Church and State.⁵⁰ According to Origen, Paul has rightly employed the term "every *soul*" (*omnis anima*), instead of "every *spirit*" in Rom 13:1. Origen is here obviously influenced by the trichotomous anthropological structure, which he partly borrowed from Paul, where the human person is seen as a hierarchy of body, animating soul, and spirit.⁵¹ The audience that Paul is addressing, in the mind of Origen, is considered somewhere between the weak flesh and the willing spirit. The soul signifies that humans, by reason of their imperfection, are still bound to this world, and subsequently subject to the higher powers of this world. On the contrary, the "just," the "perfect," or the "spiritual ones" (or still the "pneumatic" persons) are exempt from obedience to these powers, because in them the "spirit" is already in control. It means that the closer the humans come to God the more they live by the "spirit", the less need there would be for temporal powers. Origen states that if we are so

...joined unto the Lord that we are one spirit in Him, we are said to be subject to the Lord. But if we are not yet such, but still share the common 'soul,' that has within itself something of the 'world,' then the precept of the Apostle [Paul] must be followed and we are obliged to subject ourselves to the powers that be.⁵²

With Matt 22:21 at the backdrop of his interpretation of Rom 13:1, Origen's distinction between "soul" and "spirit" becomes the equivalent of the difference between "Caesar" and "God". Having lived his whole life under a government that was opposed to Christians, Origen interprets Rom 13:2 ("whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed") as not applying to pagan *potestates* who persecute the faith, but only to those who are going about their proper business.⁵³ The civil authority exists only for the wrongdoer and their power does not extend to the just and the perfect. Obedience to the [state's] commands can be exacted only if they are not in contradiction to the Divine

Law. Origen appeals to Acts 5:29 (“We must obey God rather than any human authority.”) to justify his restriction of v. 2, “a qualification that grants readers the moral space to resist some governments.”⁵⁴ For Origen, Christian subordination to the worldly powers is merely a matter of expediency, that is, in order to avoid greater calamities. To sum up: Origen, who is probably the earliest commentator of Rom 13:1-7, employs an anthropological argument (*yuchv*– *anima* in v. 1) to narrow down the proper audience of this Pauline exhortation. He likewise uses a scriptural argument (by appealing to Acts 5:29) to narrow the kind of government against whom resistance means resistance toward God. These two arguments provide the door out of an absolute, universal reading of Rom 13:1-7.

F. The Golden Age of the Fourth and Early Fifth-Century

By April 313 C.E., Constantine and Licinius, the two rulers of the entire Roman world, published the so-called Edict of Milan which contained their new religious policy of complete tolerance for every kind of cult that might be practiced within their territory.⁵⁵ As far as Christianity is concerned, this was a landmark since it meant the recognition of the Christian church as a *religio licita*, hence, the formal end to the persecution of Christians in Constantine’s domains, and the restitution of previously confiscated Christian properties.⁵⁶ Constantine elevated “Christianity to a privileged position among the religions of the Roman empire.”⁵⁷ After Constantine, except for the brief reign of Julian (361-363), all succeeding emperors were Christians. Things have changed for both the empire and the church from the fourth century onwards. A Christianizing empire entails an alliance between empire and church – a relationship that was not without risks. K. M. Setton has accurately described the situation: “With the Christianization of the Empire, however, and the growing power of the universal Church the question arose whether the Church was in the State or the State was in the Church.”⁵⁸ But what about when emperors intrude directly in the internal affairs of the church, as it happened with some of Constantine’s successors?⁵⁹ Can she just condescend to the rulers’ whims? Is the Christian religion merely a department of the state? How would they interpret Paul’s exhortation in Rom 13 given their particular situation? As the imperial authorities in the late fourth century became more and more connected with the

Rom 13:1 includes even ecclesiastical authorities (priests and monks), not merely the laity. Πα`sayuchv(“every soul”) exempts no one from Paul’s exhortation. In the same homily, Chrysostom elevates the submission of citizens to civil authority to the level of a religious duty. Submission to civil authority is something not paid to any human being, but to God who framed these laws.⁶⁵ Authority is natural and submission universal (e.g., relationships of man and wife, father and son, old and young, free and slaves, master and disciple). Anarchy of all sorts is evil and cause of confusion. While his esteem of civil authorities is remarkable, when provoked he insists on the superiority of ecclesiastical powers over civil authority.⁶⁶ When Empress Eudoxia opposed him, Chrysostom stood his ground and refused to compromise. Chrysostom is in consonance with other patristic writers in teaching that secular authority is the result of sin; it is because of our depravity. As to the historical background of Rom 13:1-7, he conjectures that the text was intended to refute the charge of fostering revolutionary activities, a conjecture that is without any historical backing.⁶⁷

Ambrose. An important figure in the history of the evolution of *imperium-sacerdotium* relations in the Western Church is Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (333-397 C.E.). It was he who courageously challenged the Christian emperor Theodosius when he thought that the latter behaved unjustly and unbecomingly of his authority by excommunicating him until he did public penance.⁶⁸ Ambrose regards the *imperium* and *sacerdotium* as two independent authorities, each autonomous within its own sphere, but both must collaborate. Drawing inspiration from Rom 13, Ambrose affirms that no power is intrinsically evil but what is evil is ambition and abuse (“non ergo potestas male, sed ambitio”). The ruler is only truly *Dei minister* if he makes proper use of his power. Ambrose insists on the complete immunity of the church from imperial interference in ecclesiastical and religious matters.⁶⁹ “Priestly power and secular authority might be parallel, but parallels never meet. Of the [two] swords, the ecclesiastical was the sharper.”⁷⁰ The emperor is a son of the church and must submit to the authority of the church: “Imperator enim intra Ecclesiam, non supra Ecclesiam est.”⁷¹

*Ambrosiaster.*⁷² He was an early exponent of the divine rights of kings. It was he who coined the maxim: “*Dei enim imaginem habet rex, sicut et episcopus Christi.*”⁷³ The king is some sort of an “*imago dei*”, while the bishop typifies God the Son. In another passage he speaks of the king as *vicarius dei* (“vicar of God”) – a concept that will be repeated in the Middle Ages. By placing the king next to God, he deserves *adoratio in terris*, a privilege which no other official on earth shares. Ambrosiaster considers the king to be above the law.⁷⁴ He sees the obligation to obey rulers in Rom 13:1 as “the law of heavenly justice.” Explaining v. 3, Ambrosiaster asserts that even pagan rulers must be obeyed since God also appoints them and they enforce God’s order.⁷⁵

Jerome. Quoting Rom 13:1 in his *Commentary on the Epistle to Titus*, Jerome explains the historical setting of Paul’s insistence on civil obedience. According to Jerome, what provoked Paul was to warn against the Christian Judaizers who were still expecting the overthrow of Rome and the establishment of the temporal messianic kingdom.⁷⁶ Paul feared that Judas Galilaeus and his teachings had still followers among some Christians. These Christians refused obedience to civil authorities and, moreover, were rebellious toward Rome, the seat of the empire.⁷⁷ In this same commentary, Jerome explains that the Greek word *ajrcaiv* (as found in Tit 3:1) means principalities rather than princes, hence, this refers to the power itself, not the persons who are in power.⁷⁸ Like Chrysostom and Ambrosiaster, Jerome differentiates between the “power” and the “ruler”.

Pelagius. An interesting feature of Pelagius’ commentary on Romans is the presence of alternative interpretations besides the commonly accepted one. Thus, his alternative interpretation of the “powers that be” in Rom 13:1 includes ecclesiastical authorities: “*Possunt sublimiores potestates ecclesiasticae dignitates intellegi.*”⁷⁹ In v. 4 Pelagius asserts that priests bear a spiritual sword “as when Peter struck down Ananias and Paul, the sorcerer” (cf. Acts 5:1-6; 13:4-12).⁸⁰ He is the only patristic writer who extends the Pauline demand of paying taxes in Rom 13:7 to almsgiving.⁸¹ Like Jerome, Pelagius also identifies the historical context of Rom 13:1-7 as being addressed to certain Christians who had misinterpreted their Christian freedom as license to ignore the

authorities or not to pay taxes.⁸² The apostle's intention was to correct their wrong attitude and to humble down their pride. In Pelagius' mind this attitude is dangerous because it reflects badly on Christ. The haughtiness of these Christians may lead the pagan public to believe that Christ taught his disciples to be proud. In short, Pelagius seems to be "concerned more about the misconceptions that an antinomian attitude in Christians will convey about Christ than about disruption to orderly society."⁸³

Augustine. As a prolific and persuasive writer, Augustine's thought dominated the philosophy, theology, and ethics of the Middle Ages.⁸⁴ Emperors and popes would appeal to his political thought "for support in their age-long contest for the supreme power: the former to vindicate their independence in secular affairs, and the latter to prove their lordship over all other earthly potentates, whether temporal or spiritual."⁸⁵

While Augustine's political thought is no longer merely an exegesis of Rom 13, as Parsons observes, still that passage exercises a profound influence.⁸⁶ His writings (like *De civitate Dei*, *Letters*, *Sermons*, *Retractions*, and *Anti-Donatist Writings*) frequently cited Rom 13 when speaking about the legitimation of the authority of civil rulers over Christians.⁸⁷ He likewise employed that Pauline text to remind Christian political rulers of their religious obligation to govern justly.⁸⁸ From his *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos* (Sections 72-74), which he wrote around the time he became a bishop (ca. 394-395 C.E.), one finds a commentary on Rom 13.⁸⁹ Commenting on v. 1 Augustine states that Paul was perfectly right when he warned the Christians

lest anyone, because his Lord has called him to liberty and made him a Christian, be exalted by pride. And let him not suppose that in this life's journey he should not keep his place, nor let him suppose he ought not be subordinate to those higher authorities who, for the time being, may govern temporal things.⁹⁰

Submission to temporal powers signifies a kind of humility – a recognition of one's partiality and finitude. Subsequently, anarchy is never an option for Christians.⁹¹ Augustine maintains that Christians err greatly when they think that they do not need to pay taxes or tribute, nor to show respect due to those authorities which look after

temporal life: “Si quis ergo putat, quoniam christianus est, non sibi esse vectigal reddendum aut tributum aut non esse exhibendum honorem debitum eis, qui haec curant potestatibus, in magno errore versatur.”⁹² Conversely, Christians commit greater error when they surrender their faith on the pretext of submission to higher authorities administering temporal affairs.⁹³ In this regard, Augustine soundly prescribes the dominical saying: “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God’s the things that are God’s” (Matt 22:21). While never losing sight of the Christian’s final destination, a kingdom where temporal authority is no longer necessary, Augustine, nevertheless, exhorts the Christians to endure the present condition for the sake of daily social order.⁹⁴ In this same commentary on Rom 13, Augustine likewise implies that subordination to higher authorities belongs to the very nature of humans:

For we are both soul and body [*anima et corpora*], and however long we exist in this temporal life, we use temporal things to support it. Thus it behooves us in our temporal, physical aspect to be subject to the authorities, that is, to the men who administer human affairs in some office.⁹⁵

In fact, these words furnished the Middle Ages the foundation of the concept of human unity: the human person is a composite being of body and soul.⁹⁶

At one time, Augustine quoting Rom 13:1 from memory wrote *ordo* (order) instead of *potestas* (authority): “All order is of God” (*Omnis ordo a Deo est*). Years later when he corrected himself, Augustine argued that although he had misquoted the text there was truth in it.⁹⁷ For the text would mean something like, “All that is, is ordered by God”. The original slip clearly reveals his understanding of political authority, i.e., the idea of order. *Potestas*, which comes from God, is subject to his ordering. In Augustine’s mind, ‘order’ (*ordo*) is “that which if we follow it in our lives, will lead us to God.”⁹⁸ The ordering of a complex society, like the state, towards the common good of earthly peace can be effective only through the exercise of authority.

Augustine’s predecessors usually have recourse to the words of Peter, “We must obey God rather than man” (Acts 5: 29), in order to exempt anybody from submitting to unjust and sinful commands. For him, however, faith and morals are not subject to

secular government, as the soul is not subject to the body. He states: “But concerning our spiritual selves, by which we believe in God and are called into his kingdom, we should not submit to any man desiring to destroy that very thing in us through which God deigned to give eternal life.”⁹⁹ Subjection to civil rulers involves only the “necessaries of this life.”¹⁰⁰ Civil rulers must not interfere with human’s spiritual allegiance, for God’s and Caesar’s are distinct – an assertion we already saw in Ambrose. In one of his sermons, after citing Rom 13:1-2, Augustine deals with the problem, “what if the ruler commands what one ought not to do?” His answer is plain and simple: “Do not obey evil commands!”, “Despise the power”!¹⁰¹ He warns that the civil ruler may threaten one with prison, but God threatens with hell.

A God-impregnated state is Augustine’s ideal. Since the ruler is also a minister of God (Rom 13:4), Augustine holds that the king has the duty to forward the interests of the true religion, a thought which was taken seriously in the Middle Ages as exemplified in the history of Charlemagne. In his *Letter 93*, Augustine exclaims, “Let the kings of the earth serve Christ even by making laws in behalf of God.”¹⁰² In that same letter he appealed to Rom 13:1-3 as a biblical warrant justifying the state’s use of compulsion to make people good. Thus, for instance, he claims: “But the Donatists are much too active and it seems to me it would be advisable for them to be restrained and corrected by the powers established by God.”¹⁰³

To sum up: Augustine has appealed to Rom 13 in many of his writings to explain the origin, nature, purpose, and even limits of political authority. At the same time, he has used the text as an exegetical warrant to justify the government’s prosecution of the church’s enemies. While there are those authors who emphasize that for Augustine civil authority had been brought into existence by the sinful condition of humankind, that is, as the necessary result of Adam’s fall and of humanity’s consequent propensity toward sin, there are also others who argue for the “naturalness” of the state. This implies that political rule would have been present even if humanity had never sinned. Augustine holds that Christians owe the state full cooperation and subjection. The state takes care of the bodily aspects of human life. It must not, however, interfere with human’s

spiritual allegiance.¹⁰⁴ When the temporal ruler contravenes a Divine command, then it ceases its legitimate authority to be obeyed. Disobedience in that case becomes a duty.

Summary and Conclusion

By way of conclusion, we draw the following summarizing statements based on the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Paul's exhortation in Rom 13:1-7 during the period of Christian Antiquity.

1. The seeming allusions or references to this passage by the Apostolic Fathers are difficult to establish since they may well derive from oral tradition rather than witness to the written text. The Apologists employed this passage as a valuable apologetic argument to demonstrate the loyalty of Christians to the Roman empire. Theophilus' citation of Rom 13:7 seems to be the oldest extant reference to the exhortation. Irenaeus was the first patristic writer to clearly cite the whole passage. Origen, however, was the first commentator of Rom 13:1-7.

2. There is no doubt that the patristic writers understood Rom 13:1-7 politically and even expounded it. They appealed to the text when speaking about the origin, nature, and extent of political authority and subjection. Except for Pelagius who offers an alternative interpretation, the Fathers interpreted *εἰς ἡμᾶς* / *potestas* in Rom 13 as the earthly, civil authorities. As to the origin of civil authority, the patristic writers, following Rom 13, maintain that government is a divine institution. Thus, "Caesar" is a minister of God, because his power comes from God. The "Caesar" has a claim on people's conscience. Christian liberty does not exempt anyone from subordination, not even ecclesiastical authorities.

3. The patristic writers developed different attitudes towards civil authority. There were those who taught that the necessity of civil authority and institutional subjection was the result of sin (e.g., Irenaeus, John Chrysostom). It was made necessary because humans departed from God, hated their fellowmen, and fell into confusion and disorder. Thus, law and government were regarded as coercive restraints over evil passions. The implication is that if humanity had not sinned, there would have been no

political rule. But there were those, especially represented by Eastern Fathers Basil and Epiphanius, who attributed the origin of the state as a natural consequence of human nature itself, and not merely to sin. Common good requires the establishment of a directive or “ordering” power of the *imperium* for the sake of peace and harmony among the people. Accordingly, the political obligation to submit to civil authority is grounded in the law of God and nature.

4. Aware that the rulers may abuse the authority instituted by God, the patristic writers in their interpretation of *potestas* in Rom 13:1 have always distinguished between the power (‘government’) and the ruler (‘governor’). The former is of divine origin, while the latter human. Paul’s exhortation, in the mind of the Fathers, is speaking of authority in general, and not of individual rulers. Authority is not intrinsically evil; it is rather the abuse of power that is reprehensible (e.g., Ambrose). The king shall derive his name from right acting. The good ruler is the *imago dei* and *vicarius dei*, placed second to God without any rival on earth (Tertullian and Ambrosiaster). Laws do not bind him, though still subject to the divine laws.

5. The patristic writers condemned all kinds of armed attacks, rebellion, usurpation against the sovereign, even if such a ruler is evil (e.g., Irenaeus, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Augustine). Yet, political authority and subjection was not without limits. Because of the apparent absolute, unconditional tone of Rom 13:1-7, some of the Fathers created a kind of exegetical space to narrow down the passage by appealing and relating it to other NT texts (e.g., Matt 22: 21; Acts 5: 29; 1 Pet 2: 13-17). Even under threat of martyrdom, the Fathers never conceded to the divinization of the emperor. In fact, passive resistance leading to martyrdom was seen as a duty, for it is God who must be obeyed rather than humans. They honored the emperor, but they feared God alone.

6. While recognizing that the Church and State are two independent authorities, each autonomous in its own sphere, Ambrose was the first Church Father who ever dared to intervene decisively in temporal affairs in order “to insist that the public acts of the Emperor or of the government should conform to the canons approved by the Christian

reason and conscience.”¹⁰⁵ The Church exercises jurisdiction over all Christian people, even over the chief of state.

7. Lastly, the period of Antiquity witnessed a shift from a non-Christian setting in the first three centuries, that is occasionally hostile toward Christians, to a Christianizing empire in the fourth century, and then finally to a Christianized empire in the fifth century. Yet in spite of these shifting contexts there is a continuity of teaching among patristic writers on the Pauline exhortation to be subject to the civil powers that God allows to rule, with a *caveat*, i.e., provided they do not contradict divine commands. Christians are the emperor’s subjects, but they are first and foremost God’s.

mentions Rom 13 in relation to *MPol* 10.2. See also Edouard Massaux et al., *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature Before Saint Irenaeus: Book 2: The Later Christian Writings* (NGS, 5/2; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1992) 50. Contra, Ernst Barnikol who maintains, “Polykarp (70-156) kennt und nennt nichts von Römer 13,1-7, weder in seinem Brief an die Philipper, noch bei seinem Martyrium” (“Der nichtpaulinische Ursprung der absoluten Obrigkeitsbejahung von Römer 13, 1-7,” in *Studien zum Neuen Testament und zur Patristik* [TU, 77; Berlin: Akademie, 1961] 65-133, esp. 108).

²⁴ To cite an example, when Polycarp was arrested, Herod, the police captain, and his father, Nicetes, tried to persuade him, saying, *Tiv ga;r kakovn ejstin eijpei;n: Kuvrio~ kai;sar, kai; ejpiku`sai kai; ta; touvtoi~ ajkovlouqakai; diaswvzesqai* ; (“What harm is there to say ‘Lord Caesar’, and to offer incense and all that sort of thing, and to save yourself?”). At first Polycarp did not answer them. But when they persisted, he said, *Ouj mevllw poiei;n, o} sumboulevetev moi* (“I am not going to do what you advise me”). See *Das Martyrium des Polykarp*, 8.2, in Bihlmeyer, *Die apostolischen Väter*, 124. Also Cyril Charles Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers* (Library of Christian Classics, 1; London: SCM, 1953) 152.

²⁵ For an extensive study see Barnikol, *Der nichtpaulinische Ursprung*, 65-133. On p. 81: “Römer 13,1-7 fehlt gänzlich bei Marcion um 130 ... Aus Kp. 13 ist erst Vers 8b durch Epiphanius bezeugt, also bot Marcion in seiner Bibel den Abschnitt 13,1-7 nicht....”

²⁶ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament. Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987; paperback edn. 1997) 40.

²⁷ Robert Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10.4 in Pauline Perspective* (JSNTSup, 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985) 8.

²⁸ Walter H. Wagner, *After the Apostles: Christianity in the Second Century* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1994) vii.

²⁹ For example, The *Apology of Aristides* addressed to Emperor Antoninus Pius (written ca. 138-147 C.E.) is considered the earliest defense of Christianity that has come down to us. “Christianity ... is worthy of the emperor’s attention because it is eminently reasonable, and gives an impulse and power to live a good life” (Metzger, *The Canon*, 128). See Charles Munier, *L’Apologie de Saint Justin: philosophe et martyr* (Paradosis, 38; Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1994) 1-6, for a good background of the Christian Greek apologists in the second century.

³⁰ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* [hereafter *Ad Autol.*] (tran. Robert M. Grant; Oxford: Clarendon, 1970) 14-15. The Greek text runs: *Toigarou`n ma`llon timhvsu to;n basileva, ouj proskunw`n aujtw`/, ajlla; eujcovmeno~ujpe;raujtou` qew de;tw`/o[ntw~qew`/kai; ajlhqeì proskunw` ,eijdw;~o{ti o} basileu;~ujp/Æ aujtu` gevgonen. jErei`~ou`n moi: „Dia; tiv ouj proskunei`~to;n basileva O`Oti oujk eij~ to; proskunei`sqai gevgonen, ajlla; eij~ to; tima`sqai th`/ nomivmw/ timh`/. Qeo;~ ga;r oujk e[stin, ajlla; a[nqrwpo~, ujpo; qeou` tetagmevno~, oujk eij~ to; proskunei`sqai, ajlla; eij~ to; dikaiw~krivnein. trovpw/ gavr tini para; qeou` oijkonomivan pepivsteutai: Ou{tw~oujde; proskunei`sqai ajll/Æ h] movnw/ qew.* See Miroslav Marcovich (ed.), *Tatiani Oratio ad Graecos: Theophili Antiocheni Ad Autolyicum* (Berlin – New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1995) 30.

³¹ English translation: “Furthermore, the divine Word gives us order about *subordination to principalities and powers* [Rom 13:1-3; Tit 3:1] and *prayer for them, so that they may lead a quiet and tranquil life* [1 Tim 2:1-2]; and it teaches us to *render all things to all men, honour to whom honour is due, fear to whom fear, tribute to whom tribute; to owe no man anything except to love all* [Rom 13,7-8].” See Grant, *Ad Autol.* 3.14, 118-119.

³² Here Theophilus simply dropped *tw`to;tevlo~to;tevlo~* and changed the sequence, as though he had read the Pauline text in reverse. See Edouard Massaux, *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature Before Saint Irenaeus, Book 3: The Apologists and the Didache* (NGS, 5/3; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1993) 141.

³³ Ernst Käsemann, *An die Römer* (HNT, 8a; Tübingen: Mohr, 1980) 339: “Daß er erst durch Irenäus, Haer V, 24,1 zitiert wird, um gnostische Mißdeutung der Gewalten auf Engelmächte abzulehnen”

³⁴ “Quoniam haec autem non de angelicis potestatibus nec de invisibilibus principibus dixit, quomodo quidam audent exponere, sed de his quae sunt secundum homines potestates.” See W. W. Harvey, *Sancti Irenaei Lugdunensis libros quinque adversus haereses* (Cambridge, 1857) 388. Because the Gnostics misunderstood Rom 13 to mean evil, metaphysical (angelic) powers, this must have been the reason why it is claimed that they rejected obedience to earthly government.

³⁵ See A. Rousseau et al. (ed.), *Irenée de Lyon: Contre Les Hérésies*, V.24. (Sources chrétiennes, 153; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1965) 296, 298. Hereafter referred to as SC.

³⁶ The Latin text is: “Ad utilitatem ergo gentilium terrenum regnum positum est a Deo; ...ut timentes regnum hominum, non se alterutrum homines vice piscium consumant, sed per legum positionem repercutiant multiplicem gentilium injustitiam.” See *Irenée de Lyon: Contre Les Hérésies*, V.24.2 (SC, 153) 300, 302, for the Latin text. Others translate “Ad utilitatem ergo gentilium terrenum regnum positum est a Deo” as powers that “have been appointed by God for the utility of the ‘Gentiles’” in order to stress that while these powers are indeed “ministers of God”, yet they remain “gentile” powers, essentially foreign to the People of God. This latter translation views civil authority as an essentially

pre-Christian, “secular”, power. See Gerard E. Caspary, *Politics and Exegesis: Origen and the Two Swords* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) 141; Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 174; Maurice Wiles & Mark Santer, *Documents in Early Christian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) 226.

³⁷ According to Joseph F. Kelly & Brian E. Daley (*The World of the Early Christians* [Message of the Fathers of the Church, 1; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997] 187-188), the third century began with a persecution on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. The African martyrs Perpetua and Felicity are among the victims of this persecution. Around 230s larger persecutions broke out again in Rome and Asia Minor.

³⁸ After Tertullian’s lifetime, the Emperor Decius (249-251 C.E.), believing that the Christians threatened the empire, launched the first empire-wide persecution. Christians were required to sacrifice to the gods, upon which they received a *libellus*, a receipt acknowledging that they had sacrificed (Kelly & Daley, *Early Christians*, 191).

³⁹ Luise Schottroff, “Give to Caesar What Belongs to Caesar and to God What Belongs to God”: A Theological Response of the Early Christian Church to Its Social and Political Environment, in *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament* (ed. Willard M. Swartley; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992) 223-257, esp. 225.

⁴⁰ Kurt Aland, “The Relation between Church and State in Early Times: A Reinterpretation,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968) 115-127, esp. 123.

⁴¹ The English translation is taken from Wiles & Santer, *Early Christian Thought*, 227. For the Latin text, see Tertullianus, *Ad Scapulam* II, 6 (crit. edn. E. Dekkers; Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina [hereafter CCL] 2; Turnhout: Brepols, 1954) 1128: “Christianus nullius est hostis, nedum imperatoris, quem sciens a Deo suo constitui, necesse est ut et ipsum diligat et reuereatur et honoret et saluum uelit...” Tertullian is here alluding to Rom 13:1.

⁴² See *Scorpiace*, XIV, 1 (crit. edn. A. Reifferscheid & G. Wissowa; CCL 2; Turnhout: Brepols, 1954) 1096: “Plane monet Romanos omnibus potestatibus subici, quia non sit potestas nisi a deo, et quia non sine causa gladium gestet, et quia ministerium sit dei, sed et ultrix, inquit, in iram ei qui malum fecerit. Nam et praemisera: Principes enim non sunt timori boni operis, sed mali. Vis autem non timere potestatem, fac bonum, et laudem ab ea referes. Dei ergo ministra est tibi in bonum. Si uero malum facias, time”.

⁴³ Wilfrid Parsons, “The Influence of Romans XIII on Pre-Augustinian Christian Political Thought,” *Theological Studies* 1 (1940) 337-364, esp. 345. In a similar note, Eric Osborn confirms that Tertullian “found a place for the Roman Empire in the divine purpose” (*Tertullian, The First Theologian of the West* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997] 84).

⁴⁴ Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 9; Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1966) 584.

⁴⁵ Tertullianus, *Apologeticum* L, 13 (CCL, 1) 171: “Etiam plures efficitur, quotiens metimur a vobis: semen est sanguis Christianorum!”

⁴⁶ Hippolyt, *Kommentar zu Daniel* (crit. edn. Georg Nathanael Bonwetsch; Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte [hereafter GCS], Neu Folge 7; Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 2000) 176-179.

⁴⁷ G. Clark, “Let Every Subject Be Subject: The Fathers and the Empire,” in *Images of Empire* (ed. Loveday Alexander; JSOTSS, 122; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 251-275, esp. 261.

⁴⁸ Erich Klostermann (ed.), *Origenes Matthäuserklärung. I. Die Griechisch erhaltenen Tomoi* (GCS, 40; Origenes 10; Leipzig: Akademie Verlag, 1935) 653-663.

⁴⁹ Origen’s commentary on Romans is available only through the Latin version made by Rufinus of Aquileia. See Caroline P. Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins. Buch 7-10* (Vetus Latina, 34; Freiburg: Herder, 1998); Theresia Heither (trans.), *Origenes: Commentarii in epistulam ad Romanos* (Fontes Christiani, 2/1-6; Freiburg: Herder, 1990-1999). Origen’s commentary on Rom 13:1-7 is found in Vol. 5 (1996).

⁵⁰ Caspary, *Politics and Exegesis*, 141-142.

⁵¹ Cf. 1 Thess 5: 23. In Origen’s tripartite division, the spirit refers to some nobler aspect of one’s being which is incapable of evil, and standing in opposition to the flesh. The body/flesh, our physical existence, is not a part of God’s original and basic creation, but rather a punishment for the fall of the pre-existent soul. The soul is in a mid-way position between the weak flesh and the willing spirit, capable of turning either to good or evil. In Origen’s view, the soul is that part of the human being which has fallen away from its original status, but which is capable of restoration through association with the spirit. All three elements are to be found in every human being. Origen is, however, not anxious to draw the distinction between the three elements too sharply. In fact, he does not find it easy to give clear expression to the precise nature and function of the soul. See Maurice F. Wiles, *The Divine Apostle: The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles in the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 31-32.

⁵² The Latin text is: “et si quidem tales simus qui coniuncti Domino unus cum eo spiritus simus Domino dicimur esse subiecti - si uero nondum tales sumus sed communis adhuc anima est in nobis quae habeat aliquid huius mundi quae sit in aliquo alligata negotiis huic praecepta apostolus ponit et dicit ut subiecta sit potestatibus mundi...” (*Com. Rom.* 9.25, in Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes*, 748-749).

- ⁵³ Gerald Bray (ed.), *Romans* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, VI; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998) 326.
- ⁵⁴ Mark Reasoner, “Ancient and Modern Exegesis of Romans 13 under Unfriendly Governments,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 38 (1999) 359-374, esp. 362.
- ⁵⁵ See Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 48.2-12 (trans. J. Moreau; Sources chrétiennes, 39; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1954) 132-135. For the English text, see P.R. Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church: A Collection of Legal Documents to A.D. 535* (3 vols.; London: SPCK, 1966) I, 30-32, for the document. It must be noted that while this edict made Christianity licit, it does not yet establish Christianity as the imperial religion – a development to take place only in 380 C.E. with Theodosius I (378-395) and his Western colleague Gratian (378-395). See also pp. 353-354 for the English translation of the Edict of Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius I on the Establishment of the Catholic Religion.
- ⁵⁶ John Meyerdorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church 450-680 AD* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989) 5.
- ⁵⁷ Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981) 50.
- ⁵⁸ Kenneth Meyer Setton, *Christian Attitude Towards the Emperor in the Fourth Century* (New York: Columbia University, 1941; repr. 1967) 41.
- ⁵⁹ An example at hand is when Constantius supported Arianism, which the church resented.
- ⁶⁰ Aland, “The Relation between Church and State in Early Times,” 127.
- ⁶¹ See Basil, *Moralia* 79 (*Patrologia Graeca* 31, 860); Saint Basil, *Ascetical Works* (trans. M. M. Wagner, Fathers of the Church, 9; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1950; repr. 1970) 196. Society, for Basil, is the converging together of people of diverse customs and habits for the sake of the common good. But common good requires the establishment of a directive power of the State for the sake of peace and harmony among the members.
- ⁶² G. F. Reilly, *Imperium and Sacrodotium according to St. Basil the Great* (The Catholic University of America Studies in Christian Antiquity, 7; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1945) 8. In Basil’s work entitled *Moralia*, he quotes faithfully Rom 13 in *Regula* 79 to emphasize the authority of the *imperium* as a means of fostering the welfare of the society, distinct from its power to punish.
- ⁶³ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 40,4.6: “ijna eij~ eu[takton suvntaxin th`~ tou` panto;~ kovsmou dioikhvsew~ta; pavntaejk qeou` kalw`~katatacqhv`/kai; oijkovnomhqv`/ ...” (p. 85).
- ⁶⁴ Epiphanius, *Panarion, Adversus haereses* 40.4 (eds. K. Holl & J. Dummer; GCS: Epiphanius II; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1980) 84. This nuanced paraphrase of Rom 13:1-4 clearly reveals his understanding of the purpose of the “powers that be”, that is, they are ordained by God, “for the sake of the good”(ujpe;rtou` ajgaqou`) and “for the sake of the truth” (ujpe;rth`~ajlhqeiva~). The translation goes: “The powers that be are ordained of God,” as the apostle says, “Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, since the rulers are not against the good, but for the good, and not against the truth, but for the truth. Wilt thou not be afraid of the power?” he says. “Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is a minister ordained of God for this very thing, for him that doeth evil”. See *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book I* (Sects 1-46) (trans. Frank Williams; Leiden: Brill, 1987) 265 for the English translation.
- ⁶⁵ Chrysostom states: “For lest the believers should say, You are making us very cheap and despicable, when you put us, who are to enjoy the Kingdom of Heaven, under subjection to rulers, he shows that it is not to rulers, but to God again that he makes them subject in doing this. For it is to Him, that he who subjects himself to authorities is obedient. ... And gives it a more precise form by saying that he who listeneth not thereto is fighting with God, Who framed these laws. And this he is in all cases at pains to show, that it is not by way of favor that we obey them, but by way of debt.” See Homily 23, in P. Schaff (ed.), *St. Chrysostom* (The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers [hereafter: NPNF], 1st Ser. 11; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, repr. 1979) 512.
- ⁶⁶ In his *Homily on the Statues* (3.6), he tells the people of Antioch that their bishop [Flavian], who has gone to ask pardon from the emperor [Theodosius] on behalf of the city, is himself a ruler of even higher rank than the emperor: “For the sacred laws take and place under his hands even the royal head. And when there is need of any good thing from the priest, the Emperor is accustomed to fly to the priest: but not the priest to the Emperor.” See NPNF (1st Ser. 9), 356. This position of superiority will be restated a century later by Pope Gelasius in his letter of 494 to Anastasius.
- ⁶⁷ Chrysostom thinks that Paul is attempting to show that the teachings of Jesus were given “not for the subversion of the commonwealth... but for the better ordering of it, and to teach men not to be taking up unnecessary and unprofitable wars.” See the opening words of Homily 23 (NPNF, 1st Ser. 11), 511. Also K. H. Schelkle, “Staat und Kirche in der patristischen Auslegung von Rm 13,1-7,” *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 44 (1952/53) 223-236, esp. 227ff.
- ⁶⁸ In 390 C.E. Theodosius massacred some 7,000 people in Thessalonica as punishment for the death of the Roman commandant of that city. See Louis J. Swift, *The Early Fathers on War and Military Service* (Message of the Fathers of the Church, 19; Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1983) 107.

⁶⁹ When Ambrose was asked by Valentinian II to surrender the basilica to the Arians so that they might celebrate their Easter liturgy, he refused and argued that the property of God was not subject to the Emperor. The Emperor is given jurisdiction over public buildings, but not over sacred buildings. See Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Contra Auxentium de basilicis tradendis* (recensuit M. Zelzer; Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum [hereafter CSEL], 82; Sancti Ambrosii 10/3; Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1982) 82-107.

⁷⁰ W. H. C. Frend, "Church and State: Perspectives and Problems in the Patristic Era," in *Studia Patristica XVII: Part One* (ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone; Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982) 38-54, esp. 49.

⁷¹ Ambrosius, *Contra Auxentium de basilicis tradendis*, 36 (CSEL, 82) 106. For English, see NPNF, 2nd Ser. 10, 436.

⁷² According to Maria Grazia Mara, "Ambrosiaster (pseudo-Ambrose) is the name commonly given to the author of the commentaries on the Pauline epistles written presumably at Rome in the second half of the fourth century ("Ambrose of Milan, Ambrosiaster and Nicetas," in *Patrology*, Vol. 4: *The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature From the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon* (ed. Angelo Di Berardino; Westminster, MD: Maryland: Christian Classics, 1986) 180. This unknown writer has certain similarities to Ambrose, hence, the name Ambrosiaster. However, at one time his writings were also attributed to Augustine and to Hilary (of Poitiers). Cf. A. Di Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, Vol. I (trans. A. Walford; Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1992) 31: "Some texts name Ambrose as author, others Hilarius." For a discussion of the problems of authorship, see A. Souter, *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927) 49. Ambrosiaster composed commentaries on thirteen Pauline letters. The commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans exists in three different versions or recensions. For the text, see *Ambrosiastri Qui Dicitur Commentarius in Epistulas Paulinas. Pars I: In Epistulam ad Romanos* (recensuit H.J. Vogels; CSEL, 81; Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1966).

⁷³ Pseudo-Augustinus, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, XXXV (recensuit A. Souter; CSEL, 50; Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1908) 63. To explain his point in *Question 35*, Ambrosiaster quotes Rom 13:1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, CXV, 45 (CSEL, 50) 332.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, XXXV (CSEL, 50) 63. In Ambrosiaster's *Commentarius in Epistulam ad Romanos*, commenting on Rom 13:1, he explains that subjects should obey ministers of the earthly law because they "have God's permission to act, so that no one should despise it as a merely human construction" ([CSEL, 81] 417).

⁷⁶ Jerome states: "Quod quidem praeceptum, et hic, et ibi propterea puto editum, quia Judae Galilaei per illud tempus dogma adhuc vigeat, et habebat plurimos sectatores..." See his *Commentariorum in Epistolam ad Titum, Cap. III* (Patrologia Latina [hereafter PL] 26, 590-591).

⁷⁷ Parsons, "Pre-Augustinian," 338, 363; *Idem*, "The Political Theory of the New Testament," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 4 (1992) 218-229, esp. 223.

⁷⁸ Hieronymus, *Com. in Epis. ad Tit., Cap. III* (PL 26, 591): "Arcaiv quippe quae leguntur in Graeco, magis principatus quam principes sonant: et ipsam significant potestatem, non eos qui in potestate sunt homines."

⁷⁹ Pelagius, *In Epistolam ad Romanos*, in Adalbert Hamman, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus Supplementum I*, (Paris: Garnier, 1958) col. 1167; Theodore de Bruyn (trans.), *Pelagius's Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1998) 136. See Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKKNT, VI,1-3; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1978-82) 46: "Bei Pelagius findet sich neben der üblichen Deutung von Röm 13,1f auf die staatliche Gewalt eine andere, nach der es um die Gewalt der kirchlichen Führer, der Bischöfe, geht." Also W. Affeldt, *Die weltliche Gewalt in der Paulus-Exegese. Röm 13,1-7 in den Römerbriefkommentaren der lateinischen Kirche bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, 22; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969) 96-97.

⁸⁰ The alternative comment given by Pelagius to 13:4: "Die Priester tragen das geistliche Schwert, wie Petrus den Ananias und Paulus den Magier damit geschlagen hat." See Schelkle, "Staat und Kirche in der patristischen Auslegung von Rm 13,1-7," 231.

⁸¹ He teaches that "even alms that are given to the poor can be called a due, as the Scriptures say: 'Incline your ear to the poor and pay your due.'" Pelagius says: "Revenue is ours to give to those who are passing by, or to give to those who are seated by the road while we pass by, and thus to bestow upon those who are alive" (De Bruyn, *Pelagius's Commentary*, 138). See also Affeldt, *Die weltliche Gewalt*, 110: "Nur Pelagius wagt es, die paulinische Forderung umzudeuten und daraus die Aufforderung zu machen, daß man Almosen geben müsse."

⁸² Pelagius, *In Epis. ad Rom.*, col. 1167: "Haec causa adversus illos prolata est qui se putabant ita debere libertate Christiana uti, ut nulli aut honorem deferrent aut tributa dependerent."

⁸³ De Bruyn, *Pelagius's Commentary*, 50.

⁸⁴ Augustine lived in 354-430 C.E. According to R.A. Markus, "Two Conceptions of Political Authority: Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XIX. 14-15, and Some Thirteenth-Century Interpretations," *Journal of Theological Studies* 16 (1965) 65-100, esp. 68: "Thirteenth-century scholastics were addicted to quoting statements of Saint Augustine's, as of other *sancti*, as *auctoritates* in support of their opinions."

⁸⁵ F.W. Loetscher, "St. Augustine's Conception of the State," in *Church and State in the Early Church* (ed. E. Ferguson; Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays, 7; New York: Garland Publishing, 1993) 16.

⁸⁶ Parsons, “The Influence of Romans XIII,” 326.

⁸⁷ See, for example, *Letter 87.7: To Emeritus* (The Fathers of the Church [hereafter FCh], 18) 18; *Letter 93: To Vincent* (FCh, 18) 76; *Letter 100: To Donatus* (FCh, 18) 141; *Letter 134.3: To Apringus* (FCh, 20) 10; *Letter 153: To Macedonius* (FCh, 20) 295-296; *Letter 220: To Boniface*, (FCh, 32) 104; *Exposition on the Book of Psalms* 104, 35 (NPNF, 8) 518; *Exp. on Ps 119, 159* (NPNF, 8) 586; *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 105 (FCh, 90) 258; *Tractate 116* (FCh, 92) 29; *Retractiones* Bk 1, Ch. 12, par 8 (FCh, 60) 55; *De catechizandis rudibus* XXI, 37 (CCSL, 46) 161; *Sermo XIII*, 6 (CCSL, 41) 181; *Concerning the Nature of Good, Against the Manicheans*, Ch. 32 (NPNF, 4) 358; *Reply to Faustus the Manichean*, Bk. 22, 75 (NPNF, 4) 301. See also William R. Stevenson, *Christian Love and Just War. Moral Paradox and Political Life in St. Augustine and His Modern Interpreters* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987) 62.

⁸⁸ R. Dorado, “Church and State,” in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999) 176-184, esp. 182.

⁸⁹ See *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos*, 64-66 (recensuit I. Divjak; CSEL, 84: Sancti Aurelii Augustini Opera Sect. IV Pars I; Vienna, 1971) 44-47; also in Paula Fredriksen Landes, *Augustine on Romans. Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans. Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations, 23; Early Christian Literature Series, 6; Chico, CA: Scholars Press 1982) 40-43. Augustine’s text of Rom 13 tends to follow closely the Vulgate.

⁹⁰ *Expos. Prop. Ep. Rom.* 64.1 (CSEL, 84) 44: “... rectissime admonet, ne quis ex eo, quod a domino suo in libertatem vocatus est factus christianus, extollatur in superbiam et non arbitretur in huius vitae itinere servandum esse ordinem suum et potestatibus sublimioribus, quibus pro tempore rerum temporalium gubernatio tradita est, putet non se esse subdendum.”

⁹¹ According to P. Burnell, this is part of Augustine’s anti-dualistic argument (“Augustine on Unjust Regimes,” in *The City of God. A Collection of Critical Essays* [ed. Dorothy F. Donnelly; New York: Peter Lang, 1995] 41).

⁹² *Expos. Prop. Ep. Rom.* 64.4 (CSEL, 84) 45. When compared to the text of Vetus Latina (which reads: “Reddite ergo omnibus debita: cui tributum, tributum: cui vectigal, vectigal: cui timorem, timorem: cui honorem, honorem”) what is lacking in Augustine’s statement is “fear” (timorem). *Tributa* refers to direct taxes; while *vectigalia* means indirect taxes, e.g. border dues.

⁹³ “Item si quis sic se putat esse subdendum, ut etiam in suam fidem habere potestatem arbitretur eum, qui temporalibus administrandis aliqua sublimitate praecellit, in maiorem errorem labitur” (*Exp. Prop. Ep. Rom.* 64. 5 [CSEL, 84] 45).

⁹⁴ *Exp. Prop. Ep. Rom.* 64.6 (CSEL, 84) 45: “...pro ipso rerum humanarum ordine....”

⁹⁵ *Exp. Prop. Ep. Rom.* 64.2 (CSEL, 84) 44. For English text, see Landes, *Augustine on Romans*, 41.

⁹⁶ According to Parsons, “Augustine to Hincmar,” 329, “To man, a composite being of body and soul, yet one being, corresponds a twofold government, the Church ruling the affairs of the soul and the State ruling the affairs of the body.” This idea of human unity under the Kingdom and the Priesthood was the culmination of Christian political thought. However, it must be noted that Augustine’s argument that the state was the necessary consequence of sin and of human’s inclination toward sin was used by medieval churchmen to defend their belief in the natural superiority of the spiritual power over the temporal.

⁹⁷ *De vera religione* XLI, 77 ([crit. edn. K.-D. Daur; CCSL, 32: Aurelii Augustini Opera IV,1; Turnhout: Brepols, 1962] 237). He noted the slip in his *Retractiones* I, XIII. 8 (CCSL, 57) 40: “et alio loco illud quod dixi: sicut ait apostolus: *omnis ordo a deo est.*”

⁹⁸ *De ordine* I, 9,27 (recensuit P. Knöll; CSEL, 63; Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1922) 139: “ordo est, quem si tenuerimus in vita, perducit ad deum”. See also Markus, *The Latin Fathers*, 108.

⁹⁹ *Exp. Prop. Ep. Rom.* 64.3 (CSEL, 84) 45: “Ex illa vero parte, qua credimus deo et in regnum eius vocamur, non nos oportet esse subditos cuiquam homini idipsum in nobis evertere cupienti, quod deus ad vitam aeternam donare dignatus est.” English translation by Landes, *Augustine on Romans*, 41.

¹⁰⁰ *Exp. Prop. Ep. Rom.* 66.1 (CSEL, 84) 46: “...sed in necessariis huic tempori constituenda est.”

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Sermon XII*, 13 (trans. R.G. MacMullen; NPNF, 1st Ser. 6; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, repr. 1996) 302. Also here Augustine speaks of “hierarchy of human affairs.” In this hierarchy God is always above the emperor. This explanation solves the old problem of what to do with a bad king.

¹⁰² *Letter 93* (FCh, 18) 75.

¹⁰³ *Letter 93* (FCh, 18) 56-57. The Latin text goes: “sed Donatistae nimium inquieti sunt, quos per ordinatas a deo potestates cohibere atque corrigi non mihi uidetur inutile”(Epistola XCIII [CSEL, 34, Pars 2, p. 445]). Cf. Charles J. Scalise, “Exegetical Warrants for Religious Persecution: Augustine vs. The Donatists,” *Review and Expositor* 93 (1996) 497-506, esp. 497.

¹⁰⁴ The Popes after Augustine would insist that the power to rule the world is twofold: the *regalis potestas* and the *auctoritas sacrata pontificum*. Of these the latter carry the greater weight. This theory of the two-fold power from God is best enunciated by Pope Gelasius (reigned 492-496 C.E.) and this so-called Gelasian theory will become the standard statement of the Church’s position for the next six hundred years.

¹⁰⁵ F. H. Dudden, *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935) 500.