

**TANGAZA COLLEGE
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LOVE OF ENEMIES IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

**An Exegesis of Matthew 5:43-48, and the Golden Rule in 7:12
A Challenge to Christian Life in Enwan (Nigeria)**

Moderator

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
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DEDICATION

To all who, despite the hatred and oppression they experience in life, still make efforts to love all people, especially those who hate them, and to all who preach boldly today on the theme, “love your enemies,” and all who promote justice.

EPIGRAPH

“To return evil for good is devilish;
to return good for good is human;
to return good for evil is divine.”

Alfred Plummer.

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declared that this *long essay* (thesis) is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed:.....
Name of the Student:.....
Date:.....

This *long essay* has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

Signed:.....
Name of Supervisor:.....
Date:.....

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Motivation and Objective of the Study

The experience of hatred and lack of understanding, especially among Catholic Christians, between Catholics and other Christian denominations, between Enwan people and Akuku people of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria, has motivated the writer of this *Long Essay* to choose the theme, “love of enemies” (Mt 5:43-48) as his theme. Christ, in Matthew, gives us the imperative to love our enemies.

In St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, Enwan¹, Christians who come together to pray and celebrate the Eucharist do not live as brothers and sisters. What only binds them together is common prayer, after which most of them return home to live as enemies. This situation is even worse when it comes to Catholics and other Christians in the village. It is as if Catholics have a different Christ from the others. There is no inter-Christian unity. So you wonder if Christ is divided (just as Paul wondered in 1 Cor 1:12-13). Above all, Enwan as a village has been struggling for a piece of land with her neighbouring village, Akuku, and there has been genocide since the year 2004. Lives of innocent people are taken without any human sympathy. The worst of such experiences

¹ Enwan is one of the minor tribes in Nigeria. It is located in Akoko-Edo Local Government Area, Edo State.

happened between 7th and 17th August 2005. During this period the writer of this Long Essay happened to be in the village. It was horrible. A state of emergency was eventually declared over the land. Until this moment there is news that the clash is not yet over. The question now is, can the two villages ever come to terms and coexist peacefully and in unity any more?

The objective of this work is thus to remind all Christians and people of Enwan (where the writer comes from) that God created only one Adam to show us that we all have a common descent. Its purpose is thus to help them realise that loving those who hate and persecute us is what makes Christianity a unique religion.

2. Method and Content of Study

This work will mainly be based on library research. The writer will consult commentaries and exegetical works so as to arrive at a systematic synthesis of what biblical scholars have said about the text in question. Where necessary, first hand experience of the situation at Enwan will be brought in.

Chapter one lays the groundwork by locating the text on which the exegesis in chapter two will be based.

The second chapter focuses on the exegesis of Mt 5:43-48. Each verse will be analysed. Where possible and necessary, any key word in the verse will be highlighted. In brief, we shall also treat the question of the Golden Rule in 7:12, but not in an exegetical manner. Then we shall deduce the theology of the text. Before all this, we shall explore the historical setting, where we shall establish how love of enemies had been seen and interpreted before the time of Jesus.

In chapter three, we shall apply the command of Jesus in a pragmatic way to the situation in Enwan. Is the command “utopian” for Enwan people or not? This chapter will be followed by a general conclusion.

that this section can be divided into two: 5:43-45 (Higher Law) and 5:46-48. But they still agree that the “ ‘supertheses,’ which deal with renunciation of resistance and love of one’s enemy belong together in their import as the double crown of Jesus’ master plan for the divinely ordained humanization of the earth.”³ So, the new righteousness culminates in the command, “love your enemies,” which begins at 5:43. The preceding unit on non-resistance begins in 5:38 and ends in 5:42. Of course, all the six supertheses in 5:21-48 are interrelated as they treat basic human attitudes, but then, 5:43 begins one of those attitudes. Indeed, in 5:43, there is a change of emphasis.

2.2 *Terminus Ad Quem*

Most commentaries take 5:48 as the *terminus ad quem* of our pericope of study, the command, “love your enemies.” We also agree to this because 6:1 seems to begin a different topic (almsgiving, prayer and fasting) altogether. “48 This verse confirms the argument of v 45 and properly forms the conclusion of the pericope [...]. There is also a sense, however, in which this verse serves as a logical conclusion to all preceding antitheses.”⁴ “48. This verse belongs firstly to the unit that begins in 5:43 [...]. Simultaneously, 5:48 is the fitting culmination of all of 5:21-48, for each of the six paragraphs in the section calls for ‘perfection’ [...].”⁵

3. TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Though there are textual problems in our pericope of study, they are not many. So we shall focus our analysis on only verses 44 and 47 where such problems are found.

³ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Utopia or Program for Action?*, 76.

⁴ D.A. HAGNER, *World Biblical Commentary*, 135.

⁵ W.D. DAVIES – D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, I, 560.

Verse: 44 Εγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς,
(But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you).

“Later witnesses enrich the text by incorporating clauses from the parallel account in Lk 6:27, 28. If the clauses were originally present in Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount, their omission in early representatives of the Alexandrian (Ⲛ B), pre-Caesarean (f¹), Western (if^k Iraneus^{late} Cyprian), Eastern (syr^{c,s}), and Egyptian (Cap^{sa,bo}) witnesses would be entirely unaccountable. The divergence of reading among the added clauses likewise speaks against their originality.”⁶

Verse 47: καὶ ἐὰν ἀσπάσησθε τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὑμῶν μόνον, τί περισσὸν ποιεῖτε; οὐχὶ καὶ οἱ ἔθνηκοὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν;
(And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?)

“In later witnesses, followed by the *Textus Receptus*, the reading *τελῶναι* appears to have been substituted for *ἔθνηκοὶ* in order to bring the statement into closer parallelism with the preceding sentence. The Armenian version conflates the reading with Luke form of the saying (Lk 6:32, 34).”⁷

4. FORM AND STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

4.1 Genre

Our text is teaching about the “new righteousness” (order of the law of the kingdom) in contrast to the order of the law of this world. From a rhetoric approach Jesus speaks of a higher ethic. Some scholars say that our text falls into the genre known as *Chreia*. “A *Chreia* is a concise reminiscence aptly attributed to some

⁶ B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 14.

⁷ B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 14.

character' [...]. The key term is 'reminiscence,' which [...] is an action or saying that is useful for living [...]."⁸ There are different types of *Chreia* — an action, a saying and a mixed structured. But then, "the point of the *Chreia*, accordingly, is made by a saying, an action, or both."⁹ Our text can fall into this category because Jesus discloses by saying that as children of God, we have to be like God who is perfect. Thus he teaches love of enemies.

Some other scholars think that the genre is best described as epitome.

According to them,

the literary genre of the SM¹⁰ is that of an epitome presenting the theology of Jesus in a systematic fashion. The epitome is a composition carefully designed out of the sayings of Jesus grouped according to thematic points. Correspondingly, its function is to provide the disciple of Jesus with the necessary tool for becoming a Jesus theologian. 'Hearing and doing the sayings of Jesus,' therefore means enabling the disciple to theologize creatively along the lines of the theology of the master. To say it pointedly: The SM is not a law to be obeyed, but a theology to be intellectually appropriated and internalized in order then to be creatively developed and implemented in concrete situations of life.¹¹

Both views seem to fit in well with what our text is all about since both see our text as a teaching based on the sayings of Jesus. Even though epitome seems to be more systematic, we shall employ both.

4.2 Structures and Organisation

The teaching on "love of enemies" is one that moves from what was ("You have heard that it was said") to a new command/understanding ("But I say to you"). What was becomes a point of departure for what should now be.

⁸ R.F. HOCK, "Chreia," *ABD*, I, 912-914.

⁹ R.F. HOCK, "Chreia," *ABD*, I, 913.

¹⁰ H.D. Betz uses SM as an abbreviation for the Sermon on the Mount. We shall use SM for the Sermon on the Mount in this work as well.

¹¹ H.D. BETZ, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, 15-16.

Since learning is done for the acquisition of knowledge or understanding, there must be a movement from hearing and reflection to actual practice. In this pericope as with the entire SM, “‘hearing’ designates the appropriation of tradition, that is, didactic activities in wider sense of the term. Thus the stereotyped formula introducing the so-called antitheses ‘You have heard that it was said [...]’ designates what in the view of the SM is the uncritical acceptance of false teaching about the meaning of the Torah.”¹²

Jesus here invites all to move from a particularistic idea of love to a universal and unconditional love. Doing this we become children of God and thus accept the invitation, “Be perfect as God is perfect”. There is therefore the whole idea of BECOMING.

5:43-48 is a unit. Even though it can be divided into two (43-45 and 46-48), the two parts still forms a unity. In general, “the structure is as follows; (1) the received view (v 43); (2) Jesus’ correction (vv44-45a); (3) the two supporting statements (45b-c); (4) two illustrative parallels (vv 46-47); and (5) a concluding exhortation (v 48).”¹³

5. PARALLEL TEXT

Our texts under investigation (5:43-48, 7:12) have a parallel only in Luke 6:27-36. But when we take a look at Luke’s parallel, it is not just that the Golden Rule in Mt 7:12 is part of the Lucan parallel, but also that Mt 5:38-42 is part of it as well. Therefore, for a proper presentation of the Lucan parallel, we shall include the Matthean passage on non-resistance (5:38-42) and the Golden Rule (7:12). Within the text itself, there is parallel between 5:44-45 and 46-47.

¹² H.D. BETZ, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, 4.

¹³ D.A. HAGNER, *World Biblical Commentary*, 133-134.

Below is a tabulation of the parallelism. We shall match Lucan verses with the corresponding verses in Matthew. It is to be noted that for the sake of space we are only focusing on Matthew, and shall neither analyse nor focus on Luke. Matching the corresponding verses is only to help us see the parallelism from one viewpoint.

While the Matthean text will be presented serially, that of Luke will not because we shall match each corresponding verse with that of Matthew. The tabulation below shows the similarities and dissimilarities. Both belong to the Q Source. But "the range of those dissimilarities induced some scholars to adopt the hypothesis of two different editions of the Q source at the disposal of Matthew and Luke."¹⁴ Thus the table presents the unit and its parallel Lucan version, basing it on the order of Matthew.

As shall be noticed, identical verses are aligned side by side. Verses which do not have correspondence are left on their own. The table will show that the Lucan arrangement of materials is different from that of the Matthean arrangement. "Luke combines in one chain of sayings what in Matthew is presented as two subsequent antitheses: on non-resistance to evil one (5:38-42) and love of enemies (5:43-48). In addition the Golden Rule that Luke has at the middle of the unit under discussion is found at the end of the Sermon in Matthew's version."¹⁵

117. ¹⁴ C. OWCZAREK, *Sons of the Most High: Love of Enemies in Luke-Acts: Teaching and Practice*,

¹⁵ C. OWCZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 119-120.

the purpose of this is pedagogical and didactic. Thus 5:43-48 and 7:12 can be seen as a teaching illustrating what the new and higher righteousness is. “The epitome is composed in such a way that it facilitates a carefully designed learning process. The goal of this continual learning process is to keep the vision of the entire system”¹⁶ (here the higher righteousness) in mind.

5:43-48 has been considered an epitome (or a *Chreia*) because it is in line with other familiar examples of this genre in ancient world, such as Epictetus’ *Enchiridion* sayings, which incite the mind of his hearers to the best things.¹⁷

The parallel text is Lk 6:27-36. But this text contains what is in 5:38-42 and 7:12. This parallel text cannot be said to be the source of the text under study. Even though they both belong to the Q Source, there are variations as much as there are similarities. Mt 5:43-48 seems to be an independent text. So we shall concentrate on it.

Our remote context covers chapters 5:1 to 7:12. We omit 7:13-29 because 7:12 fittingly sums up our text of exploration. This remote context helps us to understand our pericope better as being part of the SM. The immediate context contains successive antitheses which treat basic human attitudes attaining their climax in the command “love your enemies.”

¹⁶ H.D. BETZ, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, 14.

¹⁷ H.D. BETZ, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, 10.

CHAPTER II

EXEGESIS OF MT 5:43-48

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of Mt 5:43-48. We will proceed verse by verse. We hope to point out any key word(s) in any particular verse. We shall also explore the Golden Rule (7:12) as the apex of the last part of the Sermon on the Mount. This is not going to be an exegesis. Finally, we shall establish the theology of the text. But before any of these, we shall begin our study with the historical setting, where we shall discuss Old Testament references to love of enemies.

2. HISTORICAL SETTING

Although there is no explicit command, “love your enemies,” in Old Testament, as we read through the Scriptures we discover passages which somehow prepare for this explicit command of Jesus. A few passages from Pentateuch, Historical Books and Wisdom Literature will be explored to establish this. But before doing this, we need to establish who a neighbour is in the Jewish context and what Jesus’ idea is about this.

2.1 *Meaning of Neighbour*

For the Jews, a neighbour refers to a fellow Israelite. But Jesus rebelled against the old order because it “had demanded that the Jew love his fellow-Jew. The New Order demands that the new Israel should love without limit [...]. Complete catholicity in love-like God’s-is the ideal Christ sets before his disciples.”¹⁸ With Jesus a

¹⁸ A.M. HUNTER, *A Pattern for Life: An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, 60.

neighbour becomes “the person with whom I have to do at this moment, who is encountering me right now: the one who is my concern at this instant, no matter whether a blood relative or a total stranger.”¹⁹

A Neighbour becomes that person who stands facing you as a human being and not as a fellow-blood brother or sister. Realistically speaking, since we can all trace our roots back to Adam (as Christians and as Jews), then, the element of blood relationship is still operative to some extent. Besides, enmity can only exist between us and someone we have a relationships with. “Neighbour” is thus the nearest person, whether in terms of blood or in terms of the one I encounter now. However, “the ‘nearest’ can also be the most distant where personal characteristics are concerned, but that person nevertheless now stands facing you as a fellow human being.”²⁰

Indeed, “the ‘neighbors’ closest to you by blood or physical presence can be your arch-enemies, so that it is precisely their all too palpable nearness that makes them unbearable.”²¹ It is possible that this is the reason Lev 25:35-37 describes the stranger as a brother in need.

Literally, neighbour

means the one near [...], indicating a mere outward nearness, proximity. Thus, a neighbour might be an enemy [...]. The OT expands the meaning to cover national or tribal fellowship and that is the sense in our Lord’s quotation. The Christian sense is expounded by Jesus [...] as including the brotherhood of man, and as found in love for man, everywhere.²²

Therefore, Jesus asks for more than the Decalogue without overthrowing it.

¹⁹ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 79.

²⁰ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 80.

²¹ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 80.

²² M.R. VINCENT, *Word Study in the New Testament*, 42.

“The Pentateuch, like subsequent Jewish tradition, understands ‘neighbor’ to be an Israelite (see Lev 19:17), and this reading allows one to confine love to one’s own kind, or even to define neighbour in opposition to enemy. Jesus, however, gives ‘neighbor’ its broadest definition.”²³ Thus in quoting Lev 19:18, Jesus wishes to enlarge it. For as Worth writes: “In that day and age, one’s neighbor would more commonly be one’s fellow Jew.”²⁴

While Jesus agreed with his contemporaries that one should love his or her neighbour, he however “interpreted ‘neighbor’ to include anyone an individual comes in contact with regardless of ethnic background. This was not a ‘but I say to you’ teaching but a direct interpretation of the correct meaning of Leviticus 19:18.”²⁵ This suggests that while it is true that Jews had the idea of neighbour in their Scriptures, it was wrongly interpreted by their religious authorities. Jesus thus dealt with the question of trying to exclude one’s enemies from the definition of neighbour that one ought to love. While hatred of enemies seems natural, Jesus calls us to go beyond nature and see “neighbourhood” in all people. What Jesus does therefore is to

rob love of neighbor of its vertical component in which its theological foundation is grounded. For love of neighbor can be expounded convincingly only from the concept of God’s unity, as the theo-logic of the rabbis confirms. If love of neighbor is not to degenerate into a purely horizontal making use of others, into a godless accusation of unbelieving, [...] it needs a supplement: I am (God) the Lord. For only under the common Fatherhood of God does love of neighbor have meaning and significance as fellowship.²⁶

²³ D.C. ALLISON, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination*, 100.

²⁴ R.H. WORTH, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Old Testament Roots*, 115.

²⁵ R.H. WORTH, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Old Testament Roots*, 115.

²⁶ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 78.

This is probably the reason why Jesus drops *as yourself* and *I am the Lord* in Lev.19:18.

We see therefore that “according to Old Testament understanding, the love commandment refers to relations with one’s fellow Israelites and not to the people’s enemies.”²⁷ But for Jesus, neighbour is

someone who is not near at all, in his or her divinely-ordained otherness, who comes to us when it is important for us to be truly human. For according to God’s will, true humanization is a two-way street — in sharing and communicating the love that God originates. For seen in depth the human person is not an island but a dialogical creature who needs others to bring humanness to full blossom.²⁸

2.2 *Pentateuch*

The Pentateuch also displays some elements revealing love of enemies. In Gen 20:17, we read that Abraham prayed for Abimelech. This happened after God had cursed Abimelech for taking Sarah, the wife of Abraham. The attitude of Joseph toward his brothers who betrayed him and sold him into slavery (Gen 45:1-15; 50:18-21) also shows love of enemies. Indeed, “help, support, and care for the enemy begin in the first book of Moses.”²⁹

Other passages where we find the injunction to have good attitudes toward the enemy include Ex 8:24-27; 19:5-6; 23:4-5; Lev 19:17-18. Deut 10:17-19 invites the Israelites to love the stranger. “Since ‘stranger’ was any non-Jew (or, in later age, even a Jew born in Diaspora), God wanted them to have the same attitude toward any mankind that crossed their way.”³⁰ But as many commentators observe, Israelites failed in this interpretation.

²⁷ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 87.

²⁸ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 82.

²⁹ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 89.

³⁰ R.H. WORTH, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Old Testament Roots*, 116.

All these show that love of enemies cannot be limited to just the New Testament. Some scholars and exegetes remark that “the notion is false that Old Testament does not prescribe love of enemies. This is not inconsistent with exulting over the overthrow of the public enemies of God and the Church.”³¹

One thing to keep in mind is that “Jesus’ teachings, as they are proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount, are presented as a sovereign interpretation of the Old Testament Torah, but also the newness of the directives spoken with authority by the preacher on the Mount [...]. Old Testament directives are intensified [...].”³²

2.3 *Historical Books*

The Historical Books also present us with some idea of how some people in the Old Testament treated their enemies with kindness. In I Sam 24, we see how David displayed love of enemies. He had every opportunity to kill Saul who was seeking to kill him, yet he spared him. Realising what David had done, Saul said to him, “You are more righteous than I; for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil” (I Sam 24:17). There is already implicitly present here the high righteousness that Jesus calls for. David spared Saul (I Sam 24:12).

During the time of war between the King of Syria and Israel, Elisha protected the King of Israel. Elisha, through prayer, led the people of Syria to Samaria to meet the King of Israel. He prevented the King of Israel from killing his own enemies. The King even went as far as preparing a great feast for them (Cf II Kgs 6:8-23).

³¹ R. JAMIESON – A.R. FAUSSET – D. BROWN, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical on Old and New Testaments*, II, 492.

³² G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 94.

2.4 *Wisdom Literature References to Love of Enemies*

In Wisdom Books, a few passages make reference to not hating one's fellow human being. These include Prov. 24:17; 20:22; 25:21-22. This last verse is one of the verses that state very clearly the motive of being kind to an enemy in the Old Testament. It is not so much about loving them for who they are as about calling down punishment on them.

Besides these, we have Wis 18:1-2 and Sirach 28:2-7. These also say one thing or another on loving those with whom we are not at home. Their intention behind this is utilitarian: reward of the one who loves and conversion of the foe. But Jesus' call to love of enemies has no such intention in view, but echoes an unconditional eschatologically-based demand to practice love of one's enemies.

Thus, "the Wisdom literature of Judaism passes down the sayings, 'if your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat [...]. The Wisdom commandment to do good to one's enemy has a divine reward in view. And the advice not to repay evil with evil [...] also stands in a monitory-ethical environment and is rationally based."³³

Generally speaking, "the Jews were a very prejudiced people. They hated the Jewish tax-gathering traitors, the Samaritans, and the Roman Gentiles. There was much bitterness and resentment in their hearts."³⁴ Notice that in Jewish tradition, as mentioned in the above passage, the enemy means "the one who hates me, my subjective enemy, who today is my adversary but need not be tomorrow. But even when the enemy does something unkind to me, that person does not cease to be my

³³ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 89.

³⁴ S.D. SWIHART, ed., *Logos International Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark and Luke*, 64.

neighbour.”³⁵ In general, however, “‘enemy’ in most languages connotes a deep-seated opposition, whereas ‘haters’ is a noun derived from a verb and like all verbs has a temporary quality about it and thus implicitly hints at its own termination.”³⁶ So, “the word *hate* can be used in the less passionate sense of ‘loving less’ or ‘regarding of little or no importance in comparison with someone else’.”³⁷ This is an Aramaic nuance employed by Matthew in his Gospel.

Jesus’ idea of hatred is, however, broader than “loving less”. For “in the Antitheses the hatred is of such a nature that it must be rejected rather than embraced. Hence hatred in the pure sense of ‘vehement animosity and rejection’ makes the best textual sense.”³⁸

3. EXEGESIS OF MT 5:43-48.

In this analysis, we shall go verse by verse. Though it may not be possible to be exhaustive in our analysis of each verse, we shall do the much that is possible taking into account the scope of our work.

Verse 43: Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη, Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου καὶ μισήσεις τὸν ἐχθρόν σου.

("You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'")

“A number of scholars have said that, although the Old Testament nowhere states that one should hate one’s enemy, Matthew is thus aptly summarizing the

³⁵ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 87.

³⁶ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 116.

³⁷ R.H. WORTH, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Old Testament Roots*, 110.

³⁸ R.H. WORTH, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Old Testament Roots*, 111.

contemporary attitude.”³⁹ Jesus makes reference to an already existing law. But the Jews had distorted the command to love your neighbour. “Neighbour” has come to mean for them

those of their own country, nation and religion; and those only that they were pleased to look upon as their friends: [...] they were willing to infer what God never designed; *thou shalt hate thine enemy*; and they looked upon whom they pleased as their enemies, thus making void the great command of God by traditions, though there were express laws to the contrary, Exod 23:4,5; Deut 23:7.⁴⁰

The ‘enemy’ here has been interpreted by different scholars in different senses: Reference to the Roman (political sense) and Gentiles (one of the groups that Jews hated). But “Jesus had the whole person in mind, not just one’s political relationships. Hence the principle applies to the Romans but also to all such adversarial relationships that occur in life.”⁴¹

In this verse, “Jesus seems to be referring to the Jewish law which demands love of the neighbor if he is one of the same group of people [...]”⁴² But by “love” Jesus did not mean emotion, rather he means “practical and persistent goodwill towards all men: it means caring for others and seeking their good [...]. In this sense we may love others whom we do not like.”⁴³ Although love can and does involve emotion, Jesus is telling us that the heart of love lies in conduct, commitment and decision rather than in emotions.

This is why some scholars say that the command to love one’s enemies “entails an honest effort, a campaigning and struggling with them, so that they change, give up

³⁹ H. HENDRICKX, *The Sermon on the Mount: Studies in the Synoptic Gospels*, 91.

⁴⁰ M. HENRY, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, V, 52.

⁴¹ R.H. WORTH, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Old Testament Roots*, 113.

⁴² A. ROBINSON, *The Treasure of Jesus: A Meditation on the Sermon on the Mount*, 69.

⁴³ A.M. HUNTER, *A Pattern for Life: An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, 60-61.

their hate and become reconciled. In short — it is a theo-politics of little loving steps aimed at making the enemy cease to be an enemy.”⁴⁴ But it does not seem that Jesus commands love of enemies so that they change. We are meant to love them and not to change them. Jesus had no utilitarian view in mind in giving the command. As the verse ahead will suggest, he wants us to act like our Father who loves unconditionally.

The expression, “hate your enemy,” is not attested to in the Old Testament. “Possibly, the redactor Matthew added it as a logical extension, perhaps adapting a Jewish Catechetical rule, such as that passed down by the Qumran sect (1QS I 3-4: God commanded ‘to love everything that he has chosen but to hate everything that he has rejected.’).”⁴⁵ In this way, Matthew shows that the command to love is expressed in a limited way in Judaism.

For Matthew, the term μίσειν literally means “to hate” and not only “not to love”. Even though he knew it means “to reject” he uses it in the equivocal sense of “to hate”⁴⁶.

The command to love our neighbour was a law of God, Le x ix. 18. That we must therefore hate our enemy was an inference drawn from it by the Jews. They supposed that if we love the one, we must of course hate the other. They were total strangers to the great, peculiar law of religion which requires us to love both. A neighbour is literally one that is near to us by acts of kindness and friendship. This is its meaning here.⁴⁷

It is to be noted that verse 43 is in no way saying that Jesus was rejecting Old Testament doctrine. Rather, by emphasising “the need to love those one would prefer not to love (v.44), he was rejecting the gloss that permitted hate while reaffirming the

⁴⁴ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 97-98.

⁴⁵ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 87.

⁴⁶ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 87.

⁴⁷ A. BARNES, *Barnes' Notes: Notes on the New Testament, Matthew and Mark*, 60.

very command for love that was presented by the Torah itself.”⁴⁸

Verse 44 Εγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς,

(But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,.)

It is only natural to love one's friend and very unnatural to love one's enemies.

There are two kinds of love: 1) Love of complacency, feelings by which we approve of the conduct of another. 2) Love of benevolence in which we wish well to a person though we cannot approve of his / her conduct. It is the love of benevolence that we bear toward our enemies.⁴⁹ For one thing,

it is impossible to love the conduct of a man that curses and reviles us, that injures our person or property, or that violates all the laws of God; but, though we hate his conduct and suffer keenly when we are affected by it, yet we may still wish well to the person; we might pity his madness and folly; we may speak kindly of him and to him; we may return good for evil; we may aid him in the time of trial [...].⁵⁰

This is the kind of love Christ wants us to have by the command, “love your enemies”.

This verse is Jesus' counterthesis as the commandment of love has validity vis-à-vis one's enemies. It is to be expressed in intercessory prayer. Jesus' demand is absolute and allows no restrictions. It says: whoever comes against you with hostile intent is supposed to encounter your love and intercession.⁵¹

Love of enemies invites us to transcend human nature. Though the emotions of love may be psychologically impossible, acts of constructive love are within our capacity. In other words, in neither action nor word should one treat the enemy the way he or she has acted.

⁴⁸ R.H. WORTH, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Old Testament Roots*, 112.

⁴⁹ A. BARNES, *Barnes' Notes: Notes on the New Testament, Matthew and Mark*, 60.

⁵⁰ A. BARNES, *Barnes' Notes: Notes on the New Testament, Matthew and Mark*, 60-61.

⁵¹ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 88.

Jesus' command on loving one's enemies is not founded on human presuppositions, but is purely understood from a divine realm:

both friend and foe are nearing the coming Kingdom of God. They will both have to answer for themselves before the Supreme Judge. [...] like oneself, one's fellow human beings — the pleasant and the unpleasant, those of good will as well as those of evil intent — can also be left to the judgement and grace of the universal Judge. Here is the unconditional solidarity of sinners before a judging God.⁵²

This command, "love your enemies," shows an example of the "independence of Jesus' ethical radicalism both *vis-à-vis* his Jewish surroundings and in comparison with the Christian church"⁵³.

If in the Old Testament, "the 'enemies' are identical with opponents of the people of God, then the same is true for the new people of God. The phrase, "your enemies" stands in parallel to 'those who persecute you'."⁵⁴

The verb *διωκέων* is a technical term for the persecution of the Christian community. Thus the commandment of love and of intercessory prayer has as its object the persecutors of Christians [...]. Faced with persecution and the experience of unwarranted suffering, the Christian community has its existence on the line. Will it allow the violence striking it to provoke it to hate and counterviolence, or is it capable of standing by the word of the Son of God and thereby holding fast to its calling?⁵⁵

"One manifestation of love of enemies will be in prayer; praying for an enemy and loving him will prove mutually reinforcing. The more love, the more prayer; the more prayer, the more love."⁵⁶ We recall that both Jesus and Saint Stephen prayed for those who persecuted and even killed them. That is a typical indication of love of enemies. This is what disciples are invited to do.

⁵² G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 88.

⁵³ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 88.

⁵⁴ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 89.

⁵⁵ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 89-90.

⁵⁶ F.E. GAEBELEIN, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, VIII, 158.

Verse 45 ὅπως γένησθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς, ὅτι τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλει ἐπὶ πονηροὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς καὶ βρέχει ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους. (“That you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven [...]”)

“The word son among the Jews had a great variety of significations. It means literally a son; then a grandson; a descendant; an adopted son; a disciple, or one who is an object of tender affection — one who is to us as a son.”⁵⁷ But “Christians are called the sons or children of God in several of these senses: as his offspring; as adopted; as his disciples; as imitators of him. In this passage the word is applied to them because, in doing good to enemies, they resemble God.”⁵⁸ God treats all, good and bad alike, without discrimination. So, too, those who are his children should possess his spirit and imitate him by doing good in like manner.

Verse 45 spells out once more the unconditional and unique demand of Jesus. It is “not an ideal of humankind but the unconditional demand of Jesus, not the regularity of nature but the self-identification action of the Creator, independent of human efforts—this is what points to the foundation and the example for proper human endeavour. The introduction with ὅπως (“so that”) makes the finality of the rational. More clearly [...] the goal and theme of human activity is expressed [...]”⁵⁹

It is to be noted that the verb γένησθε is derived from γίνομαι, which means *to become* and not from εἶμι, which means *to be*. It follows necessarily then that anyone (without restriction) who heeds Jesus’ call to love of enemies may therefore become

⁵⁷ A. BARNES, *Barnes’ Notes: Notes on the New Testament, Matthew and Mark*, 1.

⁵⁸ A. BARNES, *Barnes’ Notes: Notes on the New Testament, Matthew and Mark*, 61.

⁵⁹ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 90.

God's child.

The subjunctive γένησθε ("might become") designates not an evolution but perhaps a transformation into sons of God [...]. Thus a condition of divine sonship is not presupposed [...]. In content it corresponds to the future εσεσθε [...] with the imperative meaning "you shall be". Although the goal of divine sonship for followers of Jesus is the object of the promise [...] and remains unrealized, it already defines present activity. God being "our Father" [...] motivates the behaviour of the community [...]. His fatherly goodness is not directed according to good and evil, according to the worth and unworth of people. God is benevolent without respect to persons. As a creator, he supports everything he created. Such unrestricted goodness must give rise to imitation. In like manner, the demanded realization of sonship in love *vis-à-vis* one's enemy may not inquire of the favourable or unfavourable nature of circumstances, but is supposed to obey the commandment of love.⁶⁰

God's love must thus be our own model. God loves indiscriminately. Only those who obstinately refuse this love might end up in hell.

Verse 46 εἰν γὰρ ἀγαπήσητε τοὺς ἀγαπῶντας ὑμᾶς, τίνα μισθὸν ἔχετε; οὐχὶ καὶ οἱ τελῶναι τὸ αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν;
(For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?).

This verse is saying that any love devoted only to those who love us first is very far from God's love. Such a love remains at the human level. Because of the Father's unconditional love he sent his only Son when humankind sinned (and, in a sense, became his enemies). Our sin never conditioned his love for us.

Furthermore the question, "what reward have you?" being rhetorical presupposes a *NO* answer. "The word reward seems to be used in the sense of deserving praise."⁶¹ "Jesus addresses the words "what reward have you?" to a world in which everything is calculated: love for love, salute for salute, help for help. Everything is measured by a pair of scales, and nothing new is to be expected."⁶² As

⁶⁰ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 90-91.

⁶¹ A. BARNES, *Barnes' Notes: Notes on the New Testament, Matthew and Mark*, 61.

⁶² H. HENDRICKX, *The Sermon on the Mount: Studies in the Synoptic Gospels*, 94-95.

Christ's followers, we are not to act merely like others. For it is selfishness to love only those who love you. Such a love is only love for the benefit and not love for the character (person). Nature generally inclines us to love those who love us, but we have to go beyond nature. The only evidence of a superior principle is to love those who hate you or who do not love you.

In regard to his reference to "tax collectors", "Matthew follows the conceptual system of his model, which was common to his community. In distinction to the parable tradition in the special material of the Third Gospel, the tax collectors are pictured as a negative example. They are the representatives of mutual love and cannot satisfy the demand of God."⁶³

This verse, together with the next, serves to illustrate the higher righteousness. The threefold structure in 46 is repeated in 47.

46a	If you [...]	47a	And if you [...]
46b	What reward have you?	47b	What are you doing that is remarkable?
46c	Do not also [...]?	47c	Do not also [...]?

Verse 47 καὶ ἐὰν ἀσπάσησθε τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὑμῶν μόνον, τί περισσὸν ποιεῖτε; οὐχὶ καὶ οἱ ἔθνικοὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν; (**Salute**)

The word *salute* "not only represents a polite conventional form but also, in accord with Oriental custom of peace greeting, is a blessing. Such greeting carries the force of benediction [...]. The greeting of the 'brethren' [...] does not overcome the primitive give-and-get principle, which says that one gives in order to receive. Thus, it

⁶³ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 91-92.

characterizes the ἔθνη,“⁶⁴ i.e., Gentiles. To salute is thus not simply to ‘greet’ but to desire God’s blessing and peace on another.

Salute also means “to show the customary tokens of civility, or to treat with the common marks of friendship [...]. The Saviour says [...] Christians should do more; they should show that they have a different spirit; they should treat their enemies as well as wicked men do their friends.”⁶⁵ Religion, and Christianity in particular, is to be shown as superior to other principles of action and not to be portrayed as selfishness.

ἔθνη is often rendered “Gentiles,” but “non-Christian pagan is also a possibility”⁶⁶. What we see here is that the true disciple’s or Christian’s behaviour is contrasted with that of the Gentiles, those who do not know God. Thus “the phrase ‘the Gentiles’ is not necessarily directed against the pagans, but rather a cliché applied to a certain type of behaviour in order to criticize such behaviour. But even these people show love where it is reciprocated. The true disciple must do better than that.”⁶⁷

The righteousness of Christ’s followers must go farther than that of the scribes and the Pharisees. For “the commandment of love requires more than the usual and normal. It is radical without its radical nature cancelling its meaningfulness and intentionality — both are expressed in the idea of reward.”⁶⁸

In this verse Matthew employs “a term that implies the Jewish depreciation of the Gentile world. This original opposition of Jews and Gentiles is no longer valid for

⁶⁴ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 91.

⁶⁵ A. BARNES, *Barnes’ Notes: Notes on the New Testament, Matthew and Mark*, 61.

⁶⁶ W.D. DAVIES – D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, I, 559.

⁶⁷ H. HENDRICKX, *The Sermon on the Mount: Studies in the Synoptic Gospels*, 94.

⁶⁸ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 92.

the Evangelist [...]. Similarly, to the tax collectors, the Gentiles in the first Gospel are also types for non-Christian, sinful people. Thus, the intended meaning is ‘unconverted people’.⁶⁹ The verse, in our day, therefore refers to anyone who is hard-hearted and not ready to be touched by the words of Jesus so as to be converted.

Verse 48 Ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι ὡς ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν.
 (“Be perfect [...].”)

The concluding οὖν (‘therefore’) is indeed very redactional. For one thing,

the Matthean ‘therefore,’[...] asserts that Jesus’ teaching [...] requires both: *agape* and righteousness. In both, attitude and action, inward and outward behavior are to become one. Through both, human hypocrisy is overcome, and the eschatological demand of the Son of God is realized [...]. The unconditionality of the demand leaves no room for the distinction and definition of relationship between gift and duty. Jesus’ listeners are summoned to an unlimited responsibility [...].⁷⁰

Jesus thus gives a standard of behaviour to all Christians.

Τέλειος is derived from the Semitic word, תָּמִיִּם (*tāmîm*). And it means

“whole” or “complete,” “finished,” “pure” or even “holy”. It refers to a piety that is “complete, proportionate, regular.”⁷¹ Therefore,

the Matthean Jesus demanded the wholeness, undividedness of the person. Not a *both-and* but a *neither-or* marks this understanding. Human beings face radical decision before God. No other alternatives are left open: there is only the choice between obedience and disobedience. Consequently, the ethic of Jesus may not be understood in terms of an idealistic teaching on duty or virtues, or an ethic of good or worth. Instead, all concrete moral decisions are turned over completely to individual responsibility; a person’s action has a definite character; in it he becomes a righteous person or a sinner.⁷²

⁶⁹ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 92.

⁷⁰ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 94.

⁷¹ A. BARNES, *Barnes’ Notes: Notes on the New Testament, Matthew and Mark*, 62.

⁷² G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 93.

which Matthew's thought is influenced by the wisdom tradition, it seems the immediate context of 5:48 will be a key to understanding it. It is now known that "the tradition demanded love of neighbour, but Jesus demands love of enemy, which means in effect, love of all [...]. To obey Jesus' words, his law, is, therefore, to love utterly: no more can be asked. And in this lies perfection: love of unrestrained compass lacks for nothing. It is catholic, all-inclusive. It is perfect."⁷⁶ Only a wisdom teacher could probably teach as uniquely as Jesus. The perfection he calls for also qualifies as a call to wisdom.

It is to be noted that this perfection is not opposed to concrete demands, not a superachievement in opposition to an ethical scale of values. "It is rather the human realization of Jesus' instructions and hence identical with the demanded righteousness (5:20)."⁷⁷

To be perfect, as has been explained and expanded upon, does not just refer to the highest ideal that the Christian must aspire to. The ethic of Matthew on perfection is a general Christian ethic for the entire community and not just for some people. This perfection requires the whole person. For "Jesus' call to perfection means the complete and concrete person [...] according to which the perfect, complete person brings forth perfect work of steadfastness."⁷⁸

Still according to Lapide, this perfection:

has the sense of wholeness—the opposite of conflict [...]. This concept of wholeness (*shalem*) is included in shalom, which implies a three-dimensional wholeness — as an

⁷⁶ W.D. DAVIES – D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, I, 562-563.

⁷⁷ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 94.

⁷⁸ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 94.

all-encompassing harmony of unity that corresponds to the demand for impeccability and purity of heart [...]. This unrestricted, unbroken wholeness demands one's entire heart and total behavior, so that conviction and conduct are hewed out of a simple stone, precluding schizophrenia. Integral wholeness of the entire potential of human nature is thus seen as a realizable challenge.⁷⁹

Perfection as used here is not concerned with sinlessness but with wholeness.

The motivation for being perfect in love is rooted in the Father's own love: He gives without measure. God's deeds rather than his nature is emphasised here. He gives to the good and bad alike.

4. THE GOLDEN RULE, 7:12

Matthew frames the Golden Rule positively unlike the world around the New Testament that frames it negatively. The Golden Rule is a general maxim that serves as an inclusion to 5:17 in the SM. It comes almost at the end of SM.

The general character of the rule is accentuated especially by two factors. Firstly, the commanded action (ποιείτε) is not defined in terms of what must or must not be done. The concrete doing will depend each time on the agents themselves, on their intentions, dispositions and feelings to which the rule is addressed. Secondly, the receivers of that doing are indicated by a very universal term <<the people>> (οἱ ἄνθρωποι) which may imply just anyone. In a way, this universality was already prepared and anticipated through the generalizing⁸⁰

“love your enemies”. The use of the second person plural in this rule establishes a link between the rule and the command, “love your enemies”.

“In its positive form, the Golden Rule calls clearly for action and not just re-action. It invites initiative and activity not passivity, doing good and not just withholding from doing wrong. As a result, the Golden Rule [...] appears to be a kind of summary of what it means to behave lovingly toward people, enemies included.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 118.

⁸⁰ C. OWCZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 154.

⁸¹ C. OWCZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 155.

In fact, the way the rule is “structured points to the theme of the love of enemies as its main topic.”⁸²

The rule is simply inviting us to do that which we know is best, not just good, for the others, since we always want the best for ourselves. This is beyond mere reciprocity. Jesus simply establishes the norm of behaviour for his listeners: “Whatever they consider to be to their advantage should become the starting point of their acting toward other people and not its aim [...]. The followers of Jesus should base their ethical conduct on what they judge to be good in itself and this they should do to others, regardless of what others might or might not do to them.”⁸³

The rule suggests that people should overcome natural egoism. “According to this rule, the love of self, so deeply rooted in every human being [...] is to become a mirror in which every follower of Jesus should see the needs of others. Disciples should regard these needs with no less consideration than their own and should take care of them exactly as they take care of their own needs [...]”⁸⁴

Some scholars like Paul Ricoeur think that the Golden Rule has diverse interpretations based on the context. This being the case, we say that our context here is the command, “love your enemies”. It means that this verse cannot be interpreted in terms of self-interest but rather self-sacrifice or self-forgetful attendance to the needs of others. Of course, at first glance the rule seems to reflect a morality of a naïve egoism, i.e., letting one’s action toward others follow the other’s behaviour, but “the ethical

⁸² C. OWZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 156.

⁸³ C. OWZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 157.

⁸⁴ C. OWZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 157.

norm of the Golden Rule exceeds both the reciprocity and the reality of human behaviour. For characteristic of its realization is the will or deed of another, but knows that one is placed under the unrestricted demand to do the good that one wishes for oneself and not to do the evil that one would not like to suffer oneself.”⁸⁵

The Golden Rule brings to conclusion our theme, “love your enemies.” “Mt 7:12 is [...] a general rule that is the quintessence not only of the Law and the Prophets but also the Sermon on the Mount. [...] the golden rule means living the commandments of Jesus on behalf of all other people.”⁸⁶

Indeed, the Golden Rule (as with the whole SM) “serves the purpose of taking people beyond themselves: again and again, although it promises reward, the Sermon on the Mount crucifies the ego. It is the same with 7:12. One begins with the ego as the reference point, but one immediately moves beyond.”⁸⁷ The rule is therefore a law one can obey only after reflection. For, “it is a general principle that requires imaginative application. Once again [...] the text comes to us not with a rule but with an invitation to demonstrate creatively a generosity akin to that of God (see 5:43-48).”⁸⁸

This rule is beyond dos and don'ts. It invites the followers of Christ to live in such a way that their way of life can become a standard. It deals with practical ethics and issues and not theory. It links the demands of compliance and love of enemies. “The command of unconditional love defines its application. It is thus a component of the community admonition [...]. It marks the ‘more’ that the Christian community must

⁸⁵ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 153.

⁸⁶ D.C. ALLISON, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination*, 35-36.

⁸⁷ D.C. ALLISON, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination*, 160.

⁸⁸ D.C. ALLISON, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination*, 161.

do in discipleship to Jesus if it wants to be certain of the promise.”⁸⁹

Placing the Golden Rule at the close of the section of the SM points back to the central theme of the SM: new or higher righteousness. As it appears,

the Golden Rule summarises ‘all things’ that were proclaimed in the foregoing individual directives. Thus it matches the Matthean tendency toward fundamental principles [...] esp. 5:48 [...] and is often attested in the first Gospel. As a rendering of the Old Testament will of God, it is at the same time the summary representative of the ethical instructions of Jesus. This standard for the right behavior of the followers expresses what the Lord demands: a better righteousness (5:20), perfection (5:48), mercy [...] and love of enemy as an expression of the unrestricted love of God and neighbor (5:44, [...]).⁹⁰

Although this rule has been part of Jewish ethics, only Jesus stated it positively. In this way “it speaks against the sins of omission as well as the sins of commission.”⁹¹ The rationale behind the Golden Rule lies in its connection with revealed truth as found in the Law and Prophets. Thus, “the rule is the Law and the Prophets in the same way the kingdom is the fulfilment of all that the Law and the Prophets foretold.”⁹²

In concluding this section, we affirm that

Matthew’s inclusion of the ‘Golden Rule’ (7:12) urges disciples to identify with the other, to perceive the other’s concrete need as though it were the disciple’s, to act toward the other as though the other were oneself. The morally right act is simply but radically the act which demonstrates the forgiving attentiveness to the needs of the others disclosed by Jesus as the will of God. Love is defined in Matthew’s Sermon as a way of acting, not as an emotion. However, inferable from the deeds done is an attitude toward others which might be characterized as empathy, kindness, generosity, or compassion.⁹³

Attentiveness to this will do away with any dilemmas in the ethic of love, such as the conflicts that could exist between love and justice or making a choice between two

⁸⁹ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 153-154.

⁹⁰ G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 154-155.

⁹¹ F.E. GAEBELEIN, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 187.

⁹² F.E. GAEBELEIN, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 187.

⁹³ L.S. CAHILL, “The Ethical Implications of the Sermon on the Mount,” *Interpretation* XLI (1987) 144-156.

neighbours. We are now able and ready to enter into any such conflicts, not to remove them, but identify the needs of others as our own.

5. THE THEOLOGY OF THE TEXT

The command “love your enemies,” reveals some basic theological themes. The theological themes mentioned here are by no means exhaustive. Each reader is challenged to add his or her own.

The passage in a sense reveals the theology of divinisation. For “the point of the passage is not to state the means of becoming sons but the necessity of pursuing a certain kind of sonship patterned after the Father’s character.”⁹⁴ Thus Christ says in v.45 that the aim of loving is that we become children of our Father in heaven. And in v.48, he calls us to be perfect as God himself is. To become children of God is to share in Christ’s sonship and thus we become divinised. It is all a matter of *BECOMING*.

Law is basically one of the theological themes. Speaking to his disciples about the Old Law, which the Jewish authorities had misinterpreted and made very legalistic, Jesus told them that the New Law is a universal love, a law written in our heart. Jesus’ disciples must therefore live and love beyond the patterns surrounding them. “Doing the greater righteousness is always, finally an exercise of love (7:12).”⁹⁵ J.M. Cubbs depicts Jesus as “Torah incarnate”.⁹⁶

This law, as mentioned above, is now the law of love. Matthew emphasised this

⁹⁴ F.E. GAEBELEIN, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 159.

⁹⁵ J.D. KINGSBURY, “The Place, Structure, and Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount,” *Interpretation* XLI (1987) 131-143.

⁹⁶ J.M. CUBBS, “The Son of God as Torah Incarnate in Matthew,” *Studia Evangelica*, IV, (1968) 38-46.

once more by including mercy. “Law is the glue of structures; by going beyond the law [...] to reorder relationships to include the excluded, Matthew’s Jesus shows that mercy must be at the heart of the new ethic.”⁹⁷ There is thus a call to conversion and a moral reordering of all that is not in accord with God, especially in terms of relationship. It is only by being converted that we can change and have a positive attitude towards others and so live well with those who hate us.

Theologians see this love of God as God’s “‘common grace’ (i.e., the gracious favor God bestows ‘commonly,’ without distinction, on all men). He could with justice condemn all; instead he shows repeated and prolonged favor on all.”⁹⁸

For some scholars, “vv. 44–45 insist that the OT law cited (v.43) points to the wealth of love exercised by the heirs of the kingdom, a love qualitatively different from that experienced by other people.”⁹⁹ Blessing and praying for those who persecute us mean aligning ourselves with God’s own character.

More is demanded from the disciples of Christ. For as Christ says in v.46, even the “outsiders” do the least. Certainly, “Matthew’s theology of discipleship can be understood by examining the image of those faithful elect who are ‘inside’ the house [...] or who gather to be with Jesus, who understand his teachings, and who put them into practice, thus becoming the fruit of justice which is doing the will of the heavenly Father.”¹⁰⁰ Anyone who thus claims to be a disciple, an “insider” must show this in his or her actions, and must not just do the barest minimum, but more. “The Sermon

⁹⁷ M.H. CROSBY, *House of Disciples*, 199.

⁹⁸ F.E. GAEBELEIN, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 158-159

⁹⁹ F.E. GAEBELEIN, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 159.

¹⁰⁰ M.H. CROSBY, *House of Disciples*, 262.

indicates a way of life which presupposes conversion; the Sermon's portrayal of discipleship, while not literal prescriptions, creates ideals and sets burdens of proof for all concrete embodiments."¹⁰¹ The reconciliation (in terms of conversion and loving enemies) called for, is only ingredient to the rule of God.

The SM depicts the Kingdom of God. Indeed,

a key theme of the Sermon's depiction of the Kingdom of God is imitation of God; to act as God does, with forgiveness and mercy, is to live in the Kingdom [...]. The purpose of loving even the enemy is to be sons of your father who is in heaven (5:45a); if one is to go beyond merely self-gratifying relationships, then one must aim to be as 'perfect' in the ways of mercy and forbearance 'as your heavenly Father is perfect' (5:48).¹⁰²

This kingdom is already here in the person of Jesus who reveals to us that God's love is universal. Loving unconditionally and universally will thus bring us to behold God face to face. The sayings in Mt 5:43-48 which "express the inherent rule of the kingdom of God, are God's ultimate way of dealing with humanity exhibited in the life and death of Jesus who went to the cross."¹⁰³ The SM expresses kingdom ethics. It calls for conduct in line with the present age of salvation. These demands are requirements for entering the kingdom in its future realisation.

For one thing, "the Matthean Jesus [...] makes the command to love enemies specific and concrete [...]. For Matthew the focal instance was the concrete situation of the persecuted Matthean community. But such concrete point of orientation then has the effect of making love universal."¹⁰⁴ This is a theology of love, love that is more radical and more discriminating.

¹⁰¹ L.S. CAHILL, "The Ethical Implications of the Sermon on the Mount," 146.

¹⁰² L.S. CAHILL, "The Ethical Implications of the Sermon on the Mount," 149-150.

¹⁰³ L.E. KECK, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, VIII, 198.

¹⁰⁴ L.E. KECK, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 195.

The Sermon on the Mount also presents implicit eschatological themes. To be children of God is fully realised when we come face to face with God; we only behold a glimpse of it here. Generally speaking, "it is the eschatology of the Sermon, not its morality, that confounds contemporary Christians."¹⁰⁵ Why do we seek reconciliation and become converted? Most likely because the court we are rushing to belongs to God. "We seek reconciliation [...] because the End toward which we journey will be characterized by the reconciliation already effected in Jesus Christ. Our ethical behavior, what we *do* now, is a downpayment on the perfect peace, harmony, love, purity, and worship that will characterize the End."¹⁰⁶

Perfection is the goal of all Christian struggles. It is the intensification of the laws. Rightly speaking, perfection is God's; but the perfection of the disciples is their discipleship. "Perfection is wholehearted discipleship."¹⁰⁷ "To be perfect is to serve God wholeheartedly, to be single-minded in devotion to the one God just as God is one, the ethical stance appropriate to a monotheistic faith."¹⁰⁸

Selfishness is at the root of every sin. This is what Mt 5:43-48 is reacting against. For "in loving his friends a man may in a certain sense be loving only himself—a kind of expanded selfishness [...]."¹⁰⁹ It is thus a theology that invites us to leave sin behind in its totality, that is, to dig to the root of sin and then uproot it.

¹⁰⁵ R.LISCHER, "The Sermon on the Mount as Radical Pastoral Care," *Interpretation* XL1 (1987) 157-169.

¹⁰⁶ R.LISCHER, "The Sermon on the Mount as Radical Pastoral Care," 161.

¹⁰⁷ B.B. THURSTON, "Matthew 5:43-48," *Interpretation* XL1 (1987) 170-173.

¹⁰⁸ L.E. KECK, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 198.

¹⁰⁹ F.E. GAEBELEIN, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 160.

We are now to lead a life of a redeemed people, who truly follow the justice and righteousness of God. "The life of the old (fallen) humanity is based on rough justice, avenging injuries and returning favours. The life of the new (redeemed) humanity is based on divine love, refusing to revenge but overcoming evil with good."¹¹⁰ This is the theology of love: Love as universal, unconditional and boundless. Love confined only to those we are at home with is lacking and so not complete and not perfect.

A look at the pericope in question shows that:

the Sermon reflects the christological, eschatological, and ethical stance of the Evangelist [...]. Jesus' teaching contains an eschatological call to decision in the light of the coming eschaton that confronts one [...]. Therefore, the Sermon sets forth the 'righteousness' demanded by Jesus [...] as requirement for the Kingdom of Heaven.¹¹¹

The Sermon serves more of a christological function than of an ethical function. Matthew "portrays Jesus as the eschatological fulfillment of the prophetic hope of the Scripture [...] one whose ministry including his death/resurrection, provides the 'turning point of the old and new aeons'."¹¹²

Reading between the lines, one discovers that a certain wisdom lies in Jesus' saying and that "the solemn 'But I tell you' [...] provides a christological base for such wisdom — the Matthean Jesus is among other things, a wisdom-teacher — but the intent of this is clearly to expand the teaching, not to narrow it."¹¹³ Thus

Jesus uses the wisdom language with its appeals to nature and human experience to point to the divine presence as something that is around, at hand, part of our world [...]. Mt has caught the special, revolutionary experience of this presence of God and the surprise inherent in Jesus' exhortation by framing the love of enemies command as part of a series of antitheses.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ F.E. GAEBELEIN, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 160.

¹¹¹ R.A. GUELICH, "Interpreting the Sermon on the Mount," *Interpretation* XLI (1987) 117-130.

¹¹² R.A. GUELICH, "Interpreting the Sermon on the Mount," 128.

¹¹³ C.E. CARLSTON, "Matthew 6:24-34," *Interpretation* XLI (1987) 179-183.

¹¹⁴ P. PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 48.

Basically, SM “summons the ‘disciple’ to a new relationship with God and others that issues in conduct befitting the age of salvation (‘the greater righteousness’) made possible in this through the presence of God’s eschatological rule in Jesus Messiah, Son of God.”¹¹⁵ Since in God, the Three Persons of the Trinity enjoy a perfect relationship, SM calls us to imitate such a relationship. As children of God, to be perfect as he is is to imitate him in his perfect relationship. It is only when we are able to imitate him in this way that we can claim our new identity as members of his family.

The pericope under investigation reveals that holiness or perfection uniquely belongs to God and to him alone. In fact, it unfolds “the essential nature of God and is delivered by the only one capable of mediating that holiness.”¹¹⁶

The ethic of the Sermon is one of discipleship. The concerns of 5:43-48 converge in three claims: 1) God’s reign is present only in those who share with Jesus God’s special righteousness; 2) the kingdom righteousness of forgiving love is given to those who wholeheartedly pray for it; and 3) converted, a ctive discipleship presents itself to hearers of Jesus’ words as a duty for which each will be held responsible.¹¹⁷

Therefore, “the SM is not a law to be obeyed, but a theology to be intellectually appropriated and internalized, in order then to be creatively developed and implemented in concrete situations of life.”¹¹⁸ This is a Matthean theme which calls for sincerity that translates words into action.

¹¹⁵ R.A. GUELLICH, “Interpreting the Sermon on the Mount,” 129.

¹¹⁶ L. LISCHER, “The Sermon on the Mount as Radical Pastoral Care,” 166.

¹¹⁷ L.S. CAHILL, “The Ethical Implication of the Sermon on the Mount,” 156.

¹¹⁸ R.A. GUELLICH, “Interpreting the Sermon on the Mount,” 127.

In 5:43-48 “a fundamental note of the Gospel has been sounded: Salvation is a gift, a gift whose creative power breaks into our world of pains and darkness to make us whole and blessed.”¹¹⁹

6. Conclusion

In this chapter we have discovered that Jesus takes the meaning of neighbour back to its intended meaning in the Torah. Neighbour is any human person we come in contact with that stands in need. Although we find some traces of the call for Israelites to love those who wrong them as we see in the Pentateuch, the Historical Books and the Wisdom Literature, yet, “love your enemies” as a command is unique to Jesus.

In the exegetical part, each verse was analysed. Reference was made to different commentaries and exegetical works to carry this analysis out.

The Golden Rule invites all Christ’s disciples to do that which is best for others. It is a norm of behaviour. Whatever one sees as advantageous to oneself, one has to do to others. Unlike the surrounding cultures that used the negative aspect, that is, “do to no one what you yourself dislike,” Jesus turns it to a positive saying and so includes in it the sins of omission and commission. The Rule complements the command to love one’s enemies.

The theology of the text reveals that we love so as to become God’s children, in other words, in loving as God does, we become divinised. The new law is universal love, which is not separated from mercy. Disciples must be converted and show mercy. It is a theology of discipleship. Those who are disciples must do more than the

¹¹⁹ S. DONALD, *Invitation to Matthew: A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew with Text from Jerusalem Bible*, 60.

minimum, as required by law. Since selfishness is at the root of every sin, it must be rooted out. For it is because of selfishness that we are not able to love universally.

CHAPTER THREE

LOVE OF ENEMY: A CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIAN LIFE IN ENWAN

1. INTRODUCTION

This Chapter is an application of Mt 5:43-48; 7:12. In its first part it will focus on overcoming all forms of barriers to relationships. Basically it treats a general call to all Christ's disciples to enter into a universal love relationship with all people rather than those of one's own preference.

The second part will delve concretely into the situation at Enwan. A look at the situation reveals that within the Catholic Church, there is no real unity, but only a hypothetical idea that all members of St. Patrick's Catholic Church are one. This is far from the truth. And thus, there is a call to intra-Christian unity. Also, the Catholics and other Christian members within the village do not seem to see themselves as belonging to one fold and one shepherd, Christ Jesus. They live as though each has a different Jesus. But our pericope calls us to recall that Christian unity is a necessity for Christians to be able to face the challenges of Christian discipleship. Hence, inter-Christian unity will also be treated.

The recent development between Enwan and Akuku calls the attention of every serious Christian to evaluate his/her Christian life. Since God never created two Adams (the Scriptures do not tell us that), then we are all one people. As human beings with rationality, why do we fight and kill each other? If lower animals with only instinct do such, it should not be part of humanity. This passage thus calls for inter-tribal unity.

2. Love of Enemy as a Challenge to Overcoming all Forms of Barriers to Relationships.

A worldly way of responding to evil is to return evil for evil or to return hate for evil done to us. But Matthew teaches “how Christians are to respond to evil deeds in their daily life”¹²⁰. Christians are never to return hate for hate but should imitate God who never counts the evils we do but continues to love us unconditionally. God himself is to be the standard of Christian actions and response. Christians are not to allow the enemy’s way of doing things to dictate how they themselves live their lives.

Matthew also stresses the way Christians are to be unique in their relationships. If Christians only love and greet those who love and greet them, they are doing nothing exceptional. The exceptionality comes when they are able to go beyond their natural human tendencies to imitate God. All Christians are called to a life of witness.

Is it really possible to witness to love of enemies if one has little or no knowledge of God? This is why for Matthew (as with the Gospels in general), “one’s understanding of God is the ultimate source of Christian responsibility in the world.”¹²¹ Many spiritual writers and mystics (such as John of the Cross, Teresa of Jesus) have discovered that the higher people ascend in their relationship and communion with God, the more God-like they become in their treatment of others. Though they do not condone the evils that others do, yet they excuse them because whatever others do, they probably do out of weakness. This is the call of the command, “Love your enemies.”

¹²⁰ D. PATTE, *The Challenge of Discipleship: A Critical Study of the Sermon of the Mount as Scripture*, 141-142.

¹²¹ M.H. CROSBY, *The Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, 21.

To remove the barriers in one's relationship with others, one has to constantly excuse what people do wrongly. Realising too that one is weak, one excuses the other person. If God who is in no way weak excuses us, should not our own weakness serve as a corrective measure for our behaviours? This is what the Golden Rule is calling us to. For to act in the manner of the Golden Rule

is to bring to expression that to which the law and the prophets pointed. That is, a world where only good is done to others involves by definition eschatological fulfillment, a return to the paradise of the Garden of Eden. To do good to others is to mirror the activity of the Father (7:11), which of course finds its supreme manifestation in the eschatological fulfillment brought by the Son.¹²²

Indeed, "not loving one's enemies is a betrayal of one's relationship with — not being perfect as — one's Father in heaven."¹²³ Every disciple or apprentice of a master aspires to be as good as his/her master or even better. Certainly, we cannot be as perfect as God is. But he has come down to our level by telling us that in a way, our perfection consists in loving our enemies. Of course, it is difficult, but he knows that it is not beyond our attainment. If calling ourselves disciples of Christ is not mere lip service, then, we have to break down all barriers to our relationships by loving unconditionally. When the world sees the way Christians relate to it despite its hostility, it will say "really these are disciples of Christ." This is what Christ refers to when he says, "seeing your good work (and here, seeing your unique relationship with the world), they will say you are my disciples." Discipleship is demanding, but if we are disciples, we will follow in the footsteps of the master.

"Jesus seems to have sought to overcome boundaries which separated

¹²² D.A. HAGNER, *World Biblical Commentary*, 177.

¹²³ D. PATTE, *The Challenge of Discipleship*, 156.

people.”¹²⁴ This is his invitation to all his disciples. Disciples are to break and overcome all barriers in relationships that separate people.

Basically, “there is nothing special about hating enemies and loving friends. Anyone — tax-collector, Gentile, sinner — does that [...]: God does not behave that way. Mt gives a nature analogy to explain the inclusive character of God’s action.”¹²⁵ God makes the rain fall and the sun to shine on both the just and unjust alike

Jesus shows that “the basis for human action is how God treats ‘his enemies’ in contrast with the way in which Jesus’ contemporaries looked at questions of divine judgement and vengeance.”¹²⁶ But who are those that are God’s enemies? It seems that the most appropriate answer is anyone who sins. Thus all sinners are God’s enemies. But who is free from sin and so not a sinner? It was because of our sinfulness that God sent his only son into the world. If we are to cease being sinners, we have to leave sin behind. Jesus is telling us that one concrete way of doing that is to love universally, “love not only covers a multitude of sins,” but true love does not lead to sin. Paul, in his Letter to the Romans, asked if we are to remain in sin because God has freed us through Jesus Christ, i.e., because grace abounds more where there is sin.

“By demanding non-resistance and love of enemies, Jesus seems both to hold the faithful to impossible standards of concrete action and to break up the foundations of justice on which social cooperation is built.”¹²⁷ Justice would demand that one hates and carries out revenge on another who has wronged him/her. But Jesus is breaking

¹²⁴ P.PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 22.

¹²⁵ P.PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 30.

¹²⁶ P.PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 37.

¹²⁷ L.S. CAHILL, “The Ethical Implication of the Sermon on the Mount,” 144.

such justice by his command. It is to be noted that justice is the most minimum charity, and in fact, it is no charity as such. Jesus calls us to charity in our relationship and so every justice that must be carried out should be based on charity and aimed at the good and reformation of the other person.

Jesus' call is not to "a hypothetical pretence of love but to reconciliation with one's opponent."¹²⁸ When people are reconciled, they break existing barriers in relationships. Christ broke the barrier that existed between God and us by reconciling us to God. He calls us to do the same. To love without barriers is to show love in action by placing "the other's best interests rather than one's rights foremost."¹²⁹ It is difficult to place the other's interest before one's own, but this is the invitation of the "hard sayings".

A look at our world today shows that it is full of violence and that law is not able to solve our problem of hatred or even prejudice. In this case, "true righteousness needs a transjuridical dimension for law to become true justice [...]. It is the hopeful recognition that it is not enough to move from antagonistic being-opposite-one-another to indifferent being-along-side-one-another, for humans are also capable of fruitful being-with-one-another."¹³⁰ The command, 'love your enemies,' and the golden rule both summon all people to a creative being-with-each-other. They are to empathise with each other, be generous, show love, compassion and kindness to all so as to enter into real relationships with one another. All must realise that the primary source of evil

¹²⁸ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 97.

¹²⁹ L.S. CAHILL, "The Ethical Implication of the Sermon on the Mount," 148.

¹³⁰ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 76.

in the world is the evil in the individuals' hearts. Each has to take care of the barriers in him/herself first by rooting out the evil in his/her heart. This requires conversion.

“Forgiveness from God is a gift of God’s grace, but we must take the gift seriously and make the right ethical response if we are to appropriate the gift and incorporate it into the structures of our own lives.”¹³¹ Whoever has received forgiveness from God must extend it to others. This will lead to a cycle of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Jesus’ calling for you to love the other as a fellow human being shows that “love is not simply a dual relationship but an attitude concerning both God who endowed you with the capacity to love, and the society that you should raise to a higher community of life by little steps of love.”¹³² A better communal life among all people must be the focus.

Those we consider the weak and non-Christians are to be loved. Two things are important: Love of the weak ones among us for whom Christ died and concern for the non-Christian to whom we (Christians) must bear witness. Christian witness to the world of weakness can be properly shown in love. In the early Christian community, as in the first letter of Peter (Cf. I Pet 3:8-14), disciples were advised to be subject to rulers and masters. We can say therefore, “‘love of enemies’ was perceived as an important part of Christian witness.”¹³³ The teaching on love of enemies must be seen as an essential part of the testimony that Christians have for the world.

¹³¹ C.E. CARLSTON, “Matthew 6:24-34,” 178.

¹³² P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 76.

¹³³ P. PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 91.

Through love, we can break up structures that cause sin, barriers to human growth towards perfection. Certainly, Christians will have to deal with failures in the community in which they live. But their continued effort to love will probably set a lot of relationships right; they will break through the hardness of the world.

The command to love “is rooted in God’s love for the world, which is manifested in the mission of Jesus”¹³⁴. God broke into our world of sin by sending his only son, Jesus Christ. Jesus, in his turn, did away with all barriers affecting our relationship with God and with one another. He expects us to continue that mission.

The relationship that existed between Jews and Gentiles was one of hostility. When Jesus related with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4) and told the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-36), he showed how hostile groups live side by side, and yet he and the Good Samaritan were able to break through the barriers to relationships by extending the notion of neighbour to an “enemy”. The Good Samaritan shows in his attitude that the way one stands in relation with one’s worst enemy is likely the way one stands in relation to God. Therefore, “we must get right with our fellow man before we get into the presence of God.”¹³⁵

Compassion should thus move Christ’s disciples to act without minding the barriers and restrictions to love and relationships. Even if there are sanctions, love should go against such. This is why the Catholic Church in her wisdom grants some dispensations and shows great concerns even to those impeded by law when it comes to the issues of salvation. Salvation of the other must be at the core of whatever Christ’s

¹³⁴ P. PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 105.

¹³⁵ M.H. CROSBY, *The Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, 50.

disciple does. The Samaritans were outcasts for the Jews, yet Jesus was able to relate with them.

“Leaving all things for the sake of experiencing God’s presence reorders one’s attitude towards everything. It results in a blessing.”¹³⁶ Such a reordered life has to do with a just and righteous relationship with God, neighbour/enemy, and the world. Indeed, “those who justly reorder their relationships and resources are those whose households will ultimately be blessed. The ultimate reward or blessing for such justice will be the reign of God itself.”¹³⁷

In Mt 5:48, “God’s perfection or wholeness has been revealed in making friends of enemies. Consequently, by breaking down barriers within and beyond the household of faith [...] the members of Matthew’s house church would mirror the very patterns of God’s integrity [...]”¹³⁸

Fear can inhibit one’s relationships with others. But there is need to know that

your fellow human [...] is precisely as weak, feeble, and exposed to all the anxieties of life as you yourself are. This being-like-you disarms any fear that you might have before your reya.¹³⁹ And just as fear is disarmed, so too hate, which almost always arises from an undercurrent of fear, becomes pointless and meaningless. And as soon as fear and hate disappear, then, the gates of the heart open themselves to unencumbered, free love of neighbor.¹⁴⁰

Hatred of neighbour is really a disguised hatred of God and even of the self.

As noted earlier, the love Jesus describes “is not emotion [...] but volitional acts for the benefit and well-being of others, even those we may dislike. In this love that

¹³⁶ M.H. CROSBY, *The Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, 51.

¹³⁷ M.H. CROSBY, *House of Disciples*, 170.

¹³⁸ M.H. CROSBY, *House of Disciples*, 186.

¹³⁹ The word *reya* simply means neighbour.

¹⁴⁰ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 83.

knows no boundaries, the disciples are to reflect the generosity of God's love, who sends blessings upon both the righteous and unrighteous and who has brought the kingdom to the unworthy."¹⁴¹ Living out this righteousness confirms the disciples' attitudes as children of God. This kind of ethic will shine like light in all dark places and God will be glorified (Mt 5:16).

All human beings, in one way or another, have rebelled against God, through our sinfulness. Therefore, "to love one's enemies is, then, to treat them as God treats those who have rebelled against him. Thus, the children, the disciples should imitate their heavenly Father."¹⁴² We are all enemies of God through our sin. If despite our sinfulness God continues to treat us well, then we have the same responsibility toward others. For "full being-with-God demands an unconditional orientation to God instead of to the world and its halfway measures. It rivets its eye on the highest goal so as to make God's holiness and love the measure of its own conduct, not in order to become a showcase of virtues but rather in full consciousness of human inadequacy."¹⁴³

For Jesus, those in need "include the hated and the haters [...]. Hate corrodes the heart of the hater even before it touches the hated [...]. Give your haters tangible proof that you wish to help them so that there is no reason for them to hate you."¹⁴⁴ This suggests that both the hater and the hated all suffer from hatred. Why do we create suffering for ourselves? Any suffering that is not redemptive is not worth embracing.

¹⁴¹ D.A. HAGNER, *World Biblical Commentary*, 136.

¹⁴² D.A. HAGNER, *World Biblical Commentary*, 134.

¹⁴³ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 118.

¹⁴⁴ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 137.

Even if the enemies were God's opponents, Christ still calls us to love them. God never relents in his love despite our obstinacy sometimes.

Just as "a proper disposition toward others is an effect of the light within, so similarly [...] a selfish, ungenerous, miserly spirit, is the companion of inner darkness. That is, one's moral disposition correlates with an inner darkness or light within."¹⁴⁵ Loving our enemies illumines the world and hating them increases the darkness already in the world. God's children must allow their light to shine. We can do this by giving those who hate us more consideration than we are receiving from them. The door must always be left opened for reconciliation if we are Christ's disciples. The very fact that we ourselves have fallen short of the perfection required of God's children, should humble us rather than puffing up with unholy zeal that castigates others. Others too fall within the realm of redemption.

Jesus' teaching

affirms the value of avoiding or overcoming anything that could disrupt or threaten one's relationship with others [...]. Even if at first it appears to be costly, reestablishing relationship is good for people [...]. More fundamentally, disciples should want to be reconciled with others and to forgive them, because of the positive benefit of this attitude [...].¹⁴⁶

Jesus calls us to contribute to a new world of social relationships, that is, a reordering of relationships with God, all people, the world and oneself. We are to preserve and strengthen relationships, challenge and resist evil in the world by refusing to live according to the distorted value of system in the world.

¹⁴⁵ D.C. ALLISON, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination*, 143.

¹⁴⁶ D.C. PATTE, *The Challenge of Discipleship*, 145-146.

3. Love of Enemies as Invitation to Intra-/Inter-Christian and Inter-Tribal Unity.

3.1 *Intra-Christian Unity*

St Patrick's Catholic Church is a church that is dedicated to prayer. But the fruits of its prayer, which one expects should be manifest in its members by their love for each other and a close bond that should exist among them, is lacking. Rather, what one sees is anger, quarrelling and enmity among the members. Matthew's call for an active search for reconciliation "suggests that where there is hostility between man and man, it is vain to offer worship to God."¹⁴⁷ We make our prayers confidently when we know that we have forgiven those who offended us.

This is why Mt 5:43-48 and 7:12 become a challenge for them. The command "love your enemies" "serves to regulate relationships between members of a community, just as love of brother does, and to insure that feuds and vengeance do not destroy the community."¹⁴⁸ The church is gradually being destroyed by vengeance, which though subtle, is powerful in its influence.

The letter of First Peter rightly "perceives the situation of enmity envisaged by the teaching on love of enemies to be a kind of day to day hostility that a Christian might run into in his/her"¹⁴⁹ daily relationships with fellow Christians and neighbours. This pre-empts the present situation at Enwan Catholic Church. But it is said, "charity begins at home." If members of the same fold are not united in their love, how can they ever evangelise others? You sometimes hear other Christians asking, "By the way, in

¹⁴⁷ F.W. BEAR, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 150.

¹⁴⁸ P. PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 28.

¹⁴⁹ P. PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 94.

your Catholic Church, what are you people doing there?" The same people who have just finished praying start quarrelling or exchanging words, even while still on their way home from church. Jesus exhorts his disciples to unity and love just as he is doing to members of St Patrick's Catholic Church now. For, unity and love is the witness that the Church can bear before all Enwan people.

One may object and say, "I am not involved in such attitudes." But we have to realise that "throughout the Sermon, communal implications override individual implications [...]. The focus on social relationships reflects an understanding of the person which is primarily social [...] rather than individual."¹⁵⁰ It must be a general concern whether it is caused mainly by some individuals or not, as long as it is affecting unity within the church. We all have to realise that

the norms of Christian love [...] override the claims of individual conscience, since the latter does not properly express the interpersonal demands of ethical action. The individual may be 'right' in that he/she is acting out of full conviction of his/her conscience and yet wrong because its effect on the other members of the community.¹⁵¹

The details of individual behaviour cannot be the real source of perfection in any Christian community; rather the source is the divine presence. Where love and unity are lacking, we miss this divine presence. Where there is perfection, there is interior transformation of every member. We are perfect when, though remaining authentically human, we begin to think and act like God, love all, even those who hurt us. The Christian obligation to love is grounded on the love received from God. The command, "be perfect," is therefore a call to the full realisation of human potential and a call to

¹⁵⁰ M.H. CROSBY, *House of Disciples*, 197.

¹⁵¹ P. PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 71.

imitate God. In practice, hatred cannot overcome hatred.

Matthew wrote his gospel from experience because “given the tensions inside as well as outside his house churches, Matthew’s Jesus realized that enemies could be everywhere, including one’s own household [...]”¹⁵² This prophetic saying properly applies to the situation of the Catholic Church in Enwan. Just as people of the same household would not live in enmity forever, so too should all within Enwan Catholic Church be reconciled with one another so that proper unity would reign and be promoted.

“In real life — then and now — one’s enemies are more likely to be, if not kith and kin, certainly one’s fellow co-religionists [...]”¹⁵³ This should not be surprising, for it is only those we relate with that can become our enemies. But where enmity is sensed, it has to be overcome for unity to reign.

Just as charity does not seek its own interest, so too, “forgetful of the evil treatment of which he has been the victim [...] the charitable person persists in his attachment and continues to dedicate himself, even though he is loved less in return [...]”¹⁵⁴ Jesus invites us to love rather than integrity. It is in loving that we become holy. If integrity is seen as separate from love, it is not integrity. Indeed, the amount of love we have will determine our integrity.

Members of Enwan Catholic Church must live a reconciled life so as to be able to proclaim this to others. The Church

cannot proclaim reconciliation to the world without standing in [...] solidarity of

¹⁵² M.H. CROSBY, *House of Disciples*, 185.

¹⁵³ R.H. WORTH, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Old Testament Roots*, 112.

¹⁵⁴ C. SPICQ, *Charity and Liberty*, 30.

communion [...]. It cannot offer healing to mankind without being healed in its own body. It cannot minister reconciliation to humanity in its bitter divisions and hostilities without being reconciled in its membership and purged of its internal bitterness and strife [...]. What is demanded of the Church by Christ is that it should serve the divine mercy in the actualities of physical and spiritual existence [...]¹⁵⁵

3.2 *Inter-Christian Unity*

The Church, at least since Vatican II, has been calling for the unity of Christians and all religions. Since Enwan is a Christian village with few or no Muslims, we shall focus on Christian ecumenism.

The work begun by John XXIII was continued by Paul VI when the latter invited all Christians to unity. According to Paul VI,

this unity can be realized only if all pastors and faithful, try really to know one another. To that end, they appeal to theologians to deepen, by study in common, their knowledge of the Mystery of Jesus Christ and of the revelation made in him [...]. They will thus discover new ways of overcoming the differences which still exist and leading their churches to more perfect unity, professing their faith before the world.¹⁵⁶

The lack of unity and a subtle enmity that exist among Christians in Enwan (and especially on the part of the Catholics) can be attributed to a lack of knowledge regarding what the Church's stand on ecumenism is all about. This is now the challenge. The church is saying that there must be an "acknowledgement of a common Christian faith and of a common Sacramental life [...]."¹⁵⁷

Paul VI recommends "precious steps towards that unity which is so desirable. These are prayers in common, reciprocal spiritual aid, combined efforts to discover the principles of a true Christian solution to today's problems."¹⁵⁸ This is a call to

¹⁵⁵ R.A. ANDERSON, *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, 732.

¹⁵⁶ A. FLANNERY, ed., "Joint Declaration on Unity," *Vatican II Document, Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, 479.

¹⁵⁷ A. FLANNERY, ed., "Joint Declaration on Unity," *Vatican II Document*, 479.

¹⁵⁸ A. FLANNERY, ed., "Joint Declaration on Unity," *Vatican II Document*, 479.

ecumenical dialogue which is already in process.

The aim of this dialogue is for Christians to learn to advance together in their sharing in the reality of the Mystery of Christ, to learn to give common witness to the mission Jesus confided to his Church; so that listening together to the questions the world posts, and being docile to the Holy Spirit, they may give answers the Lord expects from them; and to approach together the questions concerning laity, liturgy, ministry, catechetics, Christian family.¹⁵⁹ This dialogue seeks for “a more complete communion between the Christian communities, a common service of the Gospel and a closer collaboration [...]”¹⁶⁰

Christ, our head, is not divided. So, why should we his members be divided? We may belong to different denominations. Probably that is a matter of historical accident but serves the purpose of emphasising one aspect of Christ which another group might neglect. That is not a justification for being antagonistic to each other, spoiling each other's name through libel and slander. What kind of witness are we giving to the people of Enwan and the world around us as Christians? It is only by the communion that exists among all Christians that others will be attracted to Christ our head. As long as we call ourselves Christians, we are under one umbrella, Christ.

The new righteousness which Christ calls for “is the quality of life which is indicative of disciples who make up the church. It is behavior that comports itself with

¹⁵⁹ A. FLANNERY, ed., “Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue,” *Vatican II Document*, 485.

¹⁶⁰ A. FLANNERY, ed., “Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue,” *Vatican II Document*, 485.

living in the sphere of God's kingdom [...]."¹⁶¹

Note that

the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ himself were divided.¹⁶²

If Christ is our reference point, we have the obligation to think well of each other. This is the point Matthew is conveying to us.

If there is movement towards unity among all Christians today, why are we Christians in Enwan lagging behind? It is a divine call that we should be united. The Catholic Church has its own guidelines on how to go about this unity.

It is for the sake of extending this universal love (as in Mt 5:43-48) to all and with the idea of unity in view that the 1983 Code of Canon Law spells out conditions under which some sacraments (penance, Eucharist and Anointing of the Sick) can be administered to other Christians if they share our faith or how Catholics can receive these sacraments from other ministers outside the Catholic Church (Cf. Can 844).

Pope John Paul II was very much committed to Christian unity. According to him (April 27, 1985), "the goal of ecumenism [...] remained nothing less than 'the *full communion* of Christians in one apostolic faith and in one eucharistic fellowship at the fruit of a truly common witness,' which was an expression of the communion of persons between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ J.D. KINGSBURY, "The Place, Structure, and Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount," 137.

¹⁶² A. FLANNERY, ed., "Unitatis Redintegratio," *Vatican II Document*, 408.

¹⁶³ G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, 494-495.

When critics questioned this move for ecumenism, John Paul II re-emphasised: “the Catholic Church is committed to the ecumenical movement with an irrevocable decision.”¹⁶⁴ Since human beings have damaged this spirit-given unity, it has to be restored. Every Catholic is to help bring about this unity, in John Paul’s opinion.

“In the world of today, where anti-Christian forces are so strongly at work, secularism and Marxist atheism, as well as fast growing non-Christian religions, such [...] a solidarity and cooperation are clearly necessary.”¹⁶⁵

The concrete actions required today (which have already begun) are “free and serious theological encounter, mutual respect and unbiased attention to the opinion of others.”¹⁶⁶ Without unity among Christians, there are “real dangers to the faith in the contemporary world.”¹⁶⁷

“Until the Christian Church heals within itself the division between the service of Christ [...], until it translates its communion in the body and blood of Christ into unity in its historical existence in the flesh, it can hardly expect the world to believe [...]”¹⁶⁸ In simple terms, our way of living will witness more to Christ than our words and speech. It must be a life of witness.

The command, “Love your enemies,” shows that “Christianity is something more than humanity.”¹⁶⁹ Christians in Enwan must therefore ask what exceptional/excelling thing they are doing. The new righteousness calls us to do

¹⁶⁴ G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, 495.

¹⁶⁵ J. MEYENDORF, *Witness to the World*, 67.

¹⁶⁶ J. MEYENDORF, *Witness to the World*, 71.

¹⁶⁷ J. MEYENDORF, *Witness to the World*, 74.

¹⁶⁸ R.A. ANDERSON, *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, 733.

¹⁶⁹ M. HENRY, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 54.

3.3 *Inter-Tribal Unity*

The land problem between Enwan and Akuku today (two neighbouring villages) which is 'creating enmity,' calls to mind the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans. It was the hatred that existed between them that made Jesus give the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-36). Jesus equally associated with the Samaritan woman and the Samaritans (Jn 4).

The Jews hated the Samaritans. With such hatred, the Samaritan man had no responsibility toward the Jew who was 'half dead,' yet he assisted him and even treated him as a friend. Between Enwan and Akuku, this is a real lesson. If we are Christians we should not be banned from doing what is right before God. If we do that, then, our call to witness must be examined. Yes, we are not to flout the laws of the society, but divine law supersedes every other law.

What makes Christianity a unique religion is the call to love our enemies. If it is a command, even though difficult, then, it must be obeyed. Jesus calls you to "love those within and beyond your household. Let your love be nonexclusive. [...], from the household, it had to extend to the village or city around."¹⁷⁴ Thus, this love "ignores social boundaries and all reasonable sorts of calculations that people make."¹⁷⁵

The Scriptures tell us that God created only one Adam. This is to show that "the Creator has given us one common genetic ancestor. [...] this basic unity of humankind proves both the oneness of our Creator and the equality of all Adam's descendants, who

¹⁷⁴ M.H. CROSBY, *House of Disciples*, 185.

¹⁷⁵ P. PERKINS, *Love commands in the New Testament*, 64.

without exception come naked into the world, to return equal in the same nakedness.”¹⁷⁶ All people of the world are thus one. It tells the people of Enwan and Akuku that they too are one and any hatred of the other is a hatred of the self. It is to be noted that nakedness is emphasised here. It is because it is a symbol of harmony, communion and unity with each other and with God. When Adam and Eve had not sinned and were naked, there was pure harmony/unity, but immediately after sinning, they discovered they were naked. Instantly, that harmony they had departed from them.

If there is misunderstanding, it should be resolved; there is no need to be opponent to each other.

For if you become an opponent to your opponent, then you are surrendering what is best in you merely to make worst of the other your own. Loyalty to yourself, however, demands that you give precedence to your own standards over uncharitable influences from without. Otherwise you [...] hand yourself over to unlove, completely contradicting the ways of God.¹⁷⁷

If Enwan becomes an opponent to Akuku, and/or vice versa, each is making the other a standard of its behaviour. Do you allow another's behaviour to dictate yours? “Because repayment always makes the behavior of the other a model for one's own action, in the end two bearers of the divine image suffer: you and your brother.”¹⁷⁸

We are called to imitate God's perfection so as to build a bridge between enlightened self-interest and legitimate self-love and biblical love of neighbour and also between the real world of today and the heavenly realm of tomorrow. When people's focus is only on this world, it is easy for them to return evil for evil; but if they recall

¹⁷⁶ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 81.

¹⁷⁷ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 83.

¹⁷⁸ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 88.

that we have another home, then, they may live in ways that befit the next world.

It will be wrong to think that only the external act is evil: “no less evil is the intention that brings it forth and it is each one’s intention that is examined”¹⁷⁹ at the end.

Definitely, “the Sermon (Mt 5:38-48) [...] is challenged by those who [...] do not identify questions of war, revolution, or even personal self-defense against an attacker [...]”¹⁸⁰ Can Enwan Christians challenge the Sermon in this way today when they support tribal clashes? When there is an attack, as in the case of Enwan people and Akuku people, “it is presupposed that the attack is unprovoked and unjustified, and that the man attacked might have the right to defend himself; he is not to stand on his right, but act as befits a disciple of Jesus, a member of the kingdom of heaven, who will not be moved to hostility by any wrong done to his person.”¹⁸¹ There is thus no justification for violence breeding violence. People talk of ‘just war,’ but no war is just. If we insist on justice for a wrong done, then, by the same standard God would have been right and justified to leave us in our sinful condition; however, he redeemed us by sending his only Son.

Therefore, “for the Evangelist, it is clear that the commandment of the preacher on the Mount has an unconditional validity and is to be accepted and realized in the world without any ifs or buts and also without any side glances toward potential positive or negative consequences.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ D.C. ALLISON, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination*, 33.

¹⁸⁰ L.S. CAHILL, “The Ethical Implication of the Sermon on the Mount,” 155.

¹⁸¹ F.W. BEAR, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 158.

¹⁸² G. STRECKER, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, 90.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that the command “love your enemies” and the Golden Rule can be applied to all forms of relationships. Here, both have been specifically posited as a challenge to Christian life in Enwan.

We began with the discovery that the two commands in Mt 5:43-48 and 7:12 assist all people to overcome barriers in their relationships. Since God has to be taken as a model, if he loves us and continues to love us under our situation of sin, we too have to do the same to others. If we love ourselves and want the best for ourselves, then we must want the best for the other — the point of the Golden Rule. Looking at the command, ‘love your enemies’ and the Golden Rule, therefore, one can infer that “the juxtaposition of the two commands, though tense and paradoxical, nevertheless creates a dialectic crucial for ethics.”¹⁸³

The two commands call Catholic Christians in Enwan to be united. It is only in that way that their worship becomes realistic and can bear witness to the Gospel. It is when there is healing and reconciliation within that it can be extended. It also calls for inter-Christian unity. As this chapter suggests, the Catholic Church is at the forefront of ecumenism. The two commands further support such unity.

Jesus asks for a practical demonstration of love. For, “love must prove itself outside the comfortable world of family, friends, and associates. The solidarity of the clan is forever gone. Jesus is appealing for an experience of solidarity with humankind, an experience that is non-exclusive, [...] not dependent upon reciprocity because it

¹⁸³ P. RICOEUR, “The Golden Rule: Exegetical and Theological Perplexities,” *NTS* 36(1990) 392-397.

includes even those who hate you, persecute or treat you badly.”¹⁸⁴ Despite all ill-treatment, unity must continue to reign keeping in mind that it is only those who are in relationship with you who can hurt you. Practical experience shows that enemies can be most challenged by a loving response rather than by an attack or violent response.

¹⁸⁴ D.C. ALLISON, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination*, 100.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In this work, we have explored Jesus' command, "Love your enemies" (Mt 5:43-48) and the Golden Rule (Mt 7:12). Both help us to get rid of hate and counterhate; violence and counter-violence.

Chapter one sets the limit of the work by locating the text. Our texts were 5:43-48 and 7:12. We discovered that the genre could be a *chreia* or an epitome. We found the parallel in Lk 6:27-36.

In Chapter two, the focus was on the exegesis of Mt 5:43-48. We saw that although there were instructions on being kind to an enemy in Israel, yet the command, "love your enemies," is peculiar to Jesus. In our exegesis, each verse was analysed and, where necessary, key words were stressed. The Golden Rule complements 5:43-48. In fact, both commands can be summarised thus: "do good to all people, even to your enemies, treating them always with overflowing generosity."¹⁸⁵ In this way, 5:43-48 has a necessary connection with 7:12. While the latter gives the former a practical orientation toward the neighbours, the former in turn saves the latter from the misunderstanding that interpersonal relationships are based on reciprocity.

In analysing the theology of the text, some theological themes were discovered.

¹⁸⁵ C. OWZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 155.

They include conversion, reconciliation, selfishness, perfection (wholehearted discipleship), grace (God's common grace), law of a universal love, eschatology and a christologically based wisdom, Kingdom of God and the idea of a monotheistic faith. It is basically a theology of relationships.

Chapter three was an application of our texts. We realised that both commands can help disciples to overcome barriers in relationships. It challenges Enwan Catholic Christians and all Christians to be united. This will be a sign of witness. Since we all have one ancestral root, Adam, hating any human being is hating oneself. In this way, it calls Enwan and Akuku people to refrain from harming each other and to be re-united.

We are all bound to love enemies. This is a law of Christianity, original and peculiar. No system of religion but Christianity has required it, and no system of Christian piety is more difficult. None shows more the power of the grace of God; none is more ornamental to the character; none more like God; and none furnishes better evidence of piety [...]. He that can do this need not doubt that he is a Christian. He has caught the very spirit of the Saviour, and he must inherit eternal life.¹⁸⁶

“This meaning — repay evil with good, curse with blessing, hate with love, as does God — can be considered the most apt resume of the excerpt on the boundlessness of love (Mt 5:43-48).”¹⁸⁷

In conclusion, the command, “love your enemies,” recognises the fact of evil in the world. But even though hostility exists, it does not need to always exist. So, the command aims at the humanisation of both the hater and the hated. It is based purely on the imitation of God's own love. It has its challenges as it serves as a bridge between legitimate self-love and the practical love of neighbour. Ultimately, it is a call

¹⁸⁶ A. BARNES, *Barnes' Notes: Notes on the New Testament, Matthew and Mark*, 62.

¹⁸⁷ P. LAPIDE, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?*, 119.

to reconciliation and non-violence that will lead to a world where enmity will be overcome. It calls us to refrain from participating in the violence that evil breeds and it calls us to kill selfishness and self-love. All Christ's disciples must regain their identity as children of God.

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