

THE NEW LAW OF LOVE FOR ENEMIES (ἀΓΑΠΗ ἘΧΘΡΟῖ) IN MATTHEW 5:43-48 AND LUKE 6:27-36

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Abstract

Matthew 5:43-48 and Luke 6:27-36 comprise the teaching of Jesus about what it entails to love others as God loves them. This study explores Jesus' commandment to love one's enemies and track appeasement in the literary and narrative contexts of the two Gospels correspondingly. The level and scope of responsibility to love one's neighbour remained an ongoing issue in debates. The study trails in reaction to the ensuing questions: How would Jesus' teaching on "enemy love" be grasped and acknowledged in the framework of the two distinctive Christian communities? What is the drive and the justification for Jesus' teaching? Who is "the enemy" according to Luke, Matthew and their audiences? How does Jesus' teaching on "love of enemy" ethic boost and appropriate into the larger and specific milieu of the contemporary communities where Fulani headers are killing agrarian communities hysterically? Some methodologies employed for this study underwired the argument much more. Grammatico-analysis deciphers the words of the texts to grasp the meaning. Literary Criticism exposes a steady antithetical structure and a systematically hyperbolic mood flowing throughout the piece. Redaction Criticism examines the redactional sources extracted. Source criticism defines where the sources were obtained. The insights derived guide beneficiaries toward a refined moral code that inspires the thrilling imperatives. The paper reveals that the pinnacle of interest concerning Jesus' teaching on nonviolence and love of enemies lies a mystifying datum that admonition to love one's enemy is a labyrinth in terms of practice but the command has to be obeyed as an ethic of the new dawn. The study recommends love for one's enemies despite the impracticality.

Keywords: Law, Love, Enemies, Herders and Matthew-Luke

Introduction

Jesus' teaching about loving enemies forms a novel ideology that brings about the kingdom of God. It indicates that the new ethic and the life it presupposes are grounded in the love and mercy of God even to the undeserving, just as God is merciful to all. This paper examines the love command in light of

its Old Testament context, suggests its role in shaping Christian identity over the years, and highlights the tension between particularity and universality in Christian teaching on salvation. To properly study this antithesis in Matthew there is likewise a necessity to flip through Luke's pericope of the same material 16:27–30. One of the first things to be noticed is that the last two antitheses in Matthew are in Luke upturned. Luke's presentation makes it palpable that the object of this love of enemies is the persecutors who are slapping and stealing one's stuff. The larger context makes it clear that these are the Romans. Exegesis of Matthew's version and interpretation of Jesus' teaching on love for the enemy considering the context and content of his exposition of Jesus' ground-breaking teaching challenges God's people to love their enemies, no matter what their identity is.

Matthean and Lukan Sources

Luke's Gospel and Acts are a literary *magnum opus* for which the evangelist has drawn stimulus from a broad range of Jewish scriptural sources and traditions. The main source for his Gospel narrative was Mark (Mk). The second source, nearly wholly consisted of the sayings of Jesus, is termed "Sayings Gospel Q" (Kloppenborg 57-61). The sayings of Jesus are written credibly in Greek, or purely Quelle (Q) which is the German word for source (Kloppenborg 51-55). Then, the source where Luke's literary creativity and theology gleam forth most is termed as (L), suggesting the material exclusive to him. Matthew copied and pasted from the same two sources as Luke (Q and Mk), and also to Luke, he used them for his historical circumstances and theological schema. The material not found in Mk or Q is a distinct tradition (M) of Matthew's (Fitzmyer 80). One important example of his creative editorial work is his Sermon on the Mount, which is expansively stretched than Sermon on the Plain (Mt. 5:1-7:29; Lk. 6:20-49). Matthew added virtually all that is tracked in Luke, and nearly nothing of the two sermons is embedded in Mark (Owczarek 116-117). The extra sources of Matthew and Luke might have been either written or oral. These are not present in Mk. There appear to be no stories most astonishingly no "Passion Narrative" in Q.

Love for Enemies, 5:43

Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίόν σου καὶ μισήσεις τὸν ἐχθρόν σου.

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

The Qumran sect who kept the Dead Sea Scrolls had a mutual saying, "Love the brother; hate the outsider." Essentially, many Jews believed it was their duty to love fellow Israelites and hate outsiders (Hughes 141). Lev 19:18 teaches us to love our neighbour. However, the scribes and Pharisees imparted that men were not obliged to love those whom they did not recognise as their neighbours. Everett Harrison, trading on the same path with Hughes, opines that the phrase "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy," although not found in the Old Testament, has an equivalent declaration in the Manual of Discipline (1.4.10) presently termed the Community Rule Scroll, which is a writing of the ancient Jewish Qumran community, suggests that Jesus may have borrowed this phrase from sources outside of the Old Testament (174).

In place of love, racism and ethnocentrism were dignified. This is the sixth instance in which Jesus imparts the Law and the Prophets. You are the disciples, the people standing on the slope of the mount listening to Jesus. Jesus refers to the teaching of the Scribes and the Pharisees, which they (you) had heard in their synagogues. He does not refer to the teaching of the Old Testament, nor is he quoting the Old Testament. "That it was said," the Scribes and Pharisees read, explained and applied the words of God, which he had given to the people of Israel through his servant Moses. "That it was said" refers to the authority of Moses and God, which doesn't mean that these words were exactly taken from the Old Testament. "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy." This teaching consists of two parts "love your neighbour" and "hate your enemy". It looks like a synopsis and short explication of Leviticus 19:17-18: "Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbour frankly so you will not share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord." These two rules referred to conduct towards the brother and neighbour, the fellow Israelite. In these verses, the enemy is not mentioned. But, in the immediate setting, it avers: "When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:33-34). David was persecuted by Saul, but he didn't hate him. Elisha gave food to Aramean armies who sought to kill him (2 Ki. 6.20-23).

In the New Testament, the mingling of Jews and Gentiles in Antioch led to overflowing questions about the Law and the Gospel teachings (McKenzie 65). So, building on the last antithesis of enduring the evil of your enemy, Jesus now

concludes at the peak of his moral commands, love those enemies. Luke is dealing with a largely Gentile community struggling with keeping Jews. This is the source of conflict and controversy. Luke is concerned with how the community to which he wrote is to live in a Roman world after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. He is also committed to preserving the legacy of Paul who was a founder of the communities Luke remarks (Matthews 99-105).

Who is My Neighbour?

The command to love “your neighbour” (friend) comes explicitly from Leviticus 19:18. In later citations (Matt. 19:19, 22:39), Matthew includes the phrase “as yourself” (ὡςσεαυτόν). It has both a communal and an individual character (Betz 302, 306). The question “Who is my neighbour?” was commonly asked of the Old Testament tradition (cf. Lk. 10:25-37; Mk 12:28-34) and applied in the Holiness Code to a variety of people: the poor, the hired, the handicapped, the slave, the aged, and the stranger always a fellow Israelite. It was the subject of Torah debates as the New Testament itself attests (Lk. 10:29) (Betz 302). “Neighbour” is a recurrent OT concept for a fellowmember of the covenant community, and the synonymous notions in Lev. 19:17–18 are “your kin,” and “one of your people” (France 224). People beyond the parameters of that covenant community would not be recognised as neighbours and would consequently not be required to be loved.

In the immediate context, revenge is juxtaposed with forgiveness (Mt. 5:38–42). The OT teaching concerning “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” had been lifted out of its judicial background and misrepresented to authorization for individual retaliation. Jesus employed a more correct usage, teaching that in place of repaying a slap for a slap, “turn the other cheek.” As opposed to vengefully paying back the Romans for compelling you to carry their box for the mandatory mile (Nolland 259), Jesus pronounces to willingly go with them one more. The sixth contrast hinges on the brainwashed recognition of the sinful attitude of loving your neighbour and hating your enemy. Jesus instructed otherwise, commanding his followers to “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Mt. 5:44). All of those contrasts comprise precise illustrations of how His sermon should work itself out in the lives of His hearers. This would undeniably enrage any Jew being duty-bound to help their hated inhabitants and would unsurprisingly trigger them to desire to retaliate. Towing in the same line of thought with Nolland, Matthews agrees that Luke is concerned

with how the community to which he transcribed is to live in a Roman society after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. He is also committed to preserving the legacy of Paul who was an initiator of the communities Luke references (106).

Digging down the memory lane, Morris explains that Jesus seems to be highlighting a synopsis of the manner through which the transcribers of his day viewed the teaching concerning enemies instead of citing Scripture itself, for the Old Testament does not aver, “you shall hate your enemy” (129).

Who is the enemy?

The enemy that is masked under the disguise of both the religious and imperial benefits of the elite makes “him” even more “satanic.” It is the hardest enemy to love and resist, worse than a religious or political enemy operating independently. Jesus struggles with the power of Satan that moves behind and inbetween these two spheres simultaneously (Wright 173–193). He was sentenced by the leaders of his people and crucified by Roman authorities. Both operate as enemies in their own right, but not disjointedly. Forster elaborates on who is the enemy in the early history of Israel. The Hebrew word for “enemy” *oyev* denotes both individual and national enemies. The etymology depicts the Gentiles as enemies of Israel (“*εχθρος*”, 812). It expresses not simply the erratic and unbalanced political enmity which would shift from friend to adversary; it similarly expresses the relentless hostility articulated in several ways of enmity between Israel and the Gentiles. For the Gentiles, by the quality of being enemies of Israel, they are also enemies of God (Forster, “*εχθρος*”, 812). The salvation of Israel is, thus, grasped, not only in terms of deliverance from the oppressive Gentiles but likewise because of the total obliteration of these repetitively conflicting militaries (Forster, “*εχθρος*”, 812).

In the LXX, ‘*oyev*’ is translated as *εχθρος* and still upholds the rudimentary connotation of a national enemy. This is moreover replicated in the words of Zechariah (Luke 1:71-74) at the opening of the New Testament era. It is similarly embedded in Jesus’ prophetic sayings concerning the fall of Jerusalem (Luke 19:43) from the distinct Lukan source (Forster “*εχθρος*” 812). In the New Testament, nevertheless, the main undertone of *εχθρος* is a personal enemy regarding different facets of everyday life. This is the straightforward denotation that it has in the command to love enemies.

The subsequent questions to ask are: what is this love, and how did it operate in the Old Testament, in the setting of the many affairs together with the relationship between Israel and her enemies? The Hebrew term for 'love,' *'ehavah* represents the three different Greek words for it, ἀγαπη, φιλεω and ηρος. Stauffer defines love in the Old Testament as a "spontaneous feeling which impels to self-giving" ('ἀγαπητος' 22). The most distinctive aspects of the love of God in the Old Testament understanding are its spontaneity (Stauffer "ἀγαπητο" 38) and its preference. The love of God which is spontaneous is also a love that "makes distinctions, chooses, prefers, overlooks" (Stauffer "ἀγαπητος" 36). The notion of fondness is best taken by the word ἀγαπᾶν in pre-biblical Greek. Though it is devoid of the demonstrative power of ἐρᾶν and the brotherly temperateness of φιλεῖν, it conserves the original Hebrew sagacity of preference, a love that makes differences, choosing and keeping its object. It is a love that designates the independence and certainty of action determined by its theme (Stauffer "ἀγαπητος" 38).

The impression of liking in the love of God echoed in *'ehavah*, and well-kept-up in ἀγαπητος, does not align well with the core meaning of the Greek word ἐρως which, besides its emotive value, accentuates the awareness of a love that is general, generous, limitless and non-discriminating, equally smearing on all without differences. Israel distinguishes her duty to love the neighbour as one loves himself or herself. Neighbour, still, is known in covenantal terms and constrained to fellow nationals. This raises for Israel the question of whether the command to love be prolonged in its practice on non-members of the covenant, and to its dynamic enemies.

In Deuteronomy 30 both blessings and curses are found which God sets up for Israel as a prophetic warning to her to challenge her to a life of obedience to the law. Jesus cursed a fig tree in Mark 11–13, against faithless Israel, who had rejected Him. This curse led to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In Galatians 1:8–9 Paul uttered a curse of eternal damnation (cf. 1 Cor. 16:22). There have been times in which God has suspended rain and even the rising of the sun. These have arisen fleetingly in time but in eternity these enemies will experience darkness without sun and rain. It depicts that God sustains both love and hatred. However, Jesus' command in verse 44 ruled out human reaction to operate on love and hatred.

Correct interpretation (v. 44)

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you
ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν· ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καὶ προσεύχεσθε
ὕπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς

“But I tell you.” This is in contrast with the teaching of the Pharisees. Jesus is not contradicting or supplementing Moses, he is fulfilling Moses (Mt. 5:17-20), which means that his teachings are consistent with Moses, the Law and the Prophets. On the other hand, it is a puzzle to humanity; One issue that stands out is the question of justice. How can this love of God to bad and unjust people be reconciled with justice? “Is it not rather evidence of injustice?” (Betz 317). Shouldn’t the good be rewarded and the evil punished? Bonhoeffer asserts that this is the ultimate command. Through the medium of prayer, we go to our enemy, stand by his side, and plead for him to God (134).

ἀγαπάω (love) is to have a warm regard for and curiosity in another, value, have affection for, and love (Arndt, Danker & Bauer 5). The verb love is in the imperative mood, which entails that love is not just endorsed but commanded. ἀγαπάω “To reverence, love, signifying a path of the will and discovering one’s delight in something or someone.” Paul expresses the love of neighbour thus: “Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:10, ESV). This love of neighbour stated by Paul is inert, it “does no wrong to a neighbour.” It does not interpret what “right” you should do to a neighbour. Nevertheless, further clarification asserts; “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.” (Proverbs 25:21–22; Romans 12:20–21, ESV). These texts lack explicit explanation, one can do acts of love very much easier than one can feel love. Therefore, even though the feeling might not yet be there, the acts must be visible.

Parallelism provides the ideas that interpret the main concepts within it. For example, ἀγαπάτε is defined as καλῶς ποιεῖτε. Εχθροὺς is elucidated as τοῖς μισοῦσιν, ὑμᾶς, τοὺς καταρωμένους ὑμᾶς. Therefore, according to the poetic structure of this verse, ‘love/ is defined as ‘doing good’, ‘blessing,’ and even ‘praying’ for those who abuse you. ‘Enemies’ are demarcated as those who ‘hate’ you, those who ‘curse’ you, and those who ‘abuse’ or “speak scornfully” about you (Seits 44). To copiously appreciate the implication of the command to love enemies, it is necessary to grasp the notions of ‘love’ and ‘enemy’ as understood in

the history of Israel. To this, we now turn. Agapē does not mean a feeling of the heart, which we cannot help, and which comes unbidden and unsolicited; it means a will power of the mind, whereby you attain this unbeatable benevolence even to those who hurt and injure you. Agapē, someone has said, is the potency to love those whom you do not like and who may not like you (Barclay 174).

Jesus' projected teaching about the type of attitude one should have toward his or her enemy attacks his listeners, both then and now, like a flash of lightning. Jesus imparts what is a correct "Jewish orthodox theology" (Harrington 92), unconditional love for all people, and enemies encompassed. It is, nevertheless, not wholly inappropriate in the milieu of the Hellenistic and Jewish philosophical and religious space. Matthean Jesus substantiates his instruction with one tangible illustration: "pray for those who persecute you" (Did. 1:3. Lk. 23:34, Acts 7:6). Even though some texts in Matthew designate that persecution was deeper (Matt. 10:17-18, 21-22, 23; 23:34). It ought not to be overstated concerning Jewish and Gentile enemies (Betz 313; Luz 288).

Again, Luz underscores that praying for or against persecutors or enemies had been a mutual Jewish exercise when the Gospel of Matthew was inscribed. The writer of Psalm 17 beseeches God to terminate his enemies and "to slay them with their sword" (Ps 17:14; 2.25-27; 12.4; 15.10-12). Praying for persecutors in Sermon on the Mount, which portrays true righteousness and interpretation of God's will, takes on a radically different tone. It does not ask that the enemy should die. Quite the reverse, the love of the enemy is stuck in forgiveness and reunion (Matt. 6:9-15). It is affixed in the hope of being well kept up from "the evil in us and among us (Heb. 16:19)" (Matthews 322-333).

To shed more light on the foregoing analysis MacArthur corroborates Luz's view by expanding the horizons that love must be confirmed in acts of kindness. When Christ beckons us to love our enemies, he applies the Greek term "agape." This word is not chiefly an emotive love but an intentional or unconditional love. It is a move of the will and hence infers acts of kindness. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul uses fifteen verbs to designate agape: love is kind, love is patient, love perseveres, love never thinks the wrong, etc. (345). Agape includes mindset, but it is best designated by what it does. In reality, in the analogous pericope of Luke 6:27, Christ held, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." This is the way God loved us. Stauffer, not distant from the previous assertions, though hatching the idea of a new community, avers that in the NT, the command to love enemies fashions a novel status quo in which God's

mercy and unlimited love is seen not as a divine disposition that has already been there, but as an event which expresses itself in the person and work of Jesus. It is an event which creates a new rapport among people (47).

Paul says, "But God demonstrates his love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Though we were enemies and separated from God, God acted in love towards us by dying for us (Rom. 5:8). We must do the same to those who wrong us. We must love them by performing acts of kindness to them. Romans 12:20-21 says: "Rather, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing this you will be heaping burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

In the place of prayer, Luke says "Do good." This deed, to "do good," is a portrayal of how one is to love while praying. "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you," (Luke 6:27, ESV) Luke's "do good" parallels Proverbs 25: "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink," (Proverbs 25:21, ESV). There is gainsaying in continual hatred of another man in the sight of God. The unquestionable way of eliminating acrimony is to pray for the man you are curious to hate (Barclay 175). This is the Christian retort in the Jewish space. The Jews rejoined with hate and killing. The Christian is to riposte with love and prayer.

Jesus demonstrated the example, he prayed for his enemies. "And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments." (Luke 23:34, ESV). On this Stott asks, if the cruel agony of crucifixion could not quiet our Lord's Prayer for his enemies, what pain, pride, prejudice or sloth could rationalize the quieting of ours? (119: Carson 158). This is Jesus' riposte to the Roman problem. Well along, Stephen rejoined his persecutors in prayer also; "And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:60, ESV).

The word persecutes, according to Louw, J. P., & Nida in this passage gives us some insight into its meaning. These particular enemies are not just next-door neighbours that you have some grumble with. These are people with power and authority over you, and since they have this power, they can and will use it to injure you (498).

Love and Enemy in the New Testament Framework

The beatitudes and the woes which are both prophetic and eschatological advocate a fundamental reversal in the social, ethical and spiritual situation. In this new situation, love of the enemy becomes a hallmark for new ethics (Tannehill 207-08; Talbert 20; Ricoeur 394).

The command to love enemies is an invitation for a novel sort of reciprocity among the new people and in their rapport with humanity at large. It is a novel mindset for new people, a mindset that does not anticipate anything in return. It is a call for kindness rooted in the boundless love and mercy of God. Amid the divine potentials, Luke selects kindness in preference to holiness as a basis for Christian character and conduct (Bovon 241).

Concerning the command to love enemies, the researcher adds that Jesus upturns, re-construes and justifies the Golden Rule. In addition to his re-reading of neighbour to embrace every person in need of love and mercy, this command obliterates the parameters and borders that constrained the practice of the Golden Rule within its Old Testament construal context. The invitation to love enemies focuses on the decisive and infinite love and mercy of God and hence reacts as a curative catalyst on the earlier OT and Jewish assessments vis-à-vis the level and scope of divine love.

Purpose of God's Love for All (v. 45)

ὅπως γένησθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὁμοῦν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανῷ, ὅτι τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλει ἐπὶ πονηροὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς καὶ βρέχει ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους.

“So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (ESV).

Here is a paradigm shift to the drive of Jesus' teaching on the love of enemies, which is to “become sons of (υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς) our Father in heaven” (Mt. 6:9-13). This is a direct reference to the Beatitudes, where peacemakers are called the children of God who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt. 5:9-11; 19:14). The depiction is inherently Jewish. The sons of God are those who take the word of God into their hearts, (Prov. 2:1, cf. Jubilees 1:24-25). The concept of “the children of God” refers to Israel as well as Jesus' disciples within the framework of Matthew's Gospel. The children of God are the little ones (Mt. 19:13-14) and the ones of little faith tossed by the waves and the wind in the storm (Mt. 8:26). One who wants to be a disciple of Christ has to be like a child. Carson

categorically states “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” (159). Jesus is not saying do this and you become sons; he is saying do this that you may be sons in the deeds and character of your life. Nolland taking a step further adds that by loving enemies you will be acting in the appropriate family way like father, like son (268) Such love exemplifies God. On the same point of departure, Nolland asserts that the call to love one’s enemies is embedded in a vision of God as altruistic to all because of creation: he does not remove his creational kindness from the wicked (268). It has been said that “To pay evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human; to return good for evil is divine.” (Hughes 141). Christ taught that this divine love, this deep-seated love will be confirmed in the lives of kingdom inhabitants. They will be persecuted and hated for their faith (cf. Mt. 5:10-12), but they will retort with radical love. Fundamental love is the Christian ethic, it should define believers.

To buttress this point Hagner qualifies God’s love as unselective; he sends sun and rain on all. Therefore, our love must also be unselective. We must love family, we must love enemies. We must love Christians; we must love tyrants (134). God establishes this love in the rising of the sun on the evil and the rain on the unjust. He has set the precedence, so we too must love this way; we must love our enemies. “To love one’s enemies is, then, to treat them as God treats those who have rebelled against him (Hagner 134). To love those who do not love you is not offered as a piece of practical sense but as a duplicate of the character of God himself (France 224).

Paging through text by making overarching remarks on what is, without question, one of the most difficult commands in all of the Bible to obey. To justly love my enemy and persecutor is not ordinary. It is a divine orientation. “The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made” (Psalm 145:9, ESV).

Clarification v. 46

ἐὰν 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 do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

Is there a portion of unseemliness in loving those who love you? There might be no trace further, the next question to follow is what is wrong? The

conundrum is that this love is purely insufficient. It lacks the core quality of agape. Those that love you would be friends and family; you should love them. But your enemies? Here is where the prize is derived in practising the difficult thing. The abhorrent tax collectors correspond to the Roman context. It is these loathed conspirators to the Jewish nation that must as well be loved. In so doing, Boice confirms that the worldly man treats particular people friendly because he 'likes' them; the Christian, aspiring to treat everybody friendly, incorporates more together with people he could not even have thought loving at the start (144).

Matthew 5: 47

καὶ ἐὰν ἀσπάσησθε τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὑμῶν μόνον, τί περισσὸν ποιεῖτε; οὐχὶ καὶ οἱ ἐθνικοὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν;

And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

As stated by Nolland, "The act of greeting is a concrete expression of the fact that the other person has personal significance for the one doing the greeting. Those not greeted are excluded from significance" (269). Tax collectors, bureaucrats, soldiers, all these would be passed by without a word of credit. It is these that Jesus is demanding we greet with kindness. What additional (Louw and Nida 591) are you doing than others? This loving of fellow citizen, neighbour or family is deficient in the ingredient of the "extraordinary" that would qualify it as ethically greater and that would adapt into the greater righteousness of Sermon Mount in Matt 5:20." (Betz 320). Gentiles loved their own as did Jews. But Jesus requires more.

Concluding command (v. 48)

ἔσεσθε οὖν ὅτε τελειοὺς ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν.

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

τέλειος (perfect) denotes meeting the highest standard; of persons who are wholly up to standard in confident respect and not content with midway determines perfect. It is a translation of the Hebrew "*tamim*" sound, wholesome, unimpaired, innocent, having integrity: of God's way (Ps. 18:31; 2 S 22:31); of God's work (Dt. 32:4); of God's law (Ps. 19:8); elsewhere of man. He is a man of integrity (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1071).

To emulate God is the main idea here as shown directly above. Verse 48 may, undeniably, be observed as a synopsis of all six antitheses and the

underscoring motif of the whole sermon (Betz Sermon 325). These words bring to mind the foundational OT saying, “You shall be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy” (Lev 19:2). Holiness and perfection both refer to wholeness: to being who we are meant to be in the eyes of God; not like God per se, but God’s children created in his image and likeness (Gen. 1:27). For Harrington leveraging on God’s perfection depicts who God is, is revealed by God’s unconditional love for all the world’s people (Matthews 90). Paul experienced personally God’s perfect love for he was a persecutor (Gal. 1:13, 23), an enemy of God (Rom. 5:10), however, God loved him. For Paul, this experience of God’s love was something he could not refute. That is why for him to emulate Christ and “to live in Him” (Gal. 2:19-20). Saint Ambrose sees the commandment to love enemies as a climactic point in the teaching of Christian ethics and accentuates that “one who follows a loftier calling” is to be constrained by this commandment (Ambrose 174).

Extant Trends from Matthean and Lukan Love for Enemies in the Nigerian Context

The bigger questions that appear to be the conundrum in this study are; why is it so difficult to do good to one’s enemies and pray for them? What can the agrarian Christian communities do despite demonising Fulani herders? Should they attack back in reaction to self-defence or fold their alms and watch their communities go into extinction? Is self-defence allowed in respect to love for enemies and persecutors? Is it easy to say like Jesus, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” as found in Luke 23:34? To put this into practice appears to be impracticable.

In Matthean and Lukan communities, the enemies were the Romans, Samaritans, Hellenists, Gentiles and tax collectors while in the Nigerian context, Fulani herders are the gigantic enemies unrelenting in their evil schemes to cease fire. The question is, upon all the horrible atrocities perpetrated by herders, are Christians willing to plead for such enemies in obedience to Christ’s command?

The persistent killings of innocent persons across Nigeria by the Fulani herdsmen, their attacks on communities and their kidnapping activities are all in the name of terrorism. The Global Terror Index lists Fulani herdsmen as the fourth deadliest group in the world (Buchanan 2018). The country is suffering from recurrent mass killings by Fulani herdsmen and this has raised the insecurity status of Nigeria to be very high. The most affected states are Adamawa, Benue,

Kwara, Kogi, Niger Kaduna, Taraba, Zamfara, Nasarawa, Plateau States, FCT Abuja and spreading southward has intensified abruptly. In Southern Kaduna, the genocide in Sudan and Rwanda seemed to be a trivial matter (emphasis is mine).

The surge of violence is concentrated in Plateau, Benue and Nasarawa States in the North Central geopolitical zone and the adjoining Adamawa and Taraba States in the North East zone. In the North-West zone, Zamfara State is also a major victim of the violence. It is worrisome for the prevalent insecurity in the country where wanton attacks and killings by armed Fulani herdsmen, bandits and terrorists have been taking place daily in our communities unopposed despite vast funding from the security agencies. The perpetrators are being intentionally permitted to go unchallenged. It is even more annoying that... over 6000 deaths in 2018 alone have been recorded in various attacks (Ebeku44-61).

In reaction to the foregoing arguments, Bonaventure predominantly asserts that the command to love enemies does not foil lay people from defending themselves (526). The topic of necessity to defend themselves, and the issue of just war, as ethical themes, are additionally debated in the writings of other writers like Saint Augustine, John Calvin, and Thomas Aquinas (Bovon 243). Bonaventure's view sheds light on justifying the act of self-defence whereas the agrarian communities under constant herders' attack can help themselves to avert the unabated.

Conclusion

In the framework of Matthean and Lukan pericopes, the enemy is the Roman oppressor. Jesus' audience was told to love and pray for those who hated them. Jesus then gave examples of how God loves his enemies by the rise of his sun on the evil and the shower of rain on the unjust. Fascinatingly, these graphics of love are objective and universal; they are not redemptive. The study found out that God demonstrated his love for humanity while they were still sinners, Christ died for them. Christians are obliged to do the same to those who wrong them by performing acts of kindness to them. When you are acting as if you love someone, you will currently come to love him. If you hurt someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. The study reveals that love must be demonstrated in acts of kindness because Christ calls his followers to love their enemies, he uses the Greek word "agape." Agape undoubtedly encompasses attitude, but it is best designated by what it does. Matthew and Luke encourage acting kindly to enemies and praying for them instead of returning evil for evil.

Despite incessant killings carried out on defenceless agrarian communities in Nigeria by Fulani herders; how can these communities love herders? This probe depicts why it is so problematic to do good to one's enemies and pray for them. In the findings; "Love your friends and hate your enemies" is the law written by selfishness on the human heart. Its' necessary effect is to divide mankind into clans upholding uninterrupted grudges. Christians should love their enemies in the portrayal of reverence, kindness and goodness. In place of looking with hate at an enemy, grimacing, mumbling a curse and plotting his slaying, the study recommends that Christians should instead be obliged to smile, greet the person affectionately, pray for them and in reality, be a good neighbour and if thinkable pursue justice. Christians should pray for God to forgive, reinstate and heal their relationships with their enemies. No one presumes that love of the enemy is easy because it is not. However, it is imperative and obligatory for Jesus' followers.

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