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Love of Neighbour: The Axis of Pauline Ethics: A Brief Study of Gal 5:13-14 and Rom 13:8-10

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Abstract: Fr. Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ kept drawing my attention to two texts in the Epistles of Paul, namely Gal 5:13-14 and Rom 13:8-10 which speak about *agapē* as the fulfilment of the law. As one who always insisted on authentic human existence following the axiom of St. Irenaeus “*Gloria enim Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio Dei*,” proper understanding of these two texts was vital for Kurien.

Terminologically Paul’s idea of love is expressed not only through *agapē* and its cognates (c. 136 occurrences) but also through *phileō*, *eleeō* and *epipotheo* and their cognates and includes both God’s love for human beings, human beings love for God and human beings love for one another. Gal 5:13-14 and Rom 13:8-10 focus on the love of the neighbour.

These two texts occur at crucial places in two of Paul’s most systematic, dogmatic epistles in which he, following

the *indicative-imperative* pattern, invites every follower of Christ to live through Christ gained freedom by loving one another which amounts to a singular way of fulfilling all the commandments and the law.

Keywords: Love commandment, Love in St Paul, Love of neighbour, Love of God.

Introduction

The greatest of all the biblical commandments is the one to love one another (the Greek *agapē*) and the whole of Christian message can be summarized in this one word ‘love.’ This is what each one longs for and wishes to share with our fellow human beings though at times we end up doing just the opposite of love. ‘Love is the beauty of the soul’ said St. Augustine. It is appropriate that such a topic is studied as part of the seminar conducted in honour of Fr. Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ who always insisted on authentic human existence following the axiom of St. Irenaeus “*Gloria enim Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio Dei*.”¹ During the last few years when I got a chance to live with him in the Papal Seminary, Pune, he kept drawing my attention to studying these two texts, namely Gal 5:13-14 and Rom 13:8-10 which speak about *agapē* as the fulfilment of the law. A proper understanding of these two texts was vital for him.

‘Love of Neighbour’ in the New Testament

The New Testament is replete with ‘love’ and the ‘love commandment.’ However, the moment we hear of ‘love-commandment’ in the New Testament, the texts that immediately occur to our minds are either Jn 15:12-13 which speaks of the love of neighbour or Mt 22:37-40 (Mk 12:28-31; cf. Lk 10:25-27) which speaks about the two greatest commandments of which the second concerns the love of

neighbour) or 1 Jn 4:7-12 which sees the love of neighbour as a direct consequence of the love of God for us revealed through Jesus' death² or 1 Cor 13:1-13 which is a hymn of praise on love. However prominent and important 1 Cor 13 may be, yet there are two other texts in Paul, namely Gal 5:13-14 and Rom 13:8-10 which speak of the love of neighbour and which play a foundational role for Pauline ethical exhortations.

In fact, when we turn the pages of Paul's Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans, we find him speaking against the 'law' and the 'works of the law.'³ In its place, Paul brings in another commandment, namely, the commandment of love which is even more demanding than the laws and prescriptions which Paul has rendered superfluous. Particularly the two texts which we intend to study in this short essay and which occur at key positions of the respective Epistles, also treat the love of the neighbour as the singularly important commandment. Let us begin our brief study by first taking a look at the terminology, foundation and specifications of this love as we find in the epistles of Paul.

'Love' in Paul: Terminological Clarifications⁴

Terminologically Paul's idea of love is expressed not only through *agapē*, a word well-known among the Christian circles and which occurs around 136 times in Paul in its different forms but also through *phileō* (c. 25x),⁵ *eleeō* (c. 22x) and *epipotheo* (c. 21x) and their cognates. Now the meaning of the term *agapē* is not easy to define, though it usually refers to relationships based on love and charity, but the meaning of other terms can easily be specified. The term *phileō* refers to attachment or affection, *eleeō* to compassion or mercy and *epipotheo* to longing or yearning. Among

them, the usage of *eleeō* applies exclusively to God's mercy and compassion, while the other three are used to include God's love for human beings, human beings love for God, and human beings love for one another. Among the three first, namely God's love for human beings, is the foundation on which the other two are built. Gal 5:13-14 and Rom 13:8-10 which use the cognates of *agapaō* focus on the love of human beings for one another.

Pauline Foundation of Neighbourly Love

For Paul, love is the basis of the divine plan of salvation. As the creation and the call of Israel through covenant express the love of God in the Old Testament, Christ's death on the cross does it in the New Testament. Paul himself experiences the mercy and grace of God in and through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross in his personal life (cf. Gal 2:19-20; 1 Tim 1:13-16). He then also understands that the same has been done to the whole of humanity (Rom 5:6-8; Eph 2:4-5; 2 Thess 2:16). This becomes evident from how he speaks of the revelation of the 'wrath of God' in his Epistle to the Romans. Having established the fact that the whole of humanity is under sin and the wrath of God in Rom 1:8-3:20, Paul should have gone ahead with explaining the punishment which would have been a logical consequence of sin and wrath of God. Instead he goes on to describe how in the place of the wrath, God reveals his righteousness. This suggests that in the logic of God as explained in the Epistle to the Romans sin is not followed by punishment but by God's righteousness.

This righteousness of God is understood in the biblical context not as an attitude or a virtue, but as the way God relates to human beings. In the Letter to the Romans Paul claims that God relates to the human in that he justifies ev-

everyone under sin by revealing his grace as a gift through the redemption in Jesus Christ whom he put forward as an expiatory sacrifice (Rom 3:23-25). The important point to be noted here is that Christ who knew no sin (2 Cor 5:21) was obliged by God the Father to die for human beings while they were still weak, ungodly, sinners and enemies of God (Rom 5:6-8). Paul thus describes how salvation has been offered both to the Gentiles and to the Jews as a gratuitous gift which is appropriated by humans by faith in Christ (Gal 2:16; Rom 1:16). Such a free offering of salvation and justification is due to the love of God (Rom 5:8). When Paul speaks about the love of God, the focus is on God's love for human beings from which the love for the neighbour flows.

This love of God is further expressed in the calling given to *all* people (Eph 1:4-5) and not only to Israel (Rom 9:13.15.18.21-24). For Paul, this love of God⁶ is also the basis for Christian theology and ethics, for a believer's sense of security (Rom 8:31-39) and it is also the chief driving force (2 Cor 5:14-15) in the life of the Christians. Though Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9, 8:3; 16:22; Eph 6:24; and 2 Tim 3:4 mention human obligation to love God, Paul does not emphasize the first great commandment (cf. Mt 22:34-40) in his ethical sections as much as he does with regard to the love of neighbour.

The two texts we study in this essay, namely Gal 5:13-14 and Rom 13:8-10 which stake the claim that love of neighbour is the epitome and kernel of the entire Old Testament moral law, also demonstrate through their structural placement in the respective epistles, how this love of neighbour flows from the love of God revealed through the sacrifice of Christ. It must be noted here that these two texts occur in two of Paul's most systematic, dogmatic epistles.

Indicative-Imperative Pattern

In the epistles of Paul, we find two types of material, the first consists of the descriptive or the dogmatic section on the basis of which he then makes certain demands which form an ethical section. Since all the epistles of Paul are addressed to Christian communities the descriptive section delineates how Christians have been included in God's plan of salvation in and through Jesus Christ and the ethical section contains admonitions or exhortations which guide the Christians to live a life worthy of the call that has been given to them (Eph 4:1). This way of dividing the writings of Paul has been named the *indicative-imperative* pattern by J D G Dunn.⁷ Such a pattern can be easily traced in 1 Thessalonians, Galatians and Romans which the first part is in the indicative and the second in the imperative. In all the other epistles this pattern is followed in each of the individual issues dealt with.

Gal 5:13-14

As said above this unit occurs in the ethical section of the Epistle to the Galatians. Following the above suggested pattern, the Epistle to the Galatians can be structured in the following way:

The Indicative Section: 1:1-5:12: (contains the descriptive section on how the Galatian Christians had been saved from sin through grace without having to be circumcised): **1:1-5:** Foreword; **1:6-10:** Shock of Paul; **1:11-2:24:** Autobiographical Narratives to prove the authenticity of the gospel proclaimed by him; **2:15-21:** Justification through Faith; **3:1-4:7:** Law, Spirit and Son-ship; **4:8-31:** Warning against Falling into Slavery; **5:1-12:** Appeal to the Galatians concerning Christian Freedom.

The Imperative Section:⁸ **5:13-6:20** (contains the

ethical admonitions): **5:13-26**: Exhortations not to allow the Christian Liberty become an occasion for Self-Indulgence; **6:1-10**: Further Exhortations to give concrete expression to Christian Freedom and Love; **6:11-18**: Postscript.

Having explained the independency and the reliability of the Gospel proclaimed by Paul in Gal 1:11-2:21, Paul continued to demonstrate in Gal 3-4 that the Gentile Christians are saved without having to follow the prescriptions of the law, particularly the prescription of circumcision as a precondition for entering into a relationship with God. Thus, he concludes that the Christians have been made free from sin through the Christ Event alone.

Paul begins the next section 5:1-12 with the noun ‘freedom’ in the dative case⁹ in **5:1**, thereby showing that Christ set us free for the purpose of freedom.¹⁰ The first implication of Christian freedom, according to him, is that the Christians do not submit themselves once again to the yoke of slavery. That is, the obtained Christian freedom should not be understood as a license for doing the things according to one’s own desires. Then in the succeeding verses of this section, namely in 5:2-12 he describes the Christian freedom which is the consequence of the justification brought by Jesus and which must find its expression in authentic love (v 6). This section also reveals that the principle of Christian liberty (freedom) is very close to Paul’s heart¹¹ (cf. Gal 5:1; Rom 8:2).

Both 5:1 and 5:13 imply that to live by grace is to live in freedom, in the freedom of Christ. It is both **freedom from inner conflicts** and **external enslavements**, that is, the inhibitions one carries along within oneself and the external structures and systems which enslave the human beings and destroy human dignity. Paul seems to suggest elsewhere that the inner conflict is due to the tyranny

of sin (Rom 6:7-8.18; **6:23**; **7:13**). Though Christ has made the Christians free from all enslaving elements, yet Paul is aware that slavery to flesh on the part of the human beings is not yet overcome. That is why he begins his exhortation section by first reminding them of Christian freedom and by inviting them not to yield to self-indulgence. He writes in **5:13-14**:

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

Here Paul is making three main statements. First is a warning against self-indulgent behaviour which is actually a misuse of freedom; the second is an invitation to give expression to this freedom by serving one another, and the third contains an assurance that by practising love of neighbour one fulfils all the requirements of the law. From what follows in 5:19-22, we understand that this love of neighbour amounts to fulfilling the fruits of the Spirit.

The first statement gives a warning against turning Christian freedom into a license, which would then lead to self-indulgent behaviour. The original word used in the text for self-indulgence is ‘flesh’, and it should not be understood merely as bodily flesh distinguished from spirit but as a supra-human power which can destroy the Galatian Christian community.¹² A more detailed presentation of this flesh as a dangerous actor is made in vv 16-20. In the same verses, he also speaks of the Spirit as another supra-human power which is always in conflict with the flesh. Such a conflict is further intensified by the lists containing the works of the flesh and those of the Spirit in vv 19-22. The freedom is given by the Spirit (**2 Cor 3:17**) whose fruits are “love, joy,

peace, patience, Kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (cf. **Gal 5:22**) and who is opposed to the works of the flesh: “fornication, impurity, licentiousness,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions,²¹ envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these” (cf. **Gal 5:19-21**). The test of Christian freedom lies in the capacity of the Christians to overcome the fruits of the flesh and live the fruits of the Spirit.

The second statement calls for mutual service in love. Here freedom is understood as the right of the individual not to pursue one’s own interests but to be conditioned by the rights of the others in a community. By implication, the individual should be prepared to give up one’s rights for the sake of one’s neighbour. It is for the same reason Paul also forbids the Corinthian Christians from participating in the meals offered to the idols (cf. 1 Cor 8-10). Such an understanding of freedom appears paradoxical and comes as a puzzle to those who believe that freedom is for oneself.

Contrary to that this text affirms that this freedom is not for oneself but freedom from oneself, that is, a freedom “to be unselfish, freedom, that is, to live in love.”¹³ Living this life of freedom in love implies giving up the desires of the flesh and living the fruits of the Spirit referred to in the previous paragraph. Inability to love is an expression of one’s incapability to free oneself from one’s selfishness which again proves that one is not yet free. Freedom that does not include responsibility is not freedom at all.

The third statement confirms that the love of neighbor fulfils the whole law. It is surprising to note here that after arguing against the law in the previous sections of the Epistle, now Paul is making a claim to get the whole of the law fulfilled. What is actually meant here is not getting the prescriptions of the law executed, but Paul claims here that by loving the neighbor one behaves according to the

will of God which is actually the purpose of the whole law. Here the meaning of the word ‘fulfil’ has to be understood in the sense of ‘bringing to completion’ or ‘making perfect,’ thereby implying that the one who loves the neighbor, fulfils the essence of the law. Such an understanding is clarified later in 6:2 of the same Epistle where it is claimed that by bearing one another’s burden, the Galatian Christians will fulfil the law of Christ. Therefore, Christian freedom is not to be enjoyed in selfish solitude but it is for making oneself a ‘slave’ to all (**1 Cor 9:19-22**). Here love is defined as **the concern to serve one another** and Christian freedom is joined to active and passionate concern for one another.

Rom 13:8-10

As in the case of Galatians, the Epistle to the Romans can also be divided into two major sections with their subdivisions:

Indicative Section: 1:1-11:36 (Explains the human situation of sin and the righteousness of God expressed through justification by faith in Christ which results in a free life in the Spirit) **1:1-7:** Foreword; **1:8-15:** Introduction: thanksgiving prayers and Paul’s wish to visit Rome; **1:16-17:** Thesis Statement; **1:18-3:20:** The general guilt of humankind; **3:21-8:39:** Revelation of God’s righteousness as an expression of his love and life in the Spirit which flows from it) and **9:1-11:36:** Righteousness of God and the People of Israel: Here Paul makes the claim that the whole of Israel will be saved.

Imperative Section: 12:1-15:13: (contains exhortations which contain demands of upright Life in Christ) **12:1-13:14:** Spirit-guided Christian life must be the proper worship to God - **13:8-10: Love Commandment;** **14:1-15:13:** The strong owe the duty of love to the weak there; **16:1-27:** Postscript.

After addressing the duty to civil authorities in 13:1-7, Paul moves to the duty of love of neighbour that sums up the Mosaic Law in 13:8-10. Till now Paul has spoken of God's love for human beings (5:5.8; 8:35.37.39; 9:13.25) and the love of human beings for God (8:28), but now he takes up the question of human love for other human beings (12:9; 13:8-10; 14:15). This little passage consisting only of three verses summarizes basically Gal 5 and reverts to the theme of 12:3-13. The only difference between 12:3-13 and this text is that in ch 12 it is about love towards members within the Christian community, and here it is love for the neighbour in a universal sense. Now let us read the text:

Rom 13:8-10: ⁸

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are **summed up** in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, **love is the fulfilling of the law.**

This text begins with an opening statement on loving one another and on the relationship between the love for one another and the rest of the commandments in v 8 and continues to provide an explanation as to the relationship between love and the rest of the commandments in v 9 before finally somehow summarising the points of the previous two verses in v 10. By doing so Paul brings all social relationship demanded by the law particularly by the Decalogue under the one umbrella of love of neighbour (12:9).

As said above v 8 contains all the main points of this unit. After speaking about the 'dues' (*tas opheilias*) to be paid to the civil authorities in terms of taxes, revenues, respect and honour in 13:1-7, now he explains what a Christian 'owes' (*opheilete* – v 8) to all human beings, namely

love. Actually love cannot be a debt in the sense of a *quid pro quo* (something for something), yet Paul calls it a debt "to stress its role in all Christian conduct"¹⁴ and to provide an effective link to the just concluded section in v 7 where he speaks about paying to all what is due to them. Further he clarifies that this love is not limited only to the Christians but also to the outsiders as is implied by the Greek *ton heteron* meaning 'the other' in v 8 and *ton plesion sou* meaning 'your neighbour'¹⁵ in v 9. It means that the danger of reducing this love to the 'like-minded' person¹⁶ who is congenial to me should be avoided and must be extended to the one who differs from me. And then Paul makes the third point of this verse by asserting that this exhortation on love fulfils all the obligations of the Christian life.

Now Paul takes up the same idea of Gal 5:14 where he has already affirmed that the love of neighbour fulfils all the law. However, while in Gal 5 this idea is expressed only once through the Greek *peplērōtai*, here the same is expressed through three terms *peplērōken* in v 8, *anakephalaioitai* (summed up) in v 9 and *plērōma* in v 10. Now, this idea of fulfilling or summing up the law should be understood in the context of Romans. In 3:31 he has said "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means!

On the contrary, we uphold the law." Thus the law that is not in a position to re-establish the lost relationship between human beings and God is not overthrown. Again in 10:4, Jesus is Christ is seen as the end of the law. Jesus is also the goal of the law because he is the one who mediates the right relationship with God for the believers and through him the law obtains its original function of promoting life (cf. 7:10). Now Jesus enables the believers to fulfil the demands of the law. This happens through the love of neighbour, which is actually a response to the love of God that has been revealed in Christ himself (cf. 5:8). Both the

Greek verbs *plēroō* (v 8) and the noun *plērōma* (v 10) used here to refer to the praxis / doing of the law.

In v 9 Paul lists four / five of the Decalogue (6, 5, 7, and 9 or 10) of Deut 5:17-21. Contrary to the 9th and 10th commandments, Paul does not specify the objects of covetousness. It may be due to the fact that he has already mentioned it in 7:8. And the expression “any other commandment” may refer immediately to the rest of the commandments in the Decalogue, but remotely it would refer to the whole of Tora and even to the Greco-Roman legal system. **V 10a** reminds us of 1 Cor 13:4-6, which illustrates that authentic human love should be void of every selfish motive. One cannot both love and do wrong. In fact, evil is overcome through love (12:21: “... overcome evil with good”). Thus according to Paul the law remains. However, the highest of all the laws is love. Love of neighbour is also a law coming from the Lord and it acknowledges the unique dignity of the individual and demands to love the neighbour as oneself. The basis of such a demand lies in God’s love for us. Authentic love of neighbour consists of transforming oneself and of concretizing the good things that we want to do.

The explicit reference to the law in this section re-emerges the discussion on the law in 1:18-11:36. Throughout the Epistle Paul has identified the law with the ethnic Israel and has established that the Christians are discharged from the law (7:6) though it is good and holy (7:12). However, now that Paul has defined the Christians in non-ethnic categories, he has to provide a new centre similar to that of the law for the people of Israel, around which the rest of the norms for personal and social ethics could be built. Thus the triple emphasis on love of neighbour (vv 8, 9, 10) and bracketing emphasis on fulfilling the law (vv 8, 10) effectively gathers together and sums up the earlier scattered references on these themes (love – 5:5; 8:28; 12:9; fulfilment – 8:4).¹⁷

As in the case of Galatians, Romans too makes it clear that this love is the result of freedom which has been acquired through Jesus Christ. Cf. **Rom 8:2** *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*

Rom 8:14-17 ¹⁴

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did **not** receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ*

Synthesis of Gal 5:13-14 and Rom 13:8-10

In these two texts, Paul invites every follower of Christ to live the through Christ gained freedom by loving one another which amounts to a singular way of fulfilling all the commandments and the law. The affirmation ‘**love fulfils the law**’ is made once in Gal 5:14 and three times in Rom 13:8-10. The formulation of this love of neighbour as “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Rom 13:9; cf. Gal 5:14) is a quotation from Lev 19:18. In doing so Paul appears to echo the saying of Jesus in Mk 12:28-34 (cf. Mt 22:34-40; cf. Lk 10:25-27) where he makes the love of God (Deut 6:4-5) and the love of neighbour (Lev 19:18) as the two most important of all the commandments. Matthew (22:37-40) also makes the same claim and adds that both the law and the prophets hang on these two (Mt 22:37-40).

Paul also makes the love of neighbour commandment as the foundation of the life of every disciple of Christ. However, Paul goes one step further than Mark and Matthew in speaking of this ‘love of neighbour’ as the single commandment that fulfils the whole of the Mosaic law.

From the contexts of the two Epistles, it is clear that here **the ‘law’ refers to the Mosaic law**. In Galatians Paul has been contrasting faith with the law of circumcision and in Rom 13:9 he makes a direct reference to the Mosaic law (Decalogue). By implication what the people of Israel living under the law of Moses required to do as their covenantal obligation is now being fulfilled by those practise the love of neighbour. Thus by fulfilling the law, love only upholds it.

Specifications of this Love of Neighbour

Now in the writings of Paul, love for one another is intimately related to faith in Christ and these two concepts form two sides of the same coin. They occur in the initial thanksgiving of his epistles (Eph 1:15; Col 1:4; 1 Thess 1:3; 2 Thess 1:3; Philm 4-5). Most prominently these two terms occur in **Gal 5:6** where Paul’s summary of the Christian life is expressed as: ‘faith working through love.’ In the context of Pauline theology, “love represents the ethical outworking of the imputed righteousness bestowed by grace through faith, the outward expression of new life in Christ.”¹⁸

For Paul love is never a ‘self-attained’ virtue but is the result of the transformed life filled with the Spirit of God who pours God’s love into human hearts (Rom 5:5; Gal 4:6-7; Phil 1:8; Eph 5:18) and therefore lack of love calls into question one’s relationship to God (Rom 8:1-14). This love of neighbour is a joyful and grateful response to the grace received (Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 8:1-9). Thus there is a necessary correlation between faith in Christ and loving others. Love is the fruit of righteousness (Phil 1:11) and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). God pours his love into human heart (Rom 5:5; Gal 4:6-7; Phil 1:8; 2 Cor 8:16) and it is not a self-merited achievement.

Everything a Christian does is to be an expression of love (1 Cor 16:14) and it is the first virtue above all the others (Col 3:12-14) and the one charism believers are to seek above all others (1 Cor 12:31-14:1). In the context of 1 Cor 12-14, which insists on using the Spirit-given charisms for the ‘common good’ (cf. 1 Cor 12:7) and on every one’s readiness to restrain one’s own conviction of charism for the benefit of the whole (1 Cor 14:28.30), love of neighbour understood as love without any self-interest (cf. 1 Cor 13:1-13) is made the guiding principle. That is why 1 Cor 13 is inserted between chs. 12 and 14. 1 Cor 13:1-13 qualifies this love as self-less. Real love demands self-sacrifice (Eph 5:25-33; Col 3:19; Tit 2:4) and self-denial. The contrast is the love of self and money (2 Tim 3:2-4). The invitation made by Paul to refuse to eat meat also involves this self-denial when he requests the Corinthian Christians to give up their right to eat meat for the sake of those Christians who are of a weaker conscience (Rom 14:15.20-21; 1 Cor 8:9-13; 10:23-33).

This love is not expressed only through gentleness. Sometimes it calls for harsh language (Gal 1:8-9; 5:12; Phil 3:2) which arises out of genuine concern (1 Cor 4:14; 2 Cor 2:4; 7:8-11; 12:19; 13.2-4.10; Gal 2:11-14). It is the intention of the heart or the motivation of the action which qualifies love as authentic.

This love is first related to the Christian community¹⁹ (Gal 6:10) whose members must remain united (Rom 12:10.16.18; 14:1.19; 15:5-6; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 3:27-28; 5:22-23; 6:2; Eph 4:1-6; Phil 1:27; 2:1-4; 4:2; Col 2:2.19; 3:12-14; 1 Thess 5:13-14), should care for one another (1 Cor 12:25-26) and should help in mutual up-building (Rom 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor 8:1; 14:3-5.12.17.26; Eph 4:15-16; 1 Thess 5:11), though it includes all humans into

the fellowship (Rom 12:14.17-21; Gal 6:10; 1 Thess 3:12; 5:15). Though Paul invites the Christians to love the *ton heteron* and the *ton plesion* as we have seen in Rom 13, yet it has not gone the full way of calling the Christians to love even their enemies.

In the Hebrew context ‘neighbour’ referred to a fellow Israel. In Jesus’ language the neighbour includes an enemy (cf. Mt 5:43-44; Lk 6:28) and the alien, for according to Luke, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan in answer to the question “And who is my neighbour?” (cf. Lk 10:30-37).

Further we find in Mt 25:31-44 that the neighbours are the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the ill-clad, and the prisoners. Paul’s use of neighbourly love in his extant epistles confirms the view that Paul did not regard it as a Christian duty to go out of his way to love a non-Christian. The love of outsiders and even of enemies comes actually from Jesus himself which then gets narrowed down to the members of the Christian community at the time of the Early Church as reflected in Paul. This is understandable from a person who is concerned first to set the things right in his own communities before extending it to the larger society.

The other aspect of the love of neighbour commandment in Paul is that it does not go to the extent of questioning the dehumanising structures of the times. The possible reasons could be that Paul’s main focus was to strengthen the insiders (the Christians) in the context of an insider-outsider (non-Christians) tension. This was to attract the outsiders through an exemplary life by the insiders. Since the Church was in its fledgeling stage, Paul and the others could not afford to question the oppressive structures of the society. In some places, Paul even instructs the Christians to follow

the ‘customs’ (cf. 1 Cor 11:13) in order not to scandalize the outsiders. In fact, Paul in his epistles and Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, try to present the Church as friendly as possible to the Romans. Maybe they did it for the sake of first establishing the church in the midst of all opposition and rejection so that the church can gain wings to take off in a much stronger way.

Critical Reflection

Paul rightly identifies the importance of ‘love’ as the central proclamation of Jesus and makes it the foundation of the ethical behaviour of all the Christians. Theologically ‘love of neighbour’ is rightly understood by Paul as the central proclamation of Jesus Christ. He does it by showing that Justification is a gratuitous gift which is appropriated by everyone who believes in Christ. By virtue of this justification, every Christian is made free and this freedom is only for loving one’s neighbour as oneself. Living this life of freedom in love means giving up selfishness by avoiding all the desires of the flesh and living out of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

However, pastorally when Paul is giving exhortations to the communities on this love of neighbour his main focus remains the love of the insiders, that is, the Christian brothers and sisters before the outsiders. For whatever reason Paul may have done it, in any case, it is clear that Paul has, to a certain extent, narrowed down the perspective of love of neighbour from that of the earthly Jesus. Such an approach to love may not provide wide wings so that she can take off with a full swing, but might turn the Church communities become more and more inward-looking.

Conclusion

Gal 5:13-14 and Rom 13:8-10 presuppose Paul's description of the human situation of sin and the failure of the Mosaic law to really free them. Both the texts present God's response of love, grace and mercy in and through the cross of Christ as a gratuitous gift (initiative is from God). All those who come to believe in Christ are justified through the same Christ event, and they are made free from the desires of the flesh whose root cause is sin. All those who are freed by the cross are then led by the Spirit, who functions as a guarantee and guide. The Christian Freedom and the consequent life in the Spirit needs to be expressed through love of neighbour which replaces law and fulfils it at the same time.

Notes

1. This Latin quote must be correctly translated as "For/truly the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God" and not simply as "the glory of God man fully alive" thereby promoting the cult of self-fulfilment. The quote actually speaks about the fulfilment of human beings in beatific vision of God, namely in Christ (cf. Eph 3:18-19).
2. For a detailed study particularly of Mt 22:34-40 and 1 Jn 4:7-12 read: George M. Soares-Prabhu, "The Love Commandment," in *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action*, ed. Scaria Kuthirakattel (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2003), 65-71.
3. By these terms 'law' and 'works of the law' Paul appears to refer to the legalistic and retributive / salvific understanding of and attitude to fulfilling the works of the law (the so called 613 prescriptions) which he clearly rejects as a possible means of salvation. While admitting that the law is good and holy (cf. Rom 7:12) and explaining that it was given as a 'disciplinary' (Gal 3:24) to those who were disobedient, Paul goes on to affirm that after grace has been revealed in and through Jesus Christ, the Old Testament law has been rendered superfluous (cf. Rom 7:1-6).

4. The terminological clarifications made here are based on Kurt Aland, *Vollständige Konkordanz zum griechischen Neuen Testament unter Zugrundelegung aller modernen textkritischen Textausgaben und des Textus Receptus*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1983); R. Mohrlang, "Love," *Dictionary of Paul and His Epistles*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1993), 575.
5. The numbers here refer to the number of occurrences of the terms and their cognates in the Epistles of Paul.
6. When Paul uses the expressions 'love of God' and 'love of Christ,' he might refer either to our love for God or for Christ (*objective genitive*) or God's or Christ's love for us (*subjective genitive*). In some places it is very ambiguous (cf. Rom 5:5; 2 Cor 5:14; 2 Thess 3:5).
7. Cf. James D G Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 626-631. Such pattern is found in texts like Rom 6:4ab; 1 Cor 5:7ab; Gal 5:1ab; Gal 5:13ab, Phil 2:12-13. However, one must also be aware that the indicative-imperative pattern is strictly followed by Paul in all his epistles. Often, he mixes them up.
8. The exhortative or the hortatory character of this section is made evident by the three imperatives used in 5:13-14: "Do not use your freedom as an ..." and "... but through love become slaves ..." in v 13 and "you shall love your neighbour as yourself" in v 14. One also finds eleven other imperatives in the section 5:13-6:10. Cf. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 481.
9. Cf. Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1962), 270-71.
10. This is the so called 'dative of place whither.' Cf. Smyth H. W., *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1956), 1531. The dative of place shows the direction or the purpose of some activity. Here when Paul places 'freedom' in the dative case and relates it to Christ, it means that Christ, through his act of justification, has taken those who participate in this justification 'into the realm of freedom.'
11. Cf. James D G Dunn, *The Theology*, 658-661.
12. Cf. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 483.

13. C K Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation. A Study of the Epistle to the Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1985), 62.
14. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 678.
15. In the Hebrew context 'neighbour' referred to a fellow Israel. Cf. C. G. Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teaching* (London: Macmillan, 1930), 60-68. However, in the context of Paul it cannot be limited only to the fellow Christians. Already in Jesus' language the neighbour includes an enemy (cf. Mt 5:43-44; Lk 6:28) and the alien, for according to Luke, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan in answer to the question "And who is my neighbour?" (cf. Lk 10:30-37). Further we find in Mt 25:31-44 the neighbours are the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the ill-clad, and the prisoners.
16. C K Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: Harper & Bros, 1957), 250.
17. Cf. James D G Dunn, *Romans 9-16* (WBC 38B; Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 775.
18. R. Mohrlang, "Love," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1993), 576.
19. Cf. Hugh Montefiore, "Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself," in *Novum Testamentum V II* (July, 1962), 157-170. In this article the author notes that a close examination of Paul's use of neighbourly love in his extant epistles confirms the view that Paul did not regard it as a Christian duty to go out of his way to love a non-Christian. The author's contention in this article is that the love of outsiders and even of enemies comes actually from Jesus himself which then gets narrowed down to the members of the Christian community at the time of the Early Church.

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The Salvific Significance of Other Faiths in the Teachings of Post-Conciliar Documents

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Abstract: The Second Vatican Council articulated a paradigm shift in the church's self-understanding and her relationship with the people of other faiths. The Council opened a new vision of the Church and her mission in the world. Against this background this article dialogue with the post-conciliar understanding of the Church's mission and the vision of late Kurien Kunnumpuram concerning the Church's relationship with the adherents of other faiths. In a world where intellectual arguments and scientific proofs versus the divine truths, genuine Christian witness based on faith experience play a vital role to convey the gospel message. For Kunnumpuram, the Church is the home for all people and religions. As he acknowledges the salvific meaning of other religions, he encourages Christians to appreciate the positive values in those religions. Therefore, this article attempt to respond to the views of Kunnumpuram Kurien, in the light of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Redemptoris Missio* and *Ecclesia in Asia*.

Keywords: Salvation, mission, Kingdom of God, other faiths, evangelization, proclamation, witness, dialogue.