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"By the Mercies of God . . ."--  
Mercy and Peace in Romans 12

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ABSTRACT

In Romans 12 Paul employs three key terms which play prominent roles in his moral exhortations to the Roman Christian community comprised of Gentile and Jewish Christians. The terms are ἔλεος/ὀκτιρμοῦς ("mercy") and εἰρήνη ("peace"). Paul's appeal to "the mercies of God" in 12:1 arises from preceding discourses in the letter about mercy and peace in God's dealings with humankind. And Paul's admonitions in 12:1-2 concerning mercy and "spiritual" renewal serve as foundations for his prescriptions for acts of mercy and peaceable living in 12:8 and 12:18. In Paul's ethical exhortations for the Roman community, peace and mercy are intimately related. Merciful acts foster peaceful living, while peaceable conduct is to issue forth in merciful deeds. Such irenic and compassionate behavior is a concrete manifestation of Paul's appeal for "spiritual" worship, renewal of minds, and the pursuit of what is perfect based upon God's mercies in 12:1-2.

Romans 12 presents the modern reader with questions about the significance of the terms ἔλεος/ὀκτιρμοῦς ("mercy") and εἰρήνη ("peace") used there. In 12:1 Paul appeals to members of the Christian community in Rome in the name of "the mercies [ὀκτιμῶν] of God." To which "mercies of God" is Paul referring here? Then in verse 8 he encourages those who have the special charism for ἐλεῶν ("showing mercy") to do so with cheerfulness. Finally, in verse 18 Paul exhorts community members insofar as possible to "live peaceably [εἰρηνεύοντες] with all." From these passages four questions emerge: First, what do "mercy" and "peace" mean when employed by Paul in the first-century Mediterranean world? Second, is there a demonstrable connection between "the mercies of God" in 12:1, "showing mercy" in 12:8, and God's mercy in the adjacent context of chapters 9-11? Third, what precisely is the relationship between "mercy" and "peace" in Romans 12? Lastly, is Paul's prescription for irenic living in 12:18 absolute or conditional? These questions have not received sufficient attention in modern scholarship. Much more remains to be done to explore the actual connection between "mercy" and "peace" in Romans 12, and in the entire NT. It is hoped that this essay will advance that project in a useful way.

The foregoing questions are urgent because two issues are at stake. The

first is the unity and the honor of the Christian community in Rome according to the gospel which Paul proclaims to it (Rom 1:1-6, 9, 16). The second issue is one which has been of considerable import within the Judeo-Christian tradition, and indeed among humans throughout history: how to achieve compassionate and irenic relations among people. These issues are particularly germane to the church in Rome which at the time of Paul's writing consisted of Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians. It appears that tensions were high between these groups, especially regarding worship and eating practices (see Rom 14:1-15:12). Gentile Christians, who did not subscribe to the Mosaic law, displayed arrogance toward their Jewish counterparts and deprecated them for their adherence to the law and for the disobedience of the Jewish people in their relationship with God (Rom 11:1-32). Conversely, Jewish Christians impugned Gentile believers for advocating the law-free gospel.

The thesis of this essay is that showing "mercy" and promoting "peace" are two interpenetrating facets of Paul's ethical teaching. They form two sides of the one coin of the apostle's moral appeal. This thesis will be developed in three stages: (I) an overview of the meanings of "mercy" and "peace" in the NT, (II) a survey of the links between Rom 12:1 and its surrounding context in the epistle, and (III) an examination of Rom 12:1-2, 8, and 18, with attention to the sociological factors within the first-century Mediterranean world that impact an understanding of the letter.

## I

### Mercy and Peace in the NT

To understand the significance of "mercy" and "peace" in Romans, it is helpful to begin with a brief examination of the meanings of these expressions in the NT. The closely related Greek terms οἰκτιρμὸς and ἔλεος.<sup>1</sup> οἰκτιρμὸς denotes "compassion, mercy, and pity." ἔλεος means "mercy and compassion." The derivative verbs of ἔλεος are ἐλεῶ and ἐλεῶν, meaning to be merciful or show kindness. Mercy denotes the divinely mandated attitude of Christians toward each other.<sup>2</sup> It signifies loving kindness and sympathy which are to be exhibited in relationships, particularly by concrete deeds of assistance and relief to the needy (cf. Matt 9:13; Luke 10:37; Rom 12:8).

The Greek word εἰρήνη denotes peace and harmony. Its derivative verb εἰρηνεύω signifies to live or be at peace, or to keep the peace. In the NT εἰρήνη has two primary meanings.<sup>3</sup> First, it refers to a condition of peace and rest, denoting a normal state of one's entire being and of all things in

the universe corresponding to the will of God (e.g., see 1 Cor 14:33). This divinely willed state includes Christians' well-being and their concord with God, one another, and all humans (Rom 5:1; Eph 4:1-3; Heb 12:14; Mark 9:50). Secondly, εἰρήνη designates the final salvation of the whole person. In Luke, Zechariah proclaims this expected salvation in 1:76-79, and the angels' song in 2:14 refers to salvation which has come to the earth (cf. Heb 13:20).<sup>4</sup> Being justified by faith, believers have peace and reconciliation with God through Christ and will be granted salvation (Rom 5:1, 9-10; 2 Cor 5:16-19).<sup>5</sup>

## II

### The Links between Rom 12:1 and Its Context

Having treated some of the meanings of ἔλεος, οἰκτιρισμός and εἰρήνη in the NT, we turn now specifically to Romans. To understand properly the context of Paul's use of mercy in chapter 12, we shall examine some of the connections between 12:1 and what precedes and follows it in the epistle.

#### The Links between 12:1 and Chapters 9-11

In 12:1 Paul commences with "I exhort you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies [οἰκτιρισμῶν] of God . . . ." In this clause the Greek particle οὖν ("therefore") links (a) what follows in verses 1-2, also in 12:3-21, with (b) what precedes 12:1.<sup>6</sup> According to its usage here, the particle signifies that what is enunciated in what follows flows expressly from and is based upon what has preceded it, most directly in chapters 9-11.<sup>7</sup>

Grammatically, the use of οὖν in 12:1 makes it logical to assert that οἰκτιρισμῶν ("mercies") in the same verse refers back to antecedent material also dealing with God's mercy. The closest preceding referents are ἐλεῶ in 11:32, 31, 30, and ἔλεος in 11:31. In these verses Paul speaks about God's mercy relative to the disobedience of Gentiles and Jews. This discussion relates to the preceding discourse about God's mercy in chapter 9 which employs ἔλεος in v 23; ἐλεῶ in vv 18, 15; ἐλεῶ in v 16; and οἰκτιρῶ in v 15. ἐλεῶ and οἰκτιρῶ in 9:15 mark the first use of these terms in Romans. Hence, it is reasonable to claim on grammatical and thematic grounds that οὖν and οἰκτιρισμῶν in 12:1 refer back to the sections from 11:36 to 9:15 which address God's plan of salvation and exercise of mercy.<sup>8</sup> Thus, 12:1-2 serves as a fulcrum on which are balanced on one end that which precedes it directly in chapters 9-11--plus 5:1, 10-11--and on the other end that which follows it in 12:3-21.

A key text in which Paul speaks of justification and peace, and which provides a foundation for the upcoming discussion of mercy and peace in chapter 12, is Rom 5:1, 10-11. So, we turn now to a brief examination of those verses.

### Peace and Mercy in Rom 5:1, 10-11

Rom 5:1 contains two closely related Pauline expressions: δικαιωθέντες ("Having been justified") and εἰρήνην ("peace"). The clause εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεόν ("we have peace with God") in 5:1 expresses the theme of the section that those who have been justified by faith and who thus stand rightly before God have peace with God "through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1).<sup>9</sup> This idea parallels that of 5:10, "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life." Here the verb "reconciled" (καταλλάσσω) means to put (someone) into a right relationship or into friendship with God. The association of the forensic terms "justification" and "reconciliation" in this context indicates here that by its very nature God's justification entails reconciliation. The reason is that between God and sinners there exists a personal relationship. Consequently, by having justified sinners who then stand in a right relationship with God, God also gave God's very self to them through Christ in friendship and intimacy. In this way God established peace with them in a manner consistent with divine love and mercy. As we shall see, this justification and peace become the foundations for Christians' exercise of mercy and peace in Romans 12.

Having examined the connections between Rom 12:1-2; chapters 9-11; and 5:1, 10-11, we conclude Part II of this study by surveying briefly the relationship between Rom 12:1-2 and the exhortations following it in chapter 12. The purpose of this survey is twofold. First, it points out the connection between 12:1-2 and what flows from it. Secondly, it situates Paul's instructions about mercy and peace within the broader context of the ethical section of the chapter.

### The Link between Rom 12:1-2 and 12:3-21

The assertion that 12:1-2 comprises an introductory link to the remainder of the chapter rests on the correlation between οἰκτιρῶν in 12:1-2, ἐλεῶν ("showing mercy") in 12:8, and εἰρηνεύοντες ("live peaceably") in 12:18.<sup>10</sup> The particle οὖν and the οἰκτιρῶν in 12:1 indicate that for Paul Christian ethics in Romans 12 arise as responses to the merciful actions of God depicted in chapters 9-11 and recapitulated in 12:1-2. In chapter 12 Paul exhorts a proper use of gifts in the community (vv 3-8), a

cultivation of love and zeal (vv 9-13), and a fostering of reconciliation and peace toward all (vv 14-21). These prescriptions address the actual situation of Paul and the Roman church which was torn by tensions between its Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians.<sup>11</sup>

### III

#### An Examination of Rom 12:1-2, 8, 18

Having completed an overview of ἔλεος, οἰκτιρισμός and εἰρήνη in Romans, we begin now with an examination of Rom 12:1-2. It is crucial at the outset to point out that modern NT readers are separated from the world of Paul both temporally and culturally. We live nearly two millennia after him in a modern Western society radically different from that of Mediterranean people in the first century CE. Consequently, we have a fundamentally dissimilar world view from Paul's. To be aware of this fact is important for two reasons. First, it helps avoid a value-based bias by which we might project our modern Western perspectives and values onto the language and concepts of the NT. Second, an awareness of the social system in the world of Paul allows us to draw more accurate conclusions about the meanings he likely associated with such terms as "mercy" and "peace," which are different from our own. Hence, in the ensuing examination of Romans 12, pertinent facets of Mediterranean society will be treated. These include discussions about the social unit of the group, honor and shame, the nature of religion, the personalized character of life, and the place of emotions in human experience.

In Rom 12:1, Paul describes Christian life using metaphors from the sacrificial cult. The infinitive παραστήσα ("to present") is a technical, ritualistic term denoting "to offer" as an act of sacrifice (θυσίαν).<sup>12</sup> That which is offered to God is τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν ("your bodies"). σώματα here denotes whole persons who are summoned to lead holy lives in relation to God and others.<sup>13</sup> Offering "bodies" as a sacrifice means habitually surrendering one's entire self, understood socially, into the power and possession of God.<sup>14</sup> Paul's appeal in Rom 12:1-2 is not concerned with *individual* spiritual development or a personal relationship with God. Rather, his exhortations are *social*: they presuppose relationships with others, either community members or outsiders. This appeal must be understood in the context of a biblical culture where (1) persons were socially embedded within and defined by the group(s) to which they belonged, and (2) religion was a social phenomenon. To comprehend more clearly these cultural traits and their impact on Romans 12, we turn now to a brief examination of each.

First, in the Mediterranean world, groups were based on kinship (family), ethnic affairs, politics, and power.<sup>15</sup> Among these, kinship was the central institution of social organization: the kinship group was the nucleus of personal loyalty that exercised dominant influence over individual self-awareness and identity. Stability was grounded in the community, a unified body of persons sharing common interests, values, and activities.<sup>16</sup> Hence, the most basic unit of social analysis was not the individual, but the dyadic person who was constantly in relation with and attached to at least one other social unit.<sup>17</sup> Individual consciousness was subdued relative to the predominance of social consciousness and group needs. Behavioral controls and morals derived not from individual conscience, but from the social situation.

Second, Mediterranean religion, like other social phenomena, was embedded in kinship and/or politics.<sup>18</sup> First and foremost, membership in a faith community was based not explicitly on religious relationships, but on antecedent bonds of kinship that gave structure to religious associations. Membership in religious groups was involuntary or voluntary. Involuntary members belonged to a religion because, for example, they were born into a particular family. Voluntary membership derived from deliberate choice and resulted in a fictive kinship group. The Christian community in Rome, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, was of the latter type. Religion attempted to preserve the honor of the group(s) in which religion was embedded. "Conversion" arose from the influence of kinship (e.g., marriage, adoption, or group affiliation) and enhancement of honor. It did not derive from individual psychological decision-making or abstractions such as "truth" or "goodness." Awareness of the social nature of persons and religion helps one view Paul's exhortations in Rom 12:1-2 from a decidedly social perspective. It also aids in understanding that the apostle's admonitions there aim at promoting strong (honorable) community relations, religious practice, and social identity.

Paul continues his line of thought in Rom 12:1 by asserting that the sacrifice ( $\theta\nu\sigma\tau\alpha\nu$ ) which believers are to offer is equally  $\zeta\omega\sigma\alpha\nu$  ("living"),  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\alpha\nu$  ("holy"), and  $\epsilon\delta\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\nu \tau\tilde{\omega} \theta\epsilon\tilde{\omega}$  ("acceptable to God"). By surrendering their whole selves communally as "a living sacrifice," Christians experience a novel quality of community life. This quality may be interpreted as a "new life" bestowed by having been justified by faith (5:1), i.e., put into a new and right relationship with God. The adjective "living" suggests not merely that the sacrifice is not executed by the use of dead animals (cf. Heb 9:24-28; 10:12). Rather, it implies that the sacrifice expresses itself in lived behavior and relationships consistent with Paul's ethical instructions which follow in 12:3-21.

A "living" sacrifice is equally "holy." "Holy" here means living a life consecrated to God by exhibiting the divine characteristics revealed to humans.<sup>19</sup> As we have seen and shall see below, such characteristics include mercy and peace.

A living and holy sacrifice is equivalently "acceptable to God" (12:1). This means it is one which God desires and will receive.<sup>20</sup> With all its attributes, this sacrifice is λογικὸν ("of the reason, reasonable, spiritual") worship (v 1). λογικὸν here suggests that the ritual is not simply mechanical, carried out by means of external rites. Rather, it is a worship arising from the mind and spirit that expresses the depths of persons' whole, interior selves. For Paul, such continual worship is to become normative in human living. What is implied, and what will be shown further in the discussion of 12:3-21, is that offering "your bodies" in worship necessarily involves practicing in social interactions the qualities associated with genuine sacrifice.

Equally important elements of Paul's exhortation appear in 12:2: (a) καὶ μὴ συσχηματιζεσθε τῷ αἵῳι τοῦτῳ (verbal present imperative passive, "Stop allowing yourselves to be conformed to this world"), (b) ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε (present imperative passive, "but continue to let yourselves be transformed"), (c) ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοῦς ("by the renewal of your mind"), (d) "so that you may discern [δοκιμάζω] what is the will of God" (τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ), (e) τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον καὶ τέλειον ("what is good and acceptable and perfect"). The present imperatives "stop allowing yourselves to be conformed" and "continue to let yourselves be transformed" mean that the former action which is happening is to cease, while the latter behavior which is already occurring is to continue indefinitely.<sup>21</sup> What is to persist is the renewal of minds. In addition to meaning "mind," νοῦς here denotes attitudes and ways of thinking as the entire mental and moral state of persons. These attitudes and state are to be transformed so that believers can discern and pursue God's will in a new way. Though Christians still live in the world, they are to know that by God's mercy they simultaneously live a new life. Thus, they must stop complying with the ways of the present age that is passing away. That the attributes "good and acceptable and perfect" in 12:2 issue from the preceding "will of God" indicates that to pursue these qualities of new life is to live in accordance with God's will.

Paul's instructions about the need for renewed minds to discover, and



by implication to accomplish, the will of God and do what is "good and acceptable and perfect" are suitable for the community in Rome.<sup>22</sup> Because Gentile Christians there have been incorporated into God's people by God's mercy, their renewal of minds involves a new, respectful acceptance of Jewish traditions within Christianity. It also means honoring the rightful place of Jewish Christians in the Roman church according to the mercy and will of God. To resolve their discord with Jewish Christians constitutes a renewal of perspective by Gentile believers. Likewise, a corresponding acceptance of the Gentiles by Jewish Christians involves renewed attitudes on the part of the latter. This improvement of relations is a concrete example of both groups' viewing and behaving toward each other in a new light by which they are "living," "holy," and "acceptable" in nonconformity to the world. This manner of interacting, which stems from the fictive kinship of the Christian community, strengthens the group's sense of honor and identity over against the outside world. Such conduct is "good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2).

To understand how such interactions contribute to group honor, it is important to consider the notions of honor and shame in the Mediterranean world of the first century CE. In this environment, concern for honor and shame was paramount. The reason was that honor determined social standing and was vital for social cooperation and interdependence. Honor was the public esteem accorded a person or group *by others* whose honor was indisputable.<sup>23</sup> An individual's honor ordinarily depended upon the public esteem bestowed on one's group, which in turn depended upon the honor of the group's leader(s). Shame resulted from a lack or loss of honor. Shame was a defensive position to protect honor. People became shamed when they violated group mores or sought a social status from which public consent was withheld.

Honor could be ascribed or acquired. It was ascribed, for example, by birth into an honorable family or by bestowal from distinguished persons of power. Honor was acquired by surpassing others in social interchanges of challenge and response, a kind of social game in which persons interacted according to accepted rules to win honor from others. Leland White offers this succinct summary:

What is significant in both honor and shame is that public reputation, rather than an internal judgment of conscience, establishes one's sense of self-worth and that *this publicly acknowledged worth is ascribed on the basis of one's associations more than it is individually earned.*<sup>24</sup>

Within the framework of honor and shame, commitment or belonging was a prime value.<sup>25</sup> Attaining results in social encounters arose from appealing to another person's sense of obligation or loyalty to a group. Loyalty was fostered by such internalized sanctions as feelings of shame and disloyalty, or fear of disapproval.

From this picture of the primacy of honor in the social milieu in which Paul was writing, it is easier to appreciate the importance of his admonitions in Rom 12:1-2 relative to the value of community cohesion and adherence to prescribed patterns of Christian conduct in accord with God's will. As will be seen, Paul's exhortations in 12:1-2 about renewal and about acceptable behavior that strengthens community honor and identity can also be interpreted as being linked with the ethical commands the apostle issues in the next section of the epistle, Rom 12:3-21.

### Paul's Ethical Admonitions in Rom 12:3-21

The instructions in 12:1-2 for Christians to present their "bodies," i.e., "themselves," as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice, and to be transformed so as to do what is good and perfect find concrete social expression in 12:3-21.<sup>26</sup> It is important to reiterate that Paul's ethics in 12:3-21 are by their very nature social and communal: their purpose is to foster strong group relations and identity. In verse 3 Paul's authoritative command is addressed emphatically *παντι τῷ ὄντι ἐν ὑμῖν* ("to every one among you"). The conjunction *γάρ* ("for") at the beginning of verse 3 expresses a connection between verses 1-2 and 3-21. In other words, what Paul says in 12:3-21 is the logical development and concrete application of his thought in 12:1-2: authentic worship and renewal of minds are to find responsible expression in actual Christian living.

To emphasize this point, Paul employs a social metaphor, "the body of Christ" (vv 4-5; cf. 1 Corinthians 12; Eph 4:12), to describe the union of Christians with each other and with Christ.<sup>27</sup> In Rom 12:4-5, Paul declares that Roman Christians "though many, are one body in Christ" (*οἱ πολλοὶ ἐν σῶμα . . . ἐν Χριστῷ*), "and individually members one of another" (*δὲ καθ' εἰς ἀλλήλων μέλη*). Here "one body" most probably designates the moral unity of the Christian community deriving from what God has effected for it in Christ.<sup>28</sup> The members of this body are to pursue what is good and perfect (Rom 12:2) for the community. Because they constitute "one body in Christ," Roman Christians are to reflect this in their group living. There is a connection in Paul's thought between what God has manifested toward believers--namely justification, mercy, and peace--and what Christians are to practice concretely in

their lives. Paul's placement of his statement that the Roman Christians comprise "one body in Christ" in the context of his preceding and following instructions in verses 3 and 6-21 suggests a positive relationship between these units. That Christians are one body in Christ is to be expressed in the attitudes and actions commanded in 12:3, 6-21 which exemplify such a body. The conduct Paul enjoins here derives from and contributes to the honor of the Christian "body." Paul recognizes the importance of honor in his exhortation: "outdo one another in showing honor" (Rom 12:10). Loyalty to the "body" means practicing loving, peaceful, and merciful attitudes and conduct toward others. By expressing their love for Christ and for one another in this way, community members bind themselves together and reinforce their identity as "one body in Christ." This metaphor is particularly meaningful in a society where publicly accorded honor and self-awareness arise from group associations rather than from individual worth or consciousness.

#### Paul's Instructions in 12:3-8

The unit 12:3-8 consists of specific ethical commands. In verses 6-8 Paul lists seven *χαρίσματα* ("gifts") of the Spirit to be exercised in the community by those endowed with the respective charisms.<sup>29</sup> The seventh *χάρισμα* (v 8b) pertains to *ὁ ἐλεῶν ἐν ἡλαρότητι* ("the one [masculine] showing mercy in cheerfulness"). The exercise of such mercy is fitting for a community of both Gentile and Jewish Christians who need a reminder that reception of God's mercy entails a mandate that those specially designated are to practice mercy toward others. The one who "shows mercy" in 12:8 refers to the dyadic person(s) whose special function in the community is to care for the sick, aid the poor, and attend to the elderly and infirm in a cheerful manner. These practices of mercy by those specially gifted do not imply that others are exempted from this ministry within their means. Rather, Paul emphasizes the need for this gift by those distinctively designated as its ministers.

For the Christian community in Rome, this mandate pertains especially to the mercy which the Gentiles are to exhibit toward the Jews.<sup>30</sup> Appreciation of the importance of this mandate for Paul is heightened by an inquiry into the significance of emotions and the phenomenon of violence in first-century Mediterranean society. Nearly all significant aspects of Mediterranean life were personalized.<sup>31</sup> What was most important was not "objective" events, but the emotions aroused by those events. The chief focus in communications was interactional. The purpose of communication was to sustain emotional bonds and preserve interpersonal and inter-group relations so as to bind group members together against outsiders and to bolster their sense of identity in order to survive

in an often antagonistic world. Such communication is reflected in Paul's exhortations in Rom 12:1-21 which are based more on emotion-laden thought than on pure intellectual categories.

Moreover, in Mediterranean culture intense expressions of emotion through outbursts of temper, anger, aggression, and violence were socially acceptable.<sup>32</sup> Such behavior tended to alternate between the extremes of self-control and paroxysms of aggression. This type of conduct was usually restricted to males who were expected to show their emotions (see Matt 2:16; 9:36; 14:14; 21:15; Mark 1:41; 10:14; Luke 4:28). Hence males, who tended toward sadism and aggressiveness, willingly inflicted suffering on anyone, except other adult males in the same group(s), to attain their goals. Women were extolled, on the one hand, for their virtue of masochism in enduring violence and hostility; but on the other hand they exhibited an exaggerated sense of importance, particularly following marriage and the birth of a son.

In light of this social milieu in which he was writing, Paul's call for merciful acts serves as a countermeasure to challenge and help reduce displays of aggressiveness and pugnacity that are antithetical to cheerful expressions of kindnesses, care for the sick and elderly, and aid to the poor. Conversion to Paul's ethical prescriptions leads to a new sense of group identity and honor no longer predicated on belligerence, sadism, and masochism but on acts of compassion and graciousness. In this respect, Paul's admonitions are particularly important for community leaders from whom the group derives much of its honor in the public eye.

This compassionate conduct means putting into practice Paul's appeal in 12:1-2. Merciful behavior by community members (particularly Gentiles and Jews) is a twofold reality. First, it is a product of Christians' having been made into a holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice--one which God desires and accepts. Secondly, such conduct is evidence of a genuine renewal of minds resulting in transformed perceptions of and behavior toward others. Such perceptions and behavior exemplify "nonconformity" to former types of actions and "ways of the world" defined by discord, aggression, deleterious judgments, reprisals, and violence (Rom 1:18-3:20; 12:14-21; 14:13). These novel patterns of interaction reflect "the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2).

#### Paul's Exhortations in 12:14-21

In 12:14-21 Paul continues his ethical commands, this time with regard to the exercise of harmony, reconciliation, and peace toward all, including one's

enemies.<sup>33</sup> In verse 18 he exhorts, εἰ δυνατόν τὸ ἐ' ὑμῶν, μετὰ πάντων ἀνθρώπων εἰρηνεύοντες ("If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all" or "keep the peace," cf. Mark 9:50; Matt 5:9). This charge relates to (a) God's preceding conferral of peace and reconciliation in 5:1, 10-11, and (b) Paul's upcoming exhortations in 12:19-21. In addition to denoting putting people into friendship with God and thereby effecting peace between God and humans, the verb καταλλάσσω ("to reconcile") in 5:10 also means to effect reconciliation among human beings themselves. This understanding of "to reconcile" and its resultant "peace" from 5:1, 10-11 can be transferred to the situation in 12:18. Those whom God justified, reconciled, and brought into a relationship of peace (5:1, 10-11) are now enjoined to live out this state of peace and reconciliation within the community by positive, deliberate actions. Such interpretation of 12:18 contributes to the understanding of peace as a divine gift to be actualized in concrete human living.

What Paul specifically means by his charge to "live peaceably" in Rom 12:18 can be determined further by composition analysis. Such analysis refers to studying the context in which this charge is placed in 12:9-21 in order to illuminate its meaning. In this context, to "live peaceably" has to do with loving one another with affection and honor (vv 9-10); being patient in suffering, constant in prayer, and hospitable (vv 12-13); blessing one's persecutors, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep, living in harmony, and associating with the lowly (vv 14-16); refraining from retaliation and vengeance (vv 17, 19); giving food and drink to enemies (v 20); and overcoming evil with good (v 21). These actions constitute dimensions of peaceful living.

### The Issue of Possible Concessional Language in 12:18

The meaning in verse 18 of the qualifier εἰ δυνατόν τὸ ἐξ ὑμῶν ("If possible, so far as it depends upon you" or "for your part") requires inspection. Such inspection shows that this clause does not diminish the essential vigor of Paul's exhortation to peaceable living. The argument is threefold. First, Paul's only other use of εἰ δυνατόν is in Gal 4:15, μαρτυρῶ γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι εἰ δυνατόν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑμῶν ἐξορύξαντες ἐδώκατε μοι ("For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me"). εἰ δυνατόν is the sole qualifier here; it is not followed by another concessive utterance as in Rom 12:18. In Galatians the conditional clause emphasizes the unfeasibility of hyperbolic behavior which clearly is not expected literally. Hence, the qualifying

language in Gal 4:15 is employed differently than in Rom 12:18 and cannot properly be interpreted in Romans as diminishing the force of Paul's exhortations about realistic conduct that is literally enjoined.

Secondly, when Paul uses the verb εἰρηνεύω ("to live peaceably") or the noun εἰρήνη in other exhortatory contexts, no qualifier appears (see 2 Cor 13:11; 1 Thess 5:13; Rom 14:19; Eph 4:3; 6:15; Col 3:15; 2 Tim 2:22). This fact indicates that in these instances Paul commands Christians to peaceful living unconditionally. The absence of disclaimers suggests a consistent pattern of instructions for peaceful conduct.

Thirdly, the injunctions in Rom 12:9-21 surrounding the qualifier in verse 18 betray a similar unconditional vigor: ἡ ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος ("Let love be genuine," v 9a), ἀποστουθόντες τὸ πονηρὸν ("hate/abhor what is evil," v 9b), κολλώμενοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ ("hold fast to what is good," v 9c), τῇ σπουδῇ μὴ ὀκνησοί ("Do not flag in zeal," v 11), μὴ γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι ("do not be conceited," v 16), and μὴ ἐαυτοῦς ἐκδικοῦντες ("do not avenge yourselves," v 19). In view of Paul's consistent patterns in these verses and in other Pauline literature relative to commands for peaceful living, it is reasonable to conclude that the injunction in 12:18 should be interpreted as essentially non-concessive.

Rom 12:18, then, should be viewed as unqualified in what it expects *on the part of Christian hearers*: unconditional peaceful conduct toward all. The concessive clause, "If possible, so far as it depends upon you," may have been employed by the apostle in relation to what he perceived as a precarious and arduous situation: maintaining irenic behavior in a society that condoned contention and violence. In this view, the clause does not weaken Paul's command for peaceful conduct; such behavior is to be a distinguishing mark of Christians. Rather, the qualifier may be interpreted as reflecting Paul's realization that genuine peace requires conciliatory attitudes and behavior by both interacting parties.<sup>34</sup> Christians can determine only their *own* conduct; they cannot dictate others'. If another party refuses to behave in a cooperative manner, one may have little or no control over this situation. In such a case fostering or keeping peace is, to a degree, conditional upon the behavior of the other person(s) and/or group. Hence, the purpose of the qualifier is not to diminish what is expected from believers. This interpretation is supported by Paul's strong exhortation in Rom 12:2 that Christians discern God's will and strive for what is "perfect." To pursue Christian perfection leaves no room for concessions!

The Correlation between Mercy and Peace  
in Rom 12:1-2, 8, and 18

Paul's prescription for acts of mercy by those specially gifted for this ministry (12:8) can be viewed as related to his call for peaceable living in 12:18. Performing deeds of ἔλεος and οὐκτιμὸς is one way of exercising ἐπιθήνη: showing mercy in the face of human needs both inside and outside the community promotes peaceful interactions. To care for the sick, assist the poor, and attend to the elderly can have irenic effects upon other group members in a variety of ways. First, the exercise and reception of such kindnesses can do much to foster between dyadic givers and receivers "honorable" relations characterized by greater charity, trust, and gratitude. These attributes help diminish the discord and stresses which may prevail between persons and groups. In turn, reduction of such tensions helps promote reconciliation and nurture relationships of greater concord and peace.

Secondly, peaceful Christian living enjoined in 12:18 and in the context of 12:9-21 (see also the discussion below of 12:20) necessarily entails at least some quality of merciful conduct. Loving genuinely, extending hospitality, weeping with those who weep, associating with the lowly, feeding and giving drink to enemies, and promoting harmony and the well-being of others are qualities associated with living peaceably. These qualities closely parallel the displays of mercy called for in 12:8.

Thirdly, compassionate and irenic conduct, especially by community leaders, can promote a sense of group identity and honor (see Rom 12:10) based on values of greater charity, mercy, and peacefulness. Acts of mercy and peace (e.g., between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians) can affect positively the feelings of others, thus solidifying amicable bonds within the community. Enhanced honor and cohesion can then motivate group members to behave in ways consistent with such honor. This dynamism can, in turn, promote more compassionate, irenic intra- and inter-group relations that give way less readily to discord and hostility, which are "ways of the world."

To live with the foregoing kinds of transformed attitudes and behaviors characterized by mercy and peace is to realize tangibly the traits of authentic "spiritual" worship and renewal arising from God's mercies in 12:1-2. Such living in accord with God's will is "good and acceptable and perfect."

The Relationship between Mercy and Peace  
in 12:1-2, 8, 18 and 12:19-20

The correlations between mercy and peace can be extended further by pointing out that "showing mercy" in 12:8 closely approximates the behavior Paul prescribes in 12:19-20 as a way of fostering toward enemies the quality of peaceable living required in 12:18.<sup>35</sup> Employing verbal imperatives in verses 19b and 20, Paul forbids revenge (19a), commanding that it be left to the wrath of God (19b). Then he decrees in verse 20, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink . . . ." This part of verse 20 intensifies what has preceded it in verses 14-19.<sup>36</sup> Simply to abstain from inflicting harm upon another in return for harm done to oneself is insufficient. This constitutes inferior behavior (e.g., a reciprocity ethic) characteristic of periods in Jewish and Greco-Roman history.<sup>37</sup> It is a way of the world. Rather, dyadic members of the Christian community are to behave positively and charitably toward those who have wronged them. Failure to act in this manner is an oblique form of retaliation, which Paul prohibits. To "feed" and "give something to drink" are ways of being kind and merciful toward enemies. Conversely, the sorts of merciful acts urged in 12:8 help promote the peaceable, non-retaliatory living enjoined in 12:18 and 19-20.<sup>38</sup> In these contexts "showing mercy" fosters peaceable living, while irenic conduct is to issue forth in merciful deeds.

Such compassionate and pacific behavior is especially decisive in a society where the soundness of the group is largely determined by its influence on surrounding groups and by the expectations of outsiders, in this case "enemies." Christians must be at least as good as the outsiders are; in this sense, externs dictate the norm for the group.<sup>39</sup> To treat "enemies" with kindnesses shatters their customary expectations and allows for a new definition of "honor" in the Christian community based on the compassion and peacefulness enjoined by Paul as part of his announcement of the "gospel of God" (Rom 1:1). Peaceful conduct toward enemies, which whittles away divisions that separate members of the Christian community from adversarial "outsiders," counters one of the very functions of the group in Mediterranean society: binding group members together *against* externs. In this respect, what Paul advocates for the Roman Christians is truly revolutionary. It is a way to "overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21).

This irenic and merciful behavior is another instance of the realization of "spiritual" worship, renewal of minds, and pursuit of what is good and perfect in 12:1-2. Hatred and injustice, though allowed in some social-religious circles,



for example toward dependents in Roman antiquity or toward enemies among the Essenes, are not permitted to Christians.<sup>40</sup> The lives of the latter are to reflect qualities of peace and mercy arising from renewed perceptions of "enemies" and from "spiritual" worship that is living, holy, and acceptable to God. Again, the complementarity between mercy and peace attains greater clarity.

Paul's exhortations, particularly for peaceable living, summon Christians to new kinds of interactions in a culture where intense expressions of emotion, aggression, and violence were commonplace, particularly among males. In this respect, the apostle's function is that of a "limit breaker"<sup>41</sup> leading people to new social roles and identities. Operationally speaking, Paul's commands for peace are a call for conversion away from outbursts of anger to more consistent self-control and gentleness (cf. Gal 5:23), away from pugnacity and sadism to harmony and forbearance, and away from the infliction of suffering in the pursuit of goals toward self-restraint and benevolence. According to Paul's standards, more merciful and irenic (hence more *honorable*) conduct by a husband means greater honor for his wife and children who have honor as his dependents.<sup>42</sup> Such attainment of honor from him in turn motivates them to interact in a more compassionate and less confrontational manner. Adherence to Paul's exhortations also means relief for women who were victims of injurious treatment by males. Similarly, implementation of Paul's ethical commands is especially important for Christian leaders upon whom the community depends in a significant way for its honor (or shame). Enhanced honor for the community deriving from the more merciful and irenic conduct of its leaders feasibly inspires comparable conduct by group members consonant with their "honorable" public image.

### Final Conclusion

The conclusion of this essay is that showing  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  and  $\omicron\kappa\tau\iota\mu\omicron\delta\varsigma$  and promoting  $\epsilon\uprho\eta\eta\eta$  in Rom 12:1, 8, 18, and 20 are two interpenetrating facets of Paul's ethical teaching. Arising from the mercies of God revealed to Jews and Gentiles (Romans 9-11), Christians are to respond by surrendering themselves for "spiritual" worship that is living, holy, and acceptable (12:1). Believers are summoned to transformed ways of life characterized by nonconformity to the world, renewal of minds, and pursuit of what is good and perfect (12:2). These transformations imply renewed ways of perceiving and behaving toward others. Such new life arises from the prior revelation of God's justification, reconciliation, and peace (5:1, 10-11) which reflects the merciful character of God.

Paul's commands for Christian living are expressed in 12:3-21. Among

his exhortations is a call for mercy and peace as essential features of "spiritual" worship, renewal of minds, and pursuit of what is perfect. Merciful acts (12:8; also 12:20) and peaceable living (12:18; also 12:20) are expressions of the unity of believers and Christ, and believers among themselves constituting "one body in Christ" (12:5). Toward those inside and outside the community, including enemies, deeds of mercy are ingredients for peaceful living. Likewise, peaceable living is to give rise to displays of mercy.

Paul's ethical stipulations, particularly for peaceable living, summon Christians to new social roles predicated upon mercy, irenic conduct, and reconciliation in a culture where expressions of emotion and belligerence were commonplace. The call for transformed living entails new assertions about group identity, altered valuations about honorable/shameless conduct, modified patterns of social cooperation and interaction, and changed behavioral controls relative to compliance or noncompliance with Paul's admonitions. Loyal adherence to these admonitions is predicated on internalized sanctions such as feelings of shame or fear of disapproval if Paul's ethical precepts are not obeyed.<sup>43</sup> As a servant of God and the gospel (Rom 1:9), Paul remains undaunted in his exhortations to the Roman community. His hope for it is reflected in his blessing at the end of the entire section: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (15:13).

John K. Ridgway, S. J.

#### NOTES

1. See Rudolf Bultmann, "ἔλεος, ἐλεῶ, ἐλεημῶν, ἐλεημοσύνη, ἀνέλεος, ἀνελεημων," 56 56 56 *TDNT* 2 (1964) 482-85; "οἰκτιρῶ, οἰκτιρμός, οἰκτιρῶν," *TDNT* 5 (1967) 159-61; Elizabeth R. Achtemeier, "Mercy, Merciful; Compassion; Pity," *IDB* 3 (1962) 352-54. As will be shown in the examination of the meanings of ἔλεος and οἰκτιρῶς, these terms are parallel. Yet, because of (a) their existence as two distinct terms, and (b) the differentiated textual citations of ἔλεος and οἰκτιρῶς in the NT as relevant to some discussions in this paper, these expressions will be written individually, though their close correlation in meaning will also be maintained as appropriate. The Greek NT employed for this paper is Kurt Aland et al., eds., *UBSGNT*, 3d corrected ed. (Stuttgart, 1983). It is also to be noted that where possible and appropriate, I have edited scriptural citations to express gender-inclusive language.

2. Consult David E. Garland, "Mercy; Merciful," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* 3 (1986) 323.

3. Werner Foerster and Gerhard von Rad, "εἰρήνη, εἰρηνεύω, εἰρηνικός, εἰρηνοποιός, εἰρηνοποιέω," *TDNT* 2 (1964) 411-20; C. Leslie Mitton, "Peace in the NT," *IDB* 3 (1962) 706.

4. Foerster and von Rad 412-13.

5. Consult Ronald F. Youngblood, "Peace," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* 3 (1986) 733.

6. See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Commentary on Romans 12-13* (*SJT Occasional Papers*; Edinburgh; Oliver and Boyd, 1965) 4-5; Raymond Corriveau, *The Liturgy of Life: A Study of the Ethical Thought of St. Paul in His Letters to the Early Christian Communities* (*Studia* 25; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1970) 155-57.

7. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 593. (subsequently designated BAGD.)

8. From 9:15 through 11:36, there are twelve occurrences of οὖν at 9:16, 18, 19, 30; 10:14; 11:1, 5, 7, 11, 13, 19, and 22.

9. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (*ICC* 28; 6th ed.; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1975-79) 256-59. See also Robert Baulès, *L'Évangile Puissance de Dieu: Commentaire de l'Épître aux Romains* (*LD* 53; Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1968) 164-67. The *UBSGNT* assigns a C degree of certainty to its preferred reading of the present indicative ἔχομεν in 5:1, δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεόν ("Having been justified therefore by faith, we have peace with God").

The variant verb form is ἐξώμεν, the present subjunctive ("let us have," or "we may have"), the second translation of which implies a future and/or uncertain sense to the verb. Though the subjunctive form has superior external support over the indicative, the internal evidence favoring ἔχομεν takes precedence. Since it seems clear that in 5:1 Paul is stating facts and not just exhorting, the indicative mood is more appropriate for his purposes: those who have been justified consequently possess peace in the present. Since in the Hellenistic period there was a negligible distinction between the pronunciation of the Greek ο and ω, Paul's amanuensis likely wrote ἐξώμεν. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart:

United Bible Societies, 1971) 511 (subsequently designated *TCGNT*); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Letter to the Romans," *NJBC* (ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990) 844. Therefore, in this essay I adhere to the present indicative reading.

10. Cranfield, *Romans 12-13* 4; Corriveau 157. It could also be argued that 12:1-2 is an introductory link to what follows it up through 15:13, and even 15:33. However, discussion of Romans 13-15 would constitute another article.

11. A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1988) 81; see also Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1983) 1-9, 89-127.

12. Cranfield, *Romans 12-13* 6-10; BAGD 366. For further treatment of Paul's admonitions in 12:1-2, see Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968) 101-103 and Hans Wilhelm Schmidt, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (THKNT 6; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1966) 205-208.

13. Eduard Schweizer and Friedrich Baumgärtel, "σῶμα, σωματικός, σῶσσωμος," *TDNT* 7 (1971) 1064-66.

14. Johannes Behm, "θῶω, θῶσια, θῶσιαστήριον," *TDNT* 3 (1965) 180-90; Corriveau 169-70.

15. Bruce J. Malina, "Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters: A Guide for U.S. Consumers," *BTB* 19 (1989) 128-31, 133-35; Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (ed. and trans. John H. Schutz; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 27-40.

16. See Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) 90-91.

17. Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981) 55-56, 60-64.

18. Bruce J. Malina, "'Religion' in the World of Paul," *BTB* 16 (1986) 93-99.

19. BAGD 9; Otto Procksch, "ἄγιος, ἀγιάζω, ἀγιασμός, ἀγιότης, ἀγιωσύνη," *TDNT* 1 (1964) 88-115; Cranfield, *Romans 12-13*

10.

20.Cranfield, *Romans 12-13* 10-11.

21.Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (3d rev. ed.; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988) 486; Cranfield, *Romans 12-13* 16-21.

22.See Wedderburn 45-62, 77-78, 91; see also Charles Homer Giblin, *In Hope of God's Glory: Pauline Theological Perspectives* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970) 224. Being renewed in mind can also be interpreted as relating forward to Paul's exhortations to the "strong" and "weak" in Romans 14-15.

23.Leland J. White, "Grid and Group in Matthew's Community: The Righteousness/Honor Code in the Sermon on the Mount," *Semeia* 35 (1986) 77; Malina, *New Testament World* 27-48.

24."Grid and Group" 78.

25.Jerome H. Neyrey, "Social Science Modeling and the New Testament," *BTB* 16 (1986) 109.

26.Cranfield, *Romans 12-13* 22; Fitzmyer 863. For a treatment of the parenetic motifs in Paul's epistles, including Romans, see Kazimierz Romaniuk, "Les Motifs Parénétiqes dans les Ecrits Pauliniens," *NovT* 10 (1968) 191-207.

27.Günther Bornkamm, *Paul* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; New York: Harper and Row, 1971) 192-95; Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (trans. John P. Galvin; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 327-30.

28.*BAGD* 800; Fitzmyer 863; Schweitzer and Baumgärtel 1069-71.

29.Cranfield, *Romans 12-13* 36-37. For a further treatment of Paul's parenesis in 12:3-8, see Paul Althaus, *Der Brief an die Römer* (NTD 6; 10th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966) 125-27.

30.Wedderburn 81-83.

31.Malina, "Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters" 138-39; Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973) 283-85.

32.Malina, "Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters" 136-39; Patai 160-66.

33.*BAGD* 227; see also Baulès 268-69 and Althaus 127-29.

34.Eugene H. Maly, *Romans* (New Testament Message 9; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979) 102.

35.Krister Stendahl, "Hate, Non-Retaliation, and Love: I QS x, 17-20 and Rom. 12:19-21," *HTR* 55 (1962) 345.

36.Cranfield, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 648. Paul's use of regular verbal imperatives in verses 19b and 20 is discussed in Charles H. Talbert, "Tradition and Redaction in Romans 12:9-21," *NTS* 16 (1969) 88.

37.See PHEME PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist, 1982) 28-35. For a related treatment of Jesus' teachings on love in the NT, see Victor Paul Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972) 59-67.

38.Stendahl 350-51.

39.Malina, *New Testament World* 58.

40.Perkins 29-30; Luise Schottroff, "Non-Violence and the Love of One's Enemies," *Essays on the Love Commandment* (trans. Reginald H. and Ilse Fuller; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) 17-18. Traditions among the Essenes (see 1 QS 10:17-20) and in Enoch (e.g., 2 Enoch 1:1-4) attempt to alleviate the effects of vengeance in communities. Yet, in these traditions the love enjoined toward those who enjoy good fortune even when they violate the law seems limited in its extent. The adversary against whom one is prohibited from retaliating can still be an object of hatred. Similarly, there is a clarion contrast between the teaching on love of an enemy in Romans 12 and the ethic reflected by Sophocles' Ajax: "I learnt one need not hate a foe forever;/He may become a friend" (*Ajax* 678-79). See Lionel Pearson, *Popular Ethics in Ancient Greece* (Stanford: University Press, 1962) 193; Perkins 67. Similarly, Paul's teachings in Rom 12:17-19a against reprisals abrogate a former principle of *lex talionis* in Exod 21:24, Lev 24:20, and Deut 19:21.

In Rom 12:19, Paul enjoins his hearers, "do not avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God." Then he cites Deut 32:35a in the same verse, "'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" Cranfield interprets this verse to mean

that though the flavor of the OT is reflected in Rom 12:19, Paul's words are to be understood in view of all that he has said in the preceding sections of the letter. Paul's admonitions here are not intended to limit non-retaliation and peaceable living to members of one's own religious community. The expressions ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων (literally, "before all men," or "in the sight of all," v 17) and μετὰ πάντων ἀνθρώπων (literally "with all men," v 18) signify that Paul's exhortations are to apply universally. Thus, the sanction against revenge and the charge to peaceful living are no longer confined to their restrictions in Judaism but are now universal. The wrath (ὀργή) of God in verse 19b is chiefly eschatological (BAGD 579). According to Cranfield (*Romans: A Shorter Commentary* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985] 315-16), to give place to this wrath is to leave vengeance to God knowing that God exercises wrath with the primary purpose of healing.

Fitzmyer (*NJBC* 863) interprets Rom 12:19b to mean that the Christian is to allow for God's (eschatological) wrath which will be revealed against sin. Consequently, Christians are to seek the good and leave the compensation for evil to God. Since εἰρήνη and ἔλεος both have eschatological meanings, Cranfield's and Fitzmyer's interpretations are valid here.

41.Neyrey 110.

42.White 77.

43.See Neyrey 109. In conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to Drs. Richard Thompson and Julian Hills for their valuable insights and thoughtful criticisms during the composition of this essay.