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LOVE OF ENEMIES: A SMART STRATEGY OR SOMETHING MORE?

A b s t r a c t. Which one of us, who seriously wants to live up to the Gospel, was never haunted by Jesus' words on the love of enemy? These words are especially burning when the enemy is easily identifiable, ruthless and acting with a sense of impunity, as it is often the case. It is not so easy, in such circumstances, to accept and put into practice Jesus' challenge:

“But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away you cloak do not withhold you tunic as well. Give to everyone who asks from you; and of him who takes what is yours do not ask it back As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful”¹ (Luke 6:27-36).

Key words: love of enemies, enemy, mercy.

1. THE REASONS BEHIND THE TEACHING ON LOVE OF ENEMY – SOME POPULAR OPINIONS

Why does Jesus command such behaviour towards one's enemies? How are we really to understand these unprecedented words? Should the one who wants

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¹ All the translations are according to the RSV.

to become Jesus' follower try to live up to the Master's teaching just in order to behave as the Father does (Luke 6:35-36) or just because the Master says so (Luke 6:27a)? Is there perhaps more to that? Is it possible that there is a deeper rationale for such a way of handling those who are hostile to us?

Many contemporary scholars point in this direction. Quite popular is a trend of thought which identifies the love of enemy with the Christian method of non-violent struggle, a kind of pedagogical approach that through an unexpected behaviour may put the opponent to shame and bring him/her to their senses². The result would be the elimination of enmity³ and even the conquest of the enemy through the kindness shown towards them⁴.

Almost everybody agrees that what Jesus commands is neither armed opposition nor only a passive submission, but the acts of kindness toward one's adversary and even generous compliance with his unjust demands. According to this trend of thought, these thoroughly unexpected acts of kindness and generosity toward the enemy are meant to throw them into a region of uncertainty in regards to their oppressive behaviour⁵. At the same time, these acts of kindness constitute an appeal to their humanity that can overcome their hostility and even evoke their compassion or at least sympathy. In such a way, the love of enemy becomes an "art of survival" in the hostile environment, on the one hand, and, on the other, a strategy that disarms the adversaries and turns them into good neighbours, a "theo-politics of little, confidence building steps – *away* from conflict, *toward* empathy; *away* from confrontation, *toward* cooperation"⁶. The power of this strategy lies in the fact that it takes the initiative away from the oppressors and gives it back to the oppressed "even when the legal system is unjust and works against them"⁷. Surrender to violence and injustice together with an open, favourable

² D. Z e l l e r, *Die weisheitlichen Mahnsprüche bei den Synoptikern* (FB 17), Würzburg: Echter 1977, p. 59; D. D u n g a n, *Jesus and Violence*, in E.P. S a n d e r s (Ed.), *Jesus, the Gospel and the Church* (FS. W.R. Farmer), Macon, GA: Mercer University 1987, p. 159.

³ W. H u b e r, *Feindschaft und Feindesliebe*, ZEE 26(1982), p. 140-142.

⁴ F. N e u g e b a u e r, *Die dargebotene Wange und Jesu Gebot der Feindesliebe*, TLZ 12(1985), p. 868-869.

⁵ W. W i n k, *Neither Passivity nor Violence: Jesus' Third Way* (Matt. 5:38-42 par.), in W.M. S w a r t l e y (Ed.), *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox 1992, p. 111, Studies in Peace and Scripture.

⁶ P. L a p i d e, *The Sermon on the Mount, Utopia or Program for Action?*, Maryknoll-New York: Orbis 1986, p. 127.

⁷ W. W i n k, *Neither Passivity nor Violence: Jesus' Third Way* (Matt. 5:38-42 par.), in S w a r t l e y (Ed.), *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation*, p. 108-113.

behaviour towards their perpetrators become a method that neutralizes the enemies without destroying them⁸. It may even reveal itself as the best means of the missionary activity towards them and eventually of their conversion. The enemy won over by the attitude of active love will be persuaded to lead a different kind of life and to participate in the Christian hope⁹.

Such an understanding of Jesus' teaching on the love of enemy makes it appear as a very reasonable strategy of non-violent opposition and, at the same time, introduces into it a strong element of reciprocity. It means that I love my enemy so that he/she may stop being hostile to me; I do good to them so that they may stop hating me; I bless them and pray for them so that they may become my friends; I offer them the other cheek so that they may come to their senses; I am willing to give them more than what they unjustly deprive me of so that their wrongdoing may become even more evident and they may feel ashamed. Finally, I am prepared to do all this so that they may, at the end, come to share my faith, hope and love.

This idea of reciprocity as a key-element in the interpretation of the love of enemy seems to be stressed especially by Luke, who, in his redaction of the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49), introduces into the section on the love of enemy (Luke 6:27-36) a saying that is known as the *Golden Rule* (Luke 6:31). The *Golden Rule*, in fact, is considered by many scholars as the expression of the principle of reciprocity and retribution¹⁰. It has been argued that Luke subordinates the commandments on the love of enemies to the *Golden Rule* and since the rule is nothing else but the expression of a fundamental reciprocity in human behaviour, it is clear that the love of enemies aims also at reciprocity. Both the *Golden Rule* and the love of enemies have the same purpose, namely, the hope and expectation that the conduct of the other people will correspond to the way they are treated¹¹. This reasoning strengthens only the understanding of the commands on the love of

⁸ W i n k, *Neither Passivity nor Violence*, p. 117; P. L a p i d e, *The Sermon on the Mount. Utopia or Program for Action?*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis 1986, p. 99, 116.

⁹ L. S c h o t t r o f f, *Gewaltverzicht und Feindesliebe in der urchristlichen Jesustradition*, in G. Strecker (Ed.), *Jesus Christus in Historie und Theologie*, (FS. H. Conzelmann), Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1975, p. 215-216; L a p i d e, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 97.

¹⁰ Especially since Dihle's monograph (A. D i h l e, *Die Goldene Regel: Eine Einführung in die Geschichte der antiken und frühchristlichen Vulgäretik*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1962).

¹¹ G. T h e i s s e n, *Social Reality and the Early Christians, Theology, Ethics, and the World of the New Testament*, Minneapolis 1992p. 122.

enemy as a certain utilitarian strategy designed to win over the existing opposition by turning the adversaries if not into friends, at least, into harmless folks. As one may deduce from the existing literature, such an interpretation would make these exigent commands more appealing not only to the 1st century audience¹² but also to our generation.

The problem of the exegete, however, does not consist in making the Bible words more acceptable to his/her audience but in revealing as much as possible the truth of the text itself.

2. JESUS' TEACHING ON THE LOVE OF ENEMY REVISITED

If we confront the above theory on the ultimate purpose of the love of enemy with the biblical texts concerning this topic some questions arise. Is really the love of enemy to be understood along the principle of reciprocity, as a pedagogical method set to win over the hostile opponents? Can be it used as an "art of survival" in the hostile environment, or as a smart strategy to unmask the unjust oppression, to overcome the enmity and to bring about the conversion of the adversaries? What happens if the enemies do not come to their senses and continue their wrongdoing; if they do not convert; if the oppression and persecution persist? Is then Jesus' teaching to love those who hate and hurt his disciples still valid for them? Is the desire to unmask different kind of social injustice and the hope to change the enemies into friends the real strength that lies behind Jesus commands? Should the active love toward one's adversaries be based on the expectation of the reciprocal treatment from them?

¹² G. Theissen advances the idea that this principle, belonging basically to Hellenistic ethics, made Jesus' claims more understandable to the world around. As a consequence, the Lucan community which was already well established in the world could stand the comparison of its Christian morals with the standards of the surrounding culture. Cf. T h e i s s e n, *Ibid.*, p. 138-141. On this point Cf. also H.D. B e t z, *The Sermon on the Mount. A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, A.Y. C o l l i n s (Ed.), Minneapolis: Fortress 1995, p. 599-600, Hermeneia. The author seems to sustain the thesis that the main purpose of the Lucan version of the *Sermon* was to make Jesus' commandments sound (perfectly) reasonable to the people raised in the contemporary culture.

These questions are not of little importance if we consider that the teaching on the love of enemy constitutes the heart of Jesus' ethics¹³. In order to answer them we need to examine carefully the texts which contain this challenging teaching. We find it in the Gospel according to Matthew (5:38-48) and Luke (6:27-36¹⁴). I would like to concentrate the present enquiry especially on the Lucan text, since it is this text to which, because of the *Golden Rule* contained in it, the explanation based on the principle of reciprocity seems to be easier applicable¹⁵.

2.1 THE ADDRESSEES OF THE COMMANDS ON THE ENEMY LOVE (LUKE 27A)

Before the Lucan Jesus develops his teaching on the love of enemy, he indicates those for whom his words are meant – “But I say to you that hear” (Luke 6:27a). The addressees of Jesus' commands are “those who hear”, who listen to him. This expression “those who hear” sends back to 6:17-18, where Luke lists with a certain care all those who “came to listen to him”. Coming down from the mountain, Jesus is already in the company of the “twelve apostles whom he has just chosen (6:13). There, below, on a level place, he meets “a great crowd of his disciples” and “a great multitude of the people” arriving from “all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon”. It is the first time in the third Gospel that Jesus speaks to such a broad public. Luke modifies here in various ways a summary of Jesus' activity taken from Mk 3:7-12¹⁶. One of his modification is the substitution of the

¹³ It is the opinion of many exegetes. I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC), Granville/Cape Town: Paternoster 1978, p. 257; E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Luke*, London: SPCK 1984, p. 123; J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)* (AB 28), Garden City–New York: Doubleday 1981, p. 630; G. Rossé, *Il Vangelo di Luca. Commento esegetico e teologico*, Roma: Città Nuova 1992, p. 222; F.B. Craddock, *Luke: Interpretation. A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Louisville: John Knox 1990, p. 91; J. Nissen, *The Distinctive Character of the New Testament Love Command in Relation to Hellenistic Judaism*, in P. Borgen & S. Giversen (Eds.), *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism*, Aarhus: Aarhus University 1995, p. 140.

¹⁴ There is an ongoing discussion regarding the v. 36. A number of scholars argue that it should be considered as the introduction to the next section (Luke 6:37-38). In our opinion, however, the arguments for considering v. 36 as the conclusion of the 6:27-36 unit are stronger.

¹⁵ G. Theses (Nonviolence, p. 122) writes, for example: “Luke [...] stresses a fundamental reciprocity even in the love of enemies and in nonviolence. For in Luke these commandments come under the general heading of the *Golden Rule* [...]”

¹⁶ More precisely from Mark 3:7-10, for, as J. Nolland (*Luke 1-9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35A, Waco–Dallas: Word 1989, p. 275) rightly notices, he already used

rather unspecified Markan “a great multitude” (Mk 3:7-8) with “a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of the people”. It is not by chance that this last expression “the people”, which is used in the Septuagint as the designation of the people of God¹⁷, is closely associated here with the motif of “hearing”. In Luke only those who really listen to Jesus (and do what he says: Luke 6:46-49) are truly counted among “the people” (cf. Acts 3:18-23), notwithstanding their ethnic or social association¹⁸. Even the belonging to the group of the “twelve”, chosen from among the disciples (Luke 6:13), does not offer a security of being numbered among “the people”. The description of Judas (the last name on the list of the apostles hand-picked by Jesus) as a traitor (Luke 6:16) constitutes an eloquent remainder of that fact.

Already these few words of introduction show us that Jesus’ teaching is not meant just for everybody. It is addressed neither to all the poor and oppressed of the world as such¹⁹, nor to “the masses of the eternally inferior”²⁰ like, for example, today’s third world people struggling with misery and social injustice. His words are directed to those who want to listen to him, to follow his way and to belong to the people he came to call.

2.2 THE SERIES OF COMMANDS CONCERNING THE LOVE OF ENEMY

(LUKE 6:27B-30)

Immediately after the short introduction, Jesus pronounces the command to “love your enemies”²¹. By giving this command Jesus makes it clear that those who are listening to him are to confront themselves with the reality of having enemies, first of all, perhaps, to recognize that reality and then to

Mark 3:11-12 at Luke 4:41.

¹⁷ H. S t r a t h m a n n, *lao,n in the LXX*, in G. K i t t e l & G. F r i e d r i c h (Eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, IV, Grand Rapids 1964-1976, p. 32-37.

¹⁸ J. P i p e r, “*Love your Enemies*”: *Jesus’ Love Command in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Early Christian Paraenesis. A History of the Tradition and Interpretation of Its Uses*, Cambridge: Cambridge University 1979, p. 153-155, SNTS MS 38; R.F. O’T o o l e, *The Unity of Luke’s Theology. An Analysis of Luke-Acts*, Wilmington/Delaware: Michael Glazier 1984, p. 20, 104-105, Good News Studies 9; R.L. P a r e j a, *The Motif of Hearing in Luke-Acts: A Study of Its Thematic Configurations. Dissertatio ad Lauream in Facultate S. Theologiae apud Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae in Urbe*, Roma: PSU A. S. Thoma Aq. 1994, p. 59-182; J. J e r v e l l, *Luke and the People of God*, Minneapolis: Augsburg 1984, p. 41-47.

¹⁹ W i n k, *Neither Passivity nor Violence*, p. 108.

²⁰ L a p i d e, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 114.

²¹ It is noteworthy that it is his first direct command not only within the Sermon on the Plain but also in the whole Lucan gospel.

respond to it with love. Such a response demanded by Jesus is so startling²² that it calls for an explanation. What does it mean when he says: “love your enemies”?

In the first place it means to “do good to those who hate you” (Luke 6:27c). It means that the “love” Jesus commands as the right attitude vis-à-vis enemies is to be understood in a very active sense. “Doing good” does not say much about the feelings²³, but it points to concrete acts of kindness and benevolence²⁴. Similar acts are to be performed towards “those who hate you”.

The immediate context (Luke 6:22)²⁵ of our verse suggests that Luke may have here a particular kind of hatred in mind, namely that provoked by belonging to Jesus (see also Luke 21:17). In fact, the consequences of that hatred in our passage (cursing, abusing) are similar to those in Luke 6:22 (excluding, reviling, scorning) and in Luke 21:12-17 (arresting, persecuting). If it is true that “those who listen” to Jesus have to face the enmity of others, it is also true that they are to do it not despite, but precisely because of their belonging to Jesus. Following him does not only provide a shield against hatred, but it rather seems to provide one more reason for it, and that needs to be taken into account. Notwithstanding this reasoning that considers the immediate context of the verse 27 as a help in its understanding, it is necessary to stress that “those who hate you” are indicated here without any qualification. As a consequence, the interest of the commandment does not rest so much on what might be the cause of the hate experienced by “those who listen” to Jesus, but rather on their “doing good” to “those who hate them”.

²² No parallel expression has been found in contemporary texts, descending either from Jewish or non-Jewish tradition. H.W. K u h n, *Das Liebesgebot Jesu als Tora und als Evangelium: Zur Feindesliebe und zur christlichen und jüdischen Auslegung der Bergpredigt*, in *Vom Urchristentum zu Jesus*, Fs.J. Gnilka, Freiburg 1989, 194-230. H. F r a n k e m ö l l e & K. K e r t e l g e (Eds.), *Vom Urchristentum zu Jesus*, p. 224-227.

²³ One does not need to “wait for some emotional feeling toward his or her enemies but can from the beginning act lovingly toward them.” R.H. S t e i n, *The Method and Message of Jesus’ Teaching. Revised Edition*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox 1994, p. 105.

²⁴ N o l l a n d, *Luke 1-9:20*, p. 294; C.F. E v a n s, *Saint Luke*, London: SCM 1990, p. 334, TPI New Testament Commentaries; R.H. S t e i n, *The Method and Message of Jesus’ Teaching. Revised Edition*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox 1994, p. 206-207.

²⁵ The fact that Matthew does not mention “hatred” in his parallel “beatitude” (Matt 5:11-12) may strengthen the assumption that Luke wanted to establish a link between the thought expressed in verses 6:22 and 27.

The next two commands (v. 28) exemplify in religious terms what “loving” and “doing good to those who hate you” may mean in practice: “bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you”. Both actions, cursing and abusing, reveal a hostile attitude. The answer to such a display of enmity should not be just endurance, but exactly the opposite action, namely, that of blessing and prayer. The meaning of blessing here is wider than just “intercession”, but it can also imply “doing good, showing a friendly attitude, speaking a gracious word”²⁶. The prayer, instead, is to be understood as a prayer of intercession, a prayer “for” them, or “on their behalf” and not just a prayer for deliverance from the enemies that was so popular in the Psalms²⁷. It has been noticed that, with the exception of Luke 6:28 and Matt 5:44, in the New Testament the words “prayer” or “to pray” occur nowhere else with regard to enemy of any sort²⁸. All these circumstances may only increase the sensation of newness and surprise accompanying Jesus’ commands. The fact that Jesus indicates blessing and prayer, as examples of “doing good” to those who behave in a hostile manner, does not necessarily mean that “the enemy is in some sense a religious enemy”²⁹. It may rather suggest that those who are mistreated are religious people who cannot perhaps do much in front of a stronger enemy but can always pray³⁰.

What is really striking about these first four commands is their absolute character. In fact, Jesus says nothing on what to do if the enemy does not change his attitude and continue to act with hostility. The concern of his injunctions rotates totally around the behaviour of his listeners toward their adversaries, without a slightest consideration given to any possible response to such behaviour. This behaviour must be characterized by one-sided generosity of Jesus’ followers vis-à-vis anyone who acts toward them in a harmful way. The fact that Jesus does not mention the cause of enmity, of hating, cursing and abusing, suggests that Jesus’ teaching remains valid not only

²⁶ C. Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and in the Life of the Church*, Philadelphia: Fortress 1978, p. 69-101, Overtures to Biblical Theology 3.

²⁷ See, e.g.: Pss (LXX) 6:9-11; 7:5-7; 16:8-13; 17:18-20; 24:2.19; 40; 53:7; 142:12; K. Sakenfeld, *Faithfulness in Action. Loyalty in Biblical Perspective*, Philadelphia: Fortress 1998, p. 84-89, Overtures to Biblical Theology 16.

²⁸ Piper, “Love your Enemies”, p. 57.

²⁹ R. A. Pieper, *Wisdom in the Q-Tradition. The Aphoristic Teaching of Jesus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University 1989, p. 83, SNTSMS 61; L. Schottroff, *Gewaltverzicht und Feindesliebe in der urchristlichen Jesustradition*, p. 213-215.

³⁰ On that last point see: F. Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas, 1. Teilband Lk 1,1-9, 50*, Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchener 1989 p. 314-315, EKK III/I.

when the Christians are mistreated because they are Christians but for whatever reason.

The above sayings do not exhaust the meaning of the command: “love your enemies”. In fact, the Lucan Jesus proceeds with four other injunctions: “To him who strikes you on the cheek offer the other also; and from him who takes away you cloak do not withhold you tunic as well. Give to everyone who asks from you; and of him who takes what is yours do not ask it back” (Luke 6:29-30). The described situations represent some very concrete instances of hostile behaviour which the listeners of Jesus may happen to face. A specific act of violence needs to be confronted by an appropriate positive action that further exemplifies what loving one’s enemies and doing good to them can mean in some very particular circumstances³¹.

These examples develop the idea of “active love”³² toward one’s enemies which is much more than the idea of “non-resistance” or “non-violence”. In fact, the Lucan Jesus does not say “accept the blow”, “let him take your cloak”, “give to one who ask you” and “let him take what is yours”. He says instead: “offer him also the other cheek”, “do not withhold your tunic as well”, “give to everyone who ask you”, “do not demand back from the one who has taken what was yours”. As in the preceding verses (Luke 6:27-28), so also now, Jesus recommends not a passive attitude in enduring violent, unjust or at least unpleasant actions of the others. He rather calls for a positive disposition towards them with no consideration of the effect that such behaviour might bring about in those people.

The different cases of mistreatment which are considered in Luke 6:29-30 do not attempt to cover systematically an area of human behaviour whereby some precise precepts could be applied in clearly defined situations. They rather serve to show the possibility of a totally different behaviour from the one usually adopted by the people in their dealings with others, especially in circumstances of enmity and aggression. This different behaviour demanded by Jesus becomes, thus, a sign of a new way of being in this world. It can be described as the refusal of “our natural tendency to put self-protection

³¹ Cf. A. V ö g t l e, *Ein, unablässiger Stachel*, in H. M e r k l e i n (Ed.), *Neues Testament und Ethik*, Freiburg: Herder 1989, p. 54-55, FS. H. Schürmann; F. B o v o n, *Lukas 1,1-9,50*, p. 321; R.H. S t e i n, *Luke*, NAC 24, Nashville 1992, 207; B e t z, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 595.

³² T.W. M a n s o n, *The Sayings of Jesus*, London: SCM 1949, p. 51.

first”³³. Each command asks, in fact, for an action that is in precise opposition to our deeply rooted need to protect ourselves and our property. In this way, the commands appear to be of a very extreme if not exaggerated character³⁴. Their extreme nature consists not so much in presenting instances of the potentially greatest violence or injustice, but in proposing the reactions which go as far as apparently possible in the positive accommodation toward one’s assailant. The extreme character of the commands makes the hearer realize that they refer to “everything up to and including literal sense”³⁵. Therefore, to understand them only in the literal sense would not do any justice to them. Their goal is rather to provoke an “imaginative shock” which, in turn, awakens the “moral imagination”³⁶ that can help the serious hearers in shaping their new pattern of behaviour. This new pattern can be then applied to a whole range of similar situations. The fact that these commands have the capacity to illuminate practically an infinite number of similar situations is very important here. It allows their author to avoid a long casuistic discussion that would have to consider all possible cases in a given field on one to one basis. He is able, instead, to focus the attention of his hearers on one clear instance of behaviour that, because of its extreme character, encompasses and illuminates many analogous instances and is capable of calling in question our long-standing habits of thinking and acting³⁷.

It is remarkable and important that these commands again give no consideration to the effects which similar actions may produce in those towards whom they are directed³⁸. Lack of such considerations accentuates their unilateral character and their fundamental one-sidedness that leaves aside all

³³ R.C. T a n n e h i l l, *The Focal Instance as a Form of the New Testament Speech: A Study of Matthew 5:39b-42*, JRel 50(1970), p. 380.

³⁴ H u b e r, *Feindschaft und Feindesliebe*, p. 140; B e t z, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 595.

³⁵ T a n n e h i l l, *The Focal Instance*, p. 380.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 382.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 384; J. B e c k e r, *Feindesliebe – Nächstenliebe – Bruderliebe*, ZEE 25 (1981), p. 9; G. L o h f i n k, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith*, Transl. by J.P. Galvin, Philadelphia: Fortress 1984, p. 52; D. Z e l l e r, *Die weisheitlichen Mahnsprüche bei den Synoptikern*, p. 56.

³⁸ W. G r u n d m a n n, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1961, p. 148, *Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 3.); T a n n e h i l l, *The Focal Instance*, p. 379.

possible references to any form of reciprocal approach³⁹. Using the expressions of P. Ricoeur⁴⁰, one may say that we are dealing here with the “logic of superabundance” as opposite to the “logic of equivalence” and with the “economy of gift” that is contrary to the “economy of exchange”.

2.3 THE GOLDEN RULE FACTOR (LUKE 6:31)

It has been argued that the *Golden Rule* which is placed in the midst of the Lucan text on the love of enemy introduces into it a strong element of reciprocity that should determine the interpretation of the whole passage. The reason for it would be the subordination, by Luke, of the teaching on the love of enemy to the rule that is built on the principle of reciprocity⁴¹.

In our opinion, the careful analysis of the Lucan text shows that the arguments for the interpretation of the love of enemy teaching as subordinated to the *Golden Rule* and for the understanding of the rule itself along the principle of reciprocity are quite weak.

The fact that the maxim – “As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them” – repeats twice the verb “to do” which in different forms abounds in the immediate context (“do good” in v. 27 and in vv. 33 and 35), does not immediately mean that the *Golden Rule* can be regarded as the centre of the whole passage⁴². It rather indicates that this verb is of special importance to Luke⁴³ and that the rule fits in well with its context.

On the one hand, one may notice that the plural form used in the rule separates it grammatically from the preceding verses (vv. 29-30) which are composed in the singular. On the other hand, however, this return to the second person plural establishes a link between the *Golden Rule* and the beginning of the unit (vv. 27-28 – all in the plural) that opens with the com-

³⁹ H u b e r, *Feindschaft und Feindesliebe*, p. 139. Against T h e i s s e n, *Nonviolence*, p. 121-125.

⁴⁰ P. R i c o e u r, *The Golden Rule: Exegetical and Theological Perplexities*, NTS 36(1990), p. 392-397.

⁴¹ See esp. T h e i s s e n, *Nonviolence*, p. 122.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ A certain insistence on “doing”, on the practical expressions of “love”, constitutes, in fact, one of the characteristics of Luke’s Gospel. See, e.g., the only Lucan passage: Luke 6:27c; 7:5; 10:25-37 (esp. 10:37 – “go and do the same”). V.P. F u r n i s h, *The Love Command in the New Testament*, Nashville (1972), p. 57; O.J.F. S e i t z, *Love Your Enemies*, NTS 16(1969-70), p. 42-47; W. S c h r a g e, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, Transl. by D. Green, Philadelphia: Fortress 1988, p. 161.

mand to love one's enemy. The plural form of the rule, coming up precisely at this point, deserves a special attention as it is the only plural version of the *Golden Rule* known from the ancient tradition⁴⁴.

The link, appearing at the grammatical level, is reinforced by the positive version of the rule which agrees in form with the positive injunctions of the first fourfold series (vv. 27-28). Moreover, as far as the content is concerned, the imperative "do" of the rule recalls the "do good" of the verse 27c⁴⁵. This similarity does not remain only on the morphological level. Likewise the commands in verses 27-28, the rule, in its positive form, calls clearly for action and not just re-action. It invites initiative and not passivity, doing good and not just withholding from doing wrong⁴⁶. This characteristic puts it in line with all the previous injunctions⁴⁷.

The *Golden Rule*, as it stands in verse 31, does not ask to do to the other what one expects in return or not to do what one would like to avoid. It asks, instead, that we do to the others, out of our own initiative, what we, on the basis of our "natural" love of selves, consider to be desirable for us⁴⁸. In other words, our actions towards other people are not to be determined by their behaviour towards us, be it their actual behaviour, the expected one or the one we hope for. Instead, our ethical conduct is to be exclusively based on what we judge to be beneficial to ourselves and to do this precisely to others, regardless of what they might be doing to us. In this

⁴⁴ Z e l l e r, *Die weisheitlichen Mahnsprüche*, p. 118.

⁴⁵ It seems that all these similarities between the *Golden Rule* and the beginning of our unit were overlooked by H. Schürmann (*Luca 1,1-9,50, 572-575*) who underlines, instead, the correspondence between the rule and the readiness to give of the verse 30 (in its original form – Matt 5:42). Also P. H o f f m a n n, *Tradition und Situation. Zur "Verbindlichkeit" des Gebots der Feindesliebe in der Synoptischen Überlieferung und in der gegenwärtigen Friedensdiskussion*, in K. K e r t e l g e (Ed.), *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, Freiburg: Herder 1984, p. 69, *Questiones Disputatae* 103); T h e i s s e n, *Nonviolence*, p. 122, instead, seems to overemphasize this link.

⁴⁶ Z e l l e r, *Die weisheitlichen Mahnsprüche*, p. 119; I. H. M a r s h a l l, *The Gospel of Luke. A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC, Granville–Cape Town 1978, p. 262; A. E. H a r v e y, *Strenuous Command. The Ethic of Jesus*, London–Philadelphia 1990, p. 106-110.

⁴⁷ G. S t r e c k e r, *Compliance – Love of One's Enemy – The Golden Rule*, *Australian Biblical Review* 29(1981), p. 45; J. L a m b r e c h t, *The Sermon on the Mount. Proclamation and Exhortation*, Wilmington/Delaware: Michael Glazier 1985, p. 216, *Good News Studies* 14.

⁴⁸ H. S c h ü r m a n n, *Il Vangelo di Luca. Prima parte 1,1-9,50*, Brescia: Paideia 1983, p. 574. The same principle seems to be underlying the love of neighbour command in Lev 19:18b.

way, what we consider to be to our advantage becomes the starting point of our acting towards the people and not the aim of it⁴⁹.

The rule makes reference to our egoism only in order to overcome it. The love of self, so deeply rooted in each one of us⁵⁰, is to become a mirror in which we are to see the needs of the others. These needs must be regarded with no lesser consideration than our own and they are to be taken care of exactly as we take care of our own needs. The phrase “as you wish that men would do to you” needs, then, to be understood not as the motive but as the *norm* of the required behaviour⁵¹. It seems to be the reason for placing it at the beginning of the maxim. The expression “do so to them” which comes at the end, makes a reference to this norm and, at the same time puts a stress on it. The acceptance of this norm and putting it into practice is not possible without a conversion which appears to be the true aim of the rule⁵². The so conceived aim of the *Golden Rule* is put in evidence through the context within which it is placed. It is the context that speaks of love of enemies, voluntary defencelessness and creative submission which seem to have nothing to do with the concept of reciprocity. Thus the reading of the *Golden Rule* here according to this concept would amount to a radical misunderstanding of it⁵³.

Furthermore, if Luke, as it is suggested, really wanted to adopt the principle of reciprocity in order to make Jesus’ teaching sound familiar to his audience, then we would expect him to use the similar procedure in other

⁴⁹ H. M e r k l e i n, *Die Gottesherrschaft als Handlungsprinzip. Untersuchung zur Ethik Jesu*, Würzburg: Echter 1981², p. 244-245, *Forschung zur Bibel*; S t r e c k e r, *Compliance – Love of One’s Enemy – The Golden Rule*, p. 60; S. L e g a s s e, *Et qui est mon prochain? Étude sur l’objet de l’agape dans le Nouveau Testament*, Paris: Editions du Cerf 1989, p. 109, *Lectio Divina* 136.

⁵⁰ This reference to self-love, already abundantly present in the Jewish sources, is nothing else than the recognition of the power of self-assertion in human life. On this W. K l a s s e n, *Love your Enemies: Some Reflections on the Current Status of Research*, in W.M. S w a r t l e y (Ed.), *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament (Studies in Peace and Scripture)*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox 1992, p. 13-14. See also P. B o r g e n, *The Golden Rule, in Paul Preaches Circumcision and Pleases Men and Other Essays on Christian Origins*, Trondheim: Tapir 1983, p. 108.

⁵¹ Z e l l e r, *Die weisheitlichen Mahnsprüche*, p. 118.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁵³ Strecker (*Compliance*, p. 45) speaks in this respect about the interpretation “in malam partem” and P. Ricoeur (*Exegetical and Theological Considerations on the Golden Rule*, in: *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination*, Transl. D. Pallauer; M.I. W a l l a c e (Ed.), 1995, p. 300) calls it a “perverse interpretation”.

parts of his gospel as well. What we find, instead, is rather a firm negation of the reciprocity and, at the same time, the encouragement toward a behaviour based on asymmetrical generosity that expects nothing in return (Luke 14:12-14; see also 10:35; 19:8-9).

Notwithstanding the logic of the above reasoning, we come across the examples of the interpretation of the *Golden Rule* that are in line with the principle of reciprocity. All these examples, which come to us from the antiquity and from some modern scholars, make us think that the rule must be open to similar interpretations as well. The question arises – how can the two different interpretations be possible at the same time? The answer seems to be hidden in the formulation itself of the *Golden Rule*. In fact, as P. Ricoeur notices⁵⁴, the rule is characterized by a high degree of formalism that leaves a considerable margin for its interpretation and reinterpretation as determined by the context. The same rule may tip toward self-interest or self-sacrifice depending on the practical explanation given⁵⁵. The examples of both tendencies in the interpretation of the rule were already present in the ancient literature. P. Borgen⁵⁶ has diligently distilled them from there in his article where admits that there are many examples, both in Greek and Jewish sources, where the various formulations of the maxim “show kinship with the principle of reciprocation and also express the motive of compensation”⁵⁷. He points out, however, that there are also a significant number of instances where the *Golden Rule* is used in the context where the idea of reciprocity is totally absent and the rule itself is used as an expression for virtuous behaviour⁵⁸. A similar interpretation of the rule is strongly favoured by the context within which it appears in the Gospel of Luke.

To this context belong not only verses 27-30 and 32-34⁵⁹ but also verse 36 which continues verse 35 and concludes the whole passage. This verse

⁵⁴ R i c o e u r, *Considerations on the Golden Rule*, p. 295 (He makes a comparison between the *Golden Rule* and the even more formal Kantian categorical imperative.); Id., *The Golden Rule*, p. 394-395; N i s s e n, *The Distinctive Character of the New Testament Love Command in Relation to Hellenistic Judaism*, p. 138. See also: H.-R. R e u t e r, *Liebet eure Feinde!*, ZEE 26(1982), p. 164-165, where he distinguishes between different levels of the interpretations of the rule.

⁵⁵ R i c o e u r, *Considerations on the Golden Rule*, p. 301.

⁵⁶ B o r g e n, *The Golden Rule*, p. 99-112.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 103.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 105, 110-111.

⁵⁹ Verse 35 serves as a kind of summary of the preceding verses (Luke 6: 27-34) and, as such, picks up the topics which were already mentioned there.

seems to have a special importance for the understanding of the maxim in verse 31. What brings these two verses together is the similarity in their structure. Each of them is composed of the main clause in the imperative plural and a comparative clause introduced by “as”, but the clauses are in reverse order:

“As you wish that men would do to you, *do* so to them.”

“*Be* merciful, *as* your Father is merciful.”

If we read these verses together, it becomes clear that Jesus’ listeners are to “be merciful” in their “doing” directed to their fellow humans. God, who acts as the Father, uses mercy and love⁶⁰ in his dealings with the human beings. One can hardly imagine a better way in which to be treated. Since it is supposed that the listeners of Jesus wish to be treated in the best possible manner, so it is clear that their actions towards the others should be also controlled by similar compassion and mercy.

In conclusion, we can say that the *Golden Rule* of the verse 31 appears to be fully compatible with the passage determined by the command on love of enemies understood as the attitude of the one-sided kindness and generosity towards them. It can be noticed not only at the rhetorical but also at the thematic level. By being the last in the series of nine commands and with some quite strong links to them, the rule appears to be a kind of summary of what it means to behave lovingly towards the people, enemies included⁶¹. Thus, it is not the love of enemy teaching that is subordinated to the *Golden Rule* there, but, vice versa, it is the *Golden Rule* that is subordinated to the teaching on the love of enemy.

2.4. JESUS’ DISTURBING QUESTIONS (LUKE 6:31-33)

Verses 32-34 are the only verses in Luke 6:27-36 that do not contain a verb in the imperative mood. All three have a very similar structure that is built around the same question “what credit is it to you?” Each one of them begins with a conditional clause introduced by “if [you]” and ends with

⁶⁰ According to Strecker (*Gottes- und Menschenliebe in Neuen Testament*, in G.F. Hawthorne & O. Betz (Eds.), *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament* (Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis for His 60th Birthday), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, p. 55) God’s love is identical with his mercy.

⁶¹ Similarly: Stein, *Luke*, p. 208. Looking at the Matthean parallel (Matt 7:12) we see that also there the *Golden Rule* fulfils the role of a summary but, this time, it is the summary of the whole Sermon on the Mount and even more (“...for this is the law and the prophets”). W. Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1988, p. 136.

an example of the morality of “sinners”. All these features set the verses 32-34 apart from the preceding locutions that are basically commands, indicating a new pattern of behaviour. This part, instead, is constructed in the way that invites an examination of the listeners’ actual behaviour and, thus, has a more reflective character⁶².

The grammatical person of the verses 32-34 continues to be the plural which was reintroduced by the golden rule. There is also a certain thematic link between the rule and the following sayings. Since the *Golden Rule* was, and still can be⁶³, understood along the principle of reciprocity, the verses 32-34, by expressing the criticism of this principle, help to clarify the meaning of the rule and avoid its eventual misinterpretation⁶⁴.

All three questions make a reference to the behaviour based on reciprocity, but they discuss it from a different perspective. Verses 32 and 33 point to the behaviour that we may call the “reaction-behaviour”. It can be generally verbalized – you do good to me *therefore* I do good to you. Verse 34, instead, speaks about the behaviour which we would rather call the “anticipation-behaviour” and which corresponds to the following attitude – I do good to you *because* I hope/expect that you will respond in kind⁶⁵.

In this way, Jesus directs the attention of his listeners to the motive underlying their actions. He makes it clear that if all their positive behaviour towards the others is governed by the principle of reciprocity, then, this behaviour is in no way different from the behaviour of the “sinners”, i.e., from the behaviour of the people who have a need for conversion. In consequence, the only “credit” they have is the “credit” similar to that of other humans who are “sinners” as they are. The behaviour of the “sinners”, as such, is not discarded or disqualified⁶⁶. It is clear, however, that it does not merit any

⁶² An element of reflection was already introduced in v. 31 – “And as you wish that the people would do to you...” In this way, the *Golden Rule* secured a smoother transition to the next part of the unit.

⁶³ As it has been demonstrated above.

⁶⁴ F i t z m y e r, *The Gospel according to Luke (I-IX)*, p. 640; B e t z (*The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 599-604) appears to favour such an interpretation of vv. 32-34 which limits their role within the unit (Luke 6:27-36) exclusively to the commentary on the *Golden Rule*. This interpretation, however, seems to be too restrictive.

⁶⁵ W.C. van U n n i k, *Die Motivierung der Feindesliebe in Lukas 6:32-35*, NovT 8(1966), p. 299; N o l l a n d, *Luke 1-9:20*, p. 299.

⁶⁶ Luke 11:13//Matt 7:11 where Jesus practically admits that even those who are “evil” can do good things. Cf. F.W. H o r n, *Glaube und Handeln in der Theologie des Lukas*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1983, p. 99-100, Göttinger Theologische Arbeiten 26; Different-

appreciative recognition⁶⁷. This kind of behaviour is just usual. On the other hand, it appears to be implicit in the argument that the hearers' intention is to become different from the "sinners"⁶⁸. The purpose of Jesus' commands is just to help them in achieving that goal. He invites them to what goes well beyond people's usual conduct. It seems that Jesus' addressees find themselves in front of the following challenge: either they continue behaving like the "sinners" do or they change their behaviour by conforming it to the way traced by the just pronounced commands (vv. 27-31).

Verses 32-34, in fact, continue the idea contained in the set of the injunctions that precede them. They do it, however, in the entirely different form and from a different point of view. In Luke 6:27-30 we have eight short commands which come rhythmically one after another and demand a behaviour characterized by a totally positive one-sidedness. In Luke 6:32-34, instead, we find a chain of three rhetorical questions that are introduced by the three comparative clauses and followed by the statements regarding the behaviour of the "sinners". The Lucan Jesus uses them to force his listeners to reflect on the conduct which only apparently may resemble that which he commands. Both, the commands as well as the questions, speak of the benevolent behaviour towards other people. There is, however, a substantial difference between the objects of such a demeanour. While the commands call for the generous conduct (even) towards those who behave with hostility, the questions describe the favourable behaviour directed only towards those who reciprocate in kind.

The rhetorical questions are also in opposition to the *Golden Rule*. Whereas the rule calls for initiative in doing to others what we wish for ourselves, verses 32-34 show the behaviour which limits itself only to a reciprocation of the positive action of the others or is simply an anticipation of such an action. This conduct governed by the principle of reciprocity is qualified each time as the conduct that is typical of the "sinners". It becomes, then,

ly, B e t z, *Sermon*, p. 601.

⁶⁷ H u b e r, *Feindschaft und Feindesliebe*, p. 139; van Unnik (*Die Motivierung*, p. 296-300), however, argues that the Lucan Jesus does not only criticize the reciprocity approach of the Hellenistic ethics but also questions the legitimacy to use the word "credit" for what in reality is only a "debt" (schuld). This kind of reasoning, however, seems to limit Jesus' intervention to a kind of academic discussion concerning the proper use of different terms. It is why, in our opinion, this interpretation appears to be unsatisfactory.

⁶⁸ P i e p e r, *Wisdom*, p. 84; T h e i s s e n, *Nonviolence*, p. 119-121; N e u g e b a u e r, *Die dargebotene Wange und Jesu Gebot der Feindesliebe*, p. 871.

obvious that those who follow this principle have a need for conversion. Their belonging to the category of “sinners” cannot be regarded as particularly meritorious (what credit...?). Read in this way, the rhetorical questions in verses 32-34 constitute an implicit invitation not to behave like the “sinners” do, i.e., not according to the principle of reciprocity. This may be well understood as the negative motive in favour of the total one-sidedness in the practice of love of enemies. The positive motive is given in the following verse (Luke 6:35).

2.5 THE SONS OF THE MOST HIGH (LUKE 6:35-36)

Having demonstrated the insufficiency of the comportment based on reciprocity, the Lucan Jesus goes back to his new ethical program characterized by total one-sidedness and unrestrained generosity. A strongly adversative “but” underlines that turning point of Jesus speech. It emphasizes the contrast between the behaviour commanded by him and that of the “sinners”. The three commands in verse 35 which summarize this new ethical program, build upon Luke 6:32-34 by taking up its three main verbs, namely, “to love, to do good” and “to lend”. The first command “love your enemies”, being the exact reiteration of Luke 6:27b, suggests that this new cluster of injunctions may be considered as a recapitulation of all the demands which are expressed in the previous verses (Luke 6:27-30). There is, however, an important difference between these two groups of commands. In the first group (vv. 27-30), all the attitudes and actions commanded by Jesus have their various recipients clearly indicated. In verse 35, instead, only one recipient is mentioned, namely, “your enemies”. In this way, Luke underlines once more the extreme nature of Jesus’ demands. His new moral order is based on “love” that excludes nobody, not even one’s enemies. The commands to “do good” and to “lend” are stated without objects and, thus, they are given an even more absolute form. The implication is that as Jesus’ listeners are to “love” everyone, their enemies included, so also everyone is to become the recipient of their “doing good” and “lending”⁶⁹. The stress, however, rests on the commended actions themselves and not on their potential recipients. In fact, it is not they, their needs or the circumstances of their lives that will deter-

⁶⁹ Combining the command to “lend” with the saying on “lending” in verse 34 one easily realizes that the Lucan Jesus goes with his program far beyond the very cautious instructions of Ben Sirach 8:12; 29:1-7.

mine the behaviour of Jesus' followers in the first place. The only positive reason that is given in support of the required behaviour is not social but theological, namely, the character of God (for he is kind...).

The three commands in Luke 6:35 appear to constitute a condition the fulfilment of which will produce the following consequences: "and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High". Thus, the future tense which is employed in verse 35 is to be read, first of all, not as an eschatological but as a logical future, indicating the consequences of the commended behaviour⁷⁰. It means that if Jesus' listeners "love their enemies, do good and lend" they will have a "great reward" and they will show themselves to be "sons of the Most High"⁷¹. Indeed, there is nothing in the text itself which suggests that those consequences will be revealed only in the world to come⁷². Luke underlines, instead, the present attitude of God⁷³. The "for"-clause which concludes verse 35 points, in fact, not to a future judgment of God but to his present comportment towards "the ungrateful and the wicked". In consequence, as God "is kind" to them now, in this world, so also those who will put into practice the word of Jesus will reveal themselves as the "sons of the Most High" already in this world⁷⁴.

This point seems to be further stressed by the subsequent verse (Luke 6:36) which is an invitation to behave already now (imperative present) as the "Father" does (just as your Father...)⁷⁵. On the one hand, it is true that,

⁷⁰ Z e l l e r, *Mahnsprüche*, p. 103; M e r k l e i n, *Die Gottesherrschaft*, p. 235. We may find a further corroboration of this conclusion in the LXX where the expression "reward ... will be" occurs seven times (Gen 15:1; 30:32-33; 31:8; Isa 28:18; Jer 38:16; Ezek 29:19; Zech 8:10) and every time with a reference to something that is expected still in this world.

⁷¹ M a r s h a l l, *Luke*, p. 264; N o l l a n d, *Luke 1-9:20*, p. 300; S t e i n, *Luke*, p. 203.

⁷² D. L ü h r m a n n, *Liebet eure Feinde*, ZTK 69 (1972), p. 426; M e r k l e i n, *Die Gottesherrschaft*, p. 235.

⁷³ Matthew, in his parallel text (Matt 5:45), makes a similar point through the reference "to the experiential evidence of the present condition of God's world" (Cf. P i e p e r, *Wisdom*, 81, 84) – "for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust".

⁷⁴ Cf. F.W. D a n k e r, *Luke (Proclamation Commentaries*, Ed. G. K r o d e l), Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1987, p. 149-150; L.J. T o p e l, "The Christian Ethic of the Lukan Sermon", in R.J. D a l y (Ed.), *Christian Biblical Ethics. From Biblical Revelation to Contemporary Christian Praxis: Method and Content*, New York/Ramsey: Paulist 1984, p. 189-196.

⁷⁵ Even Schürmann (*Luca 1,1-9,50*, p. 581) who opts for the eschatological interpretation admits that.

as H. Riesenfeld argues⁷⁶, “the term ‘sons of God’ in Old Testament, especially in the Wisdom Literature [...] is part of a definitely eschatological concept”⁷⁷. On the other hand, however, he himself admits that in the New Testament, both the term “children of God” and the idea of the Christian *ecclesia* which he links with the concept of the “sons of God” designate an earthly anticipation of the transcendental reality⁷⁸. The same conclusion may be applied to Luke 6:35, especially when one takes into account that according to the third evangelist the eschatology has already entered this world⁷⁹, for “the end times [...] begin with the birth of Jesus”⁸⁰. Besides, it could be that Luke did not use the term “sons of God” precisely because it was so highly charged with the ideas linked to the realm of life after death. He chose, instead, the term “sons of the Most High” which in the LXX was already used in the context similar to that of Luke 6:35, namely, in the context of the benevolent behaviour toward others after the example of God (cf. Sir 4:10)⁸¹. Of course, the fact that the consequences of such behaviour are to be experienced in the present age does not exclude the fullness of this experience in the age to come⁸².

What precisely the “great reward” means is not clearly indicated. Most of the exegetes identify it with the divine sonship attained by those who fulfil Jesus’ commands. There are, however, some problems with this interpretation. Once we assume that the two future clauses in verse 35 explain one another, we have to understand the divine sonship not as an almost “natural” and logical result of the commanded behaviour but as a favour conferred by God on those who have merited it. In other words, it is not the question of the disciples of Jesus who show themselves to be “sons of the Most High” by emulating the behaviour of “their Father” but it is God who rewards them for their exemplary comportment by elevating them to the status of his sons. A similar reasoning does not really seem to agree with the thought of the

⁷⁶ H. R i e s e n f e l d, *Sons of God and Ecclesia: An Intertestamental Analysis*, in V. M c i n n e s (Ed.), *Renewing the Judeo-Christian Wellsprings*, New York: Crossroad 1987, p. 89-104.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 97.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 99, 104.

⁷⁹ T o p e l, *The Christian Ethic*, p. 196.

⁸⁰ O’T o o l e, *The Unity*, p. 149 (See also the whole chapter: “Delay of the Parousia and Luke’s Notion of Eschatology” on pp. 149-159); R. M a d d o x, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, Edinburgh 1982, 1985, p. 137-145; L o h f i n k, *Jesus and Community*, p. 70.

⁸¹ Riesenfeld does not even mention this text in his discussion.

⁸² M e r k l e i n, *Die Gottesherrschaft*, p. 235-236.

text which says “and you *will be* sons of the Most High” and not “and you *will be made* (into) ...” or even, “*so that you may become* sons of the Most High”. Of course, one should not exclude that the status of divine sonship, resulting from behaviour similar to that of God, can be considered a reward in itself⁸³. The text, however, as it stands, does not really point to such an interpretation.

Perhaps, one may find some help in the understanding of the reward idea in verse 35 at the end of the Sermon (Luke 6:46-49). Jesus speaks there, in fact, about the consequences of doing or not doing his words. By way of a parable, he compares those who not only listen but also do his words to those who build their house on the rock. Whatever happens, it remains stable and secure. This analogy seems to deliver one clear message: Take my words really to heart, and your lives will show it⁸⁴. If this interpretation be right, then the “great reward” would signify the results which are brought about by following Jesus’ difficult commands. Eventually these will reveal themselves good for one’s life. However, to confine the meaning of the “great reward” only to this would result in setting limits to God’s rewarding “fantasy” and this should not be done as well. What needs to be stressed, instead, is the fact that Luke appears to be very circumspect in avoiding any possible allusion to an alternative self-serving ethics based on the *quid pro quo* approach that he criticises in the previous verses (Luke 6:32-34). He does not try to replace the practical reciprocity which characterizes the dealings among humans with a new, “eschatological” reciprocity that is supposed to govern the relations between humans and God⁸⁵. Neither the divine sonship nor the “great reward” can be understood as one’s desert, a fruit of the calculated reciprocity (cf. also Luke 17:10)⁸⁶. As J. Nolland⁸⁷ underlines, “reward is not payment: it is a concrete form of God’s approval”.

The main stress of the saying rests, however, on the comparison between the behaviour commanded by Jesus and that of God himself. By living up to the new moral order that is characterized by kindness even towards one’s

⁸³ Just as Paul considered his reward to be the possibility of preaching the Gospel free of charge (Cf. 1Cor 9:18).

⁸⁴ J.W. S e i d e r, *Proportional Analogy in the Gospel Parables*, NTS 31(1985), p. 18. According to the author, the other analogies in verses 39-45 convey also the same message.

⁸⁵ N o l l a n d, *Luke 1-9:20*, p. 299-300; Against T h e i s s e n, *Nonviolence*, p. 125-130.

⁸⁶ H. C o n z e l m a n n, *The Theology of St. Luke*, London: Faber & Faber 1960, p. 234; T o p e l, *The Christian Ethic*, p. 195.

⁸⁷ N o l l a n d, *Luke 1-9:20*, p. 300.

enemies, the disciples of Jesus will show themselves to be “sons of the Most High for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked”. Luke emphasizes here even more clearly than Matthew the one-sidedness of God’s behaviour whose benevolence provides a stark contrast to human wickedness and ungratefulness. Where Matthew (5:45) mentions the representatives of both sides of the moral spectrum, “the wicked and the good”, “the just and the unjust” who in equal degree enjoy God’s care, Luke has only “the ungrateful and the wicked” as the recipients of God’s kindness. In this way, the expression appears to fit in very closely with the preceding stress on the unconditional love toward one’s enemies.

The one-sidedness and generosity of God whose behaviour toward humans is benevolent even when they are undeserving provides a solid, theological reason for the similar behaviour of Jesus’ disciples. Their acts of love performed even towards those who are the least deserving like their enemies will put the followers of Jesus into harmony with God. In this way, their association with him will become unmistakable and it will be evident that they are as the Most High is, in so far as this is possible for the humans. Jesus’ listeners, in fact, are implicitly invited here to imitate God in their dealings with the fellow humans⁸⁸.

This idea of the imitation of God is made explicit in verse 36, where Jesus’ listeners are told not just to strive to be more loving or more merciful, but to “be merciful as” God himself. Nowhere in the Old Testament do we find a similar demand. The closest biblical parallel would be the sentence from the levitical Sanctity Code: “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy” (Lev 19:2). In this command, however, as J. Dupont⁸⁹ rightly notices, God does not ask the Israelites to be holy “as” he is holy, but “because” he is holy. Thus, the relationship between God’s way of being and that of the people which is expressed by the saying is one of consequence rather than of resemblance. Instead, the comparative conjunction “as” that is used in verse 36 denotes, in the first place, a strict correspondence (just as)⁹⁰

⁸⁸ S c h ü r m a n n, *Luca 1,1-9,50*, p. 581; M e r k l e i n, *Die Gottesherrschaft*, p. 236; H o r n, *Glaube und Handeln*, p. 103. This idea is much more clear in Luke than in Matthew, since humans cannot send rain or make the sun rise (Cf. Matt 5:45) but, for sure, they can be kind (Cf. Luke 6:35).

⁸⁹ J. D u p o n t, *L'appel à imiter Dieu en Mt 5,48 et Lc 6,36*, in J. Dupont, *Études sur les Évangiles Synoptiques*, T. II, Leuven: University Press 1985, p. 532, BETL 70-B.

⁹⁰ Cf. W. B a u e r, W.F. A r n d t, F.W. G i n g r i c h, & F.W. D a n k e r, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago 1979², p. 391.

though it may be used in a causal sense as well⁹¹. This idea of correspondence suggests that Jesus wants his listeners to imitate God, to take his attitude of mercy and compassion as the model of their own way of being in the world. The necessity to be like God seems to be stressed also through the title that the Lucan Jesus applies to God. It is the first time in this Gospel that Jesus uses the expression “your (pl.) Father”⁹². He tells his listeners that the supreme God, the “Most High”, whose “sons” they are called to become, is their “Father”. This awareness of having in God their “Father” creates, on the one hand, a certain sphere of protection and security which are especially needed when one is to act in a way that goes far beyond a natural tendency to put oneself first. On the other hand, this awareness constitutes a challenge to conform their behaviour to the behaviour of God. Thus, it may become “the starting point from which the imitation proceeds”⁹³.

To be sure, the idea of the imitation of God does not exist only in the Gospels. Nowhere, however, can one find a call to be merciful or compassionate as God in the context of love of enemies. By putting them together, Luke seems to suggest that the love of enemy is to be understood as a form of compassion and mercy. In fact, in Jesus’ prayer from the cross (Luke 23:34) for his persecutors and in the similar prayer of the deacon Stephen (Acts 7:60), one can find an exemplification of such love toward one’s enemies.

3. CONCLUSION – NO UNDERSTANDING WITHOUT FAITH

The above analysis makes it clear that the new morality program exposed by Jesus is fully theocentric⁹⁴. The model of it is God’s mercy and compassion, while its final goal is God’s sonship which is attained by those who imitate the behaviour of God himself by loving and doing good even to their enemies. There is no allusion of any kind to the possible social reasons or

⁹¹ Cf. F. B l a s s & A. D e b r u n n e r, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press 1961, p. 453 (2).

⁹² It is worth noticing that all the references to the Father, in the third Gospel, are in Jesus’ words. For a detailed analysis see: R. L. M o w e r y, *God the Father in Luke-Acts*, in E. R i c h a r d (Ed.), *New Views on Luke and Acts*, Colledgeville: Liturgical 1990, p. 82-101.

⁹³ N o l l a n d, *Luke 1-9:20*, p. 300.

⁹⁴ L a m b r e c h t, *Sermon*, p. 220; M e r k l e i n, *Die Gottesherrschaft*, p. 236.

consequences of the similar behaviour. There is also no trace of the reciprocity motive, neither as the condition nor as the aim of the comportment which Jesus commands his listeners. There is no pedagogical or social strategy of survival or of changing anyone's behaviour. There is nothing that would suggest that loving one's enemies is very reasonable. On the contrary, this kind of Jesus' teaching seems to be as little reasonable as his death on the cross with his prayer for his executioners or as the Deacon Stephen's martyrdom and his prayer on behalf of his persecutors. Jesus' listeners are to follow his commands not because they are convinced that they are reasonable but because Jesus says so. The question here is not the authority of human reason but the authority of Jesus that one recognizes or not. The recognition of this authority, then, is impossible without faith. One needs to believe that what Jesus says is better for him, that his reward "will be great". One needs to believe that the status of the son of God is something worthy to yearn for, despite all the battering and injustices one may experience in the process. One needs to believe that the acceptance of the unjust cross after the example of the Servant of Yahweh makes sense that goes beyond purely human sense. Otherwise, one could remain as he or she is or even continue in his/her wickedness. After all, the Most High "is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked" as well!

It seems that, if we are to remain honest to the Gospel text and to ourselves, we need to admit that in order to accept and put into practice Jesus' words on the love of enemy we need faith. There is no alternative to it. There is no shortcut available. I wish it were, but there is none. Either I accept Jesus' authoritative "But I say to you" as it is or I don't. At the same time, I have to know that only the acceptance of it with faith will allow me to leave behind my fundamental and visceral inability to love and do good to those who are hostile to me.

Perhaps, it is not by chance that the Lucan Jesus uses for the first time the emphatic "I say to you" in the story of healing of a paralysed man that precedes the Sermon: "I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home" (Luke 5:24). Once his words were heard and accepted the paralysed man rose, took up his bed and went home (Luke 5:25). Something that for a long time was regarded as impossible and beyond human reasoning came true. The paralysis disappeared. In the similar way, perhaps, each one of us, who seriously wants to live up to the Gospel, should hear and believe the words of Jesus so that our spiritual paralysis may be overcome and we may start loving as God and as Jesus Christ, who is par excellence "the son of the Most High" (Luke

1:34). In this way, as Christ's followers, we may be able to start a miracle of reconciliation within our society and of its transformation so that there won't be any more a division on "we" and "they" but a communion of God's children who enjoy and share together all God's blessings.

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MIŁOŚĆ NIEPRZYJACIÓŁ:
INTELIGENTNA STRATEGIA CZY COŚ WIĘCEJ?

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Któż z nas, którzy prawdziwie chcemy dorastać do wyzwań Ewangelii, nie czuł się nie-swojo w kontekście słów Jezusa dotyczących miłości nieprzyjaciół? Słowa te mają szczególnie silny emocjonalny wydźwięk, gdy jest nam łatwo wskazać konkretnego nieprzyjaciela, bez-względne i bezkarnego w swych poczynaniach, jak tego często doświadczamy. W takich wypadkach, akceptacja i praktyczne zastosowanie się do słów Jezusa staje się prawdziwym wyzwaniem: „Lecz powiadam wam, którzy słuchacie: Miłujcie waszych nieprzyjaciół; dobrze czynicie tym, którzy was nienawidzą; błogosławcie tym, którzy was przeklinają, i módlcie się za tych, którzy was oczerniają. Jeśli cię kto uderzy w [jeden] policzek, nadstaw mu i drugi! Jeśli bierze ci płaszcz, nie broń mu i szaty! Daj każdemu, kto cię prosi, a nie dopominaj się zwrotu od tego, który bierze twoje. Jak chcecie, żeby ludzie wam czynili, podobnie wy im

czyńcie! Jeśli bowiem miłujecie tych tylko, którzy was miłują, jakaż za to dla was wdzięczność? Przecież i grzesznicy miłość okazują tym, którzy ich miłują. I jeśli dobrze czynicie tym tylko, którzy wam dobrze czynią, jaka za to dla was wdzięczność? I grzesznicy to samo czynią. Jeśli pożyczek udzielacie tym, od których spodziewacie się zwrotu, jakaż za to dla was wdzięczność? I grzesznicy grzesznikom pożyczają, żeby tyleż samo otrzymać. Wy natomiast miłujcie waszych nieprzyjaciół, czyńcie dobrze i pożyczajcie, niczego się za to nie spodziewając. A wasza nagroda będzie wielka, i będziecie synami Najwyższego; ponieważ On jest dobry dla niewdzięcznych i złych. Bądźcie miłosierni, jak Ojciec wasz jest miłosierny” (Łk 6:27-36).

Słowa kluczowe: miłość nieprzyjaciół, nieprzyjaciel, miłosierdzie.