

“Love Your Neighbor as Yourself”//Jesuanic or Mosaic?

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1. Introduction¹

According to a majority of the members of the *Jesus Seminar*, the command to love your enemies belongs to the very few sayings of Jesus that were considered to be most authentic.² In the first decades of the twentieth century, Paul Billerbeck, in his *Commentary on the New Testament from Talmud and Midrash*, comes to the same conclusion.³ Billerbeck argues for Jesus' role as initial teacher of the *universalistic* interpretation of the Love Command, an interpretation that can be found neither in the Hebrew Bible nor in the Jewish writings of the Second Temple and Rabbinic periods.⁴ As it is also an unlikely derivation of early Christianity, it must be authentic Jesuanic.

Fifty years later, in 1972, this view gained the rather polemical and somewhat anti-Jewish support of Andreas Nissen in his book on *God and the Neighbor in Ancient Judaism*. He repeatedly asserts that it is impossible to conclude that either Biblical or post-Biblical Judaism ever included every human being in the command to love one's neighbor.⁵

Klaus Berger's dissertation on Jesus' interpretation of the Law (also published in 1972) openly considers Jewish sources, however, and draws attention to the universalizing interpretations of the Love Command in Hellenistic Judaism and the similar implications already extant in Biblical tradition itself.⁶

In this same year, Victor P. Furnish published a third book which considered the Love Command in the New Testament. Instead of working from a tradition-historical point of view like Berger, Furnish concludes, on the basis of the redaction-historical approach, that: „Jesus was not the first to formulate the love command“, but the centrality, urgency, and concreteness of the command were typical of Jesus' teaching.⁷

¹ As paper „The Historical Jesus and the Love Command“ read at the First Meeting of the *Jerusalem Companion to the New Testament* in Jerusalem, July 27th - 29th 2000 as well as at the Annual Meeting of the *Society of Biblical Literature* in Nashville, November 18th - 21st 2000.

² See M.A. Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History. How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 1998, 68 and R.W. Funk; R.W. Hoover (eds.), *The Five Gospels. The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, New York: Macmillan 1993.

³ [H.L. Strack;] P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München: C.H. Beck 1922, reprint 1974, Vol. 1, 353-354 and 368-370.

⁴ Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, Vol. 1, 353-364.

⁵ A. Nissen, *Gott und der Nächste im antiken Judentum. Untersuchungen zum Doppelgebot der Liebe*, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck 1974, 278-317.

⁶ K. Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu. Ihr historischer Hintergrund im Judentum und im Alten Testament*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1972, Vol. 1, 80-176.

⁷ V.P. Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament*, Nashville-New York: Abingdon Press 1972, 195. See also L. Schottroff, *Essays on the Love Commandment*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1978, and J. Piper, *Love Your Enemies. Jesus' Love Command in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Christian Paraenesis. A History of the Tradition and Interpretation of Its Uses*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1979.

Common to Billerbeck, Nissen and others, as well as, for instance, to many members of the *Jesus Seminar*, is the rigorous adherence to the „Criterion of Double Dissimilarity“.⁸ One is allowed, however, to question the integrity of this particular classification device and indeed of other sayings pertaining to the historical Jesus by criticizing the criterium for authenticity itself.⁹

This „Criterion of Double Dissimilarity“ was formulated by the late Ernst Käsemann, who wrote in 1953,¹⁰ „Historical reliability can only be reached [...] if a tradition can neither be deduced from Judaism nor ascribed to early Christianity“. Nevertheless, it does not provide the only criterium for authenticity. Even Käsemann himself, in his famous article on the „Problem of the historical Jesus“, admits that Jesus must have shared many ideas with ancient Judaism. Thus Käsemann himself paved the way for the onslaught of critique pertaining to his „Criterion of Double Dissimilarity“, most notably the responses voiced by some spokesmen of the recent „Third Quest for the Historical Jesus“.¹¹

In this paper I intend to examine some of those passages in the Hebrew Bible and in early Jewish literature which point to *similarities* between the ancient Jewish and the early Christian interpretation of the Love Command. The Love Command itself originates from Lev 19:18b, „and you shall love your neighbor as yourself“; a possible reference to enemy love already appears in the Pentateuch, namely in Exod 23:4-5: „If you meet your enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, you shall bring it back to him“. Rabbinic literature further defines the term „enemy“ in the Mekhilta on Exod 23:4: „R. Josiah says: this means of a heathen worshiping idols. For thus we find everywhere that the heathen are designated as enemies of Israel.“¹²

Given this opening, we can apply new criteria for authenticity, such as the „Criterion of Plausibility“, as recently Gerd Theissen has done, or the „Criterion of Double Similarity“ – a Saying is authentic Jesuanic, if it can be derived both from Jewish and from Christian tradition(s) – , a device I would suggest and is supported by N.T. Wright,¹³ and which especially pertains to this particular analysis of the Love Command.

⁸ See B. Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest. The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press 1995, 46-48.

⁹ See now also E. Rau, *Jesus - Freund von Zöllnern und Sündern. Eine methodenkritische Untersuchung*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer 2000, and A. Scriba, *Echtheitskriterien der Jesus-Forschung*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer 2000.

¹⁰ See E. Käsemann, „Das Problem des historischen Jesus“, in: *ZThK* 51 (1954), 124-153; repinted in: E. Käsemann, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* I, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1960, 187-214. Quotation from P. 205, translated into English by G.O. See further J. Reumann, „Jesus and Christology“, in: E.J. Epp; G.W. MacRae S.J. (eds.), *The New Testament and its Modern Interpreters*, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1989, 501-564 and J.M. Robinson’s Introduction in: A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 9th ed. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck 1984, 7-24.

¹¹ See G. Theissen; D. Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung. Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium*, Freiburg-Göttingen: Universitätsverlag-Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1997, 1-174; the bibliography in C.A. Evans, *Life of Jesus Research. An Annotated Bibliography*, NTTTS 24, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1996, 127-146 and N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, London: SPCK 1996, 91ff. and 131ff.

¹² J.Z. Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, Vol. 1-3, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America 1949, Vol. 3, 163. See Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, Vol. 1, 368ff.; G.S. Oegema, „Paulus und die Ethik“, in: G.S. Oegema, *Für Israel und die Völker. Untersuchungen zum alttestamentlich-jüdischen Hintergrund der paulinischen Theologie*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1998, 253-279, and Chr. Burchard, „Das doppelte Liebesgebot in der frühen christlichen Überlieferung“, in: E. Lohse et al. (eds.), *Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde. Exegetische Untersuchungen (Festschrift J. Jeremias)*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1970, 39-62.

¹³ See Theissen; Winter, *Kriterienfrage*, 175ff.; G.S. Oegema, „The Historical Jesus and Judaism. A Methodological Inquiry“, in: *H. Lichtenberger; G.S. Oegema* (eds.), *Jüdische Schriften in ihrem antik-jüdischen*

1) Leviticus 19:18b, as with the rest of the Hebrew Bible, was subject to the universalistic interpretation which characterized pre-Christian Hellenistic Judaism. This passage was understood to reflect the Golden Rule and the command to love God (Letter of Aristeas § 207; Tobit 4:15; Jubilees 36:4; Sirach 7:21 and 31:15, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Testament of Simeon 4:6; Testament of Issachar 5:2; 7:6; Testament of Zebulon 5:1 and Testament of Benjamin 4:3).¹⁴

2) Jews of the early Rabbinic period attached different meanings to the Love Command, however, deeming it a succinct summary of the essence of the Torah and a call to imitate God (*Imitatio Dei*), among other things (Targum Yerushalmi I on Lev 19:8b; Mishnah Nedarim 9:4; Mishnah Abot 1:12; Tosephta Sotah 9:11; Sifra, Qedushim IV:12; Bereshit Rabbah 24:7 and Babylonian Talmud Shabbath 31a).¹⁵

3) Only Essene Judaism represents an exception with its particularistic interpretation, namely that one should only love his brother, about which Jesus seems to take issue (see, for instance, 1QS 1:9-10, and CD 6:20-7:1).¹⁶ Current consensus, however, considers this explication to be erroneous.

4) All New Testament passages offering an explanation of the Love Command (Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 22:34-40 and Luke 6:32-35; Matthew 5:43.48 and 19:16-26, as well as Galatians 5:14 and Romans 13:9-10) can be understood within the context of ancient Judaism.¹⁷ Viewed from a tradition-historical point of view, there seems to be no specific new element in Jesus' interpretation of the Love Command. Even the command to love one's enemies parallels ancient Jewish teaching, as seen in examples such as the Testament of Benjamin 4:3: „by doing good this man conquers evil“.¹⁸

Considering these passages, however, one should concentrate not only on the exact wording of the Love Command, but also on the different theologies which underlie its various interpretations. Ancient Jewish theology employed many different arguments to support the notion of loving one's neighbor; examples include *Imitatio Dei*, striving to attain holiness, and loving one's fellow human as an image of God.¹⁹

Early Christianity formulated similar arguments. Here, the Love Command is considered the ultimate summation of the law and a call to imitate Christ (*Imitatio Christi*).²⁰

If we assume that Jesus had a „theology“, then we should ask whether one of these *theological* arguments could have been his. Did Jesus have a clearly theological argument for loving one's neighbor and was this central notion behind such „authentic“ words as those expressed in Lk 6:27-36? Do the Gospels give us any clue as to what can be considered truly Jesuanic,²¹ or do all of Jesus' words concerning the Love Command derive from either ancient Judaism or early Christianity?

und urchristlichen Kontext (JSHRZ-St, Vol. 1), Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus 2002, 449-469, and Wright, *Victory*, xvff. and 78ff.

¹⁴ See Oegema, „Paulus“, in: Oegema, *Israel*, 255-261.

¹⁵ See Oegema, „Paulus“, in: Oegema, *Israel*, 261-263.

¹⁶ So still Furnish, *Command*, 46-47, but see Oegema, „Paulus“, in: Oegema, *Israel*, 258.

¹⁷ See Oegema, „Paulus“, in: Oegema, *Israel*, 264-272.

¹⁸ On the Testament of Benjamin 4:3, see below. See also Sir 4:3-5; Tob 4:7-8; T. Jos. 18:2, etc., in: J.S.

Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q. Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*, Philadelphia 1987, 178-179.

¹⁹ See Oegema, „Paulus“, in: Oegema, *Israel*, 263-264.

²⁰ See Oegema, „Paulus“, in: Oegema, *Israel*, 272-273.

²¹ See Oegema, „Paulus“, in: Oegema, *Israel*, 274-276.

In the following I will attempt to deal with these methodological and theological questions, and concentrate on the relevant verses of the Sermon on the Plain, as it is found in Lk 6:27-36.²²

2. Luke 6:27-36/Matthew 5:43-48

In Luke 6:27-28 it is said: „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“.²³ The command to love your enemies is divided here into four subcommands - love, do good, bless and pray - , whose general character is thereupon limited to three various groups: those who hate you, those who curse you, and those who abuse you. Jesus' followers were probably outcasts and therefore quite often afflicted by hatred, curses, and abuse, be „to you that hear“ merely the disciples or, indeed, his many listeners. Despite the wrathful treatment aimed at them, these believers were exhorted to repay evil with kindness.

Compared to the parallel in Matthew 5:43-45, in Luke the logion has been enlarged (Luke 6:27ab.28b), first in the mentioning of „those who hear“ and again in the addition of „those who hate, curse and abuse“. Conversely, Matthew speaks merely of „the enemies and of those who persecute“. The Lukan enlargement is clearly an actualization of the general expression „enemies“ and may point to the specific „Sitz im Leben“ of the Gospel of Luke.²⁴ It does not, however, change the intention of the command to practice good deeds to those that hate you - in other words, love your enemies. Furthermore, while Matthew connects this passage about enemies to the command to love one's neighbor in expectation of becoming sons of the heavenly Father, Luke skips the connection with the love command and adds the becoming of sons to the end of the pericope.

Further actualizations are found in Luke 6:29-30, as well as in Luke 6:31-34. The verses 29-30 most probably refer to the historical situation of the Lukan Christians; they suffer blows to the cheek, acquisition of their coats, and simple deprivation in general.²⁵ The verses inform us, however, also of the right conduct or behaviour readers and listeners are to follow: offer the other cheek for striking, part with mantle, as well as cloak and never ask for compensation.

The Verses 31 and 34, which are both different formulations of the Golden Rule, serve as a starting point for this argumentation, elaborating on why one should love one's enemies at all. In Verses 31-34, righteous or Christian behavior modelled by the Golden Rule, is opposed to a sinful behaviour. Sinners love only those who love them, practise kindness to those who act similarly, and lend only in order to receive.

Finally, Verses 35-36 describe the reasoning which supports adherence to the „right“ conduct: „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 selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful“. In other words, one should behave with

²² See also G.S. Oegema, „Das Gebot der Nächstenliebe im lukanischen Doppelwerk“, in: J. Verheyden (ed.), *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, Leuven: Peeters 1999, 507-516.

²³ Translation according to the *Revised Standard Version*.

²⁴ See G. Lohfink, „Der ekklesiale Sitz im Leben der Aufforderung Jesu zum Gewaltverzicht (Mt 5,39b-42/Lk 6,29f)“, in: *TQ* 162 (1982), 236-253.

²⁵ On the historical situation see also Luke 21:12-19.24; Acts 6:8ff.; 16:16ff.; 20:25.38; 21:13 and 22:22ff.; Tacitus, *Annales* XV 44:4 as well as Oegema, „Gebot“, in: Verheyden, *Unity*, 509 and H. Hommel, „Tacitus und die Christen“, in: H. Hommel, *Sebasmata. Studien zur antiken Religionsgeschichte und zum frühen Christentum*, Vol. II, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984, 174-199.

grace and mercy like God does (*Imitatio Dei*), as this is the theological argument for embracing enemy-love.²⁶

3. Q 6:27-36

In the following I will ask, whether this call for *Imitatio Dei* as argument to love your enemies is Lukan or whether it was introduced by the historical Jesus.²⁷ In order to answer this question, one must establish the text of Q 6:27-36 first.²⁸ An initial hypothetical reconstruction offers the following reading (in translation):

Q 6:27: I say to you, Love your enemies,

Q 6:28: pray for <those> who (persecute) you,

Q 6:29: (when they hit) you <on> the cheek, (give) the other also;
and (who takes) your coat, (give) the shirt also,

Q 6:30: (and) to (him) who begs from you,
<and> of (him) do not (receive back).

Q 6:34: <And if you> lend (...).

Q 6:31: <As> you wish that men would do to you, do (also) to them.

Q 6:32: (But if you) love those who love you (know that);
even the (sinners do so).

Q 6:33: And if <you> (do good) to those who (do good to you);
and the (sinners) do the same.

Q 6:35 (Be) sons (of God), for (He is good) to (the ungrateful) and the selfish

Q 6:36 <Be> as your Father is.

Verse 27 may contain a Word of Jesus, the command to love your enemies, Verses 28-30.34 contain exemplifications or actualizations of this command in six subcommands (Verse 34 actually belongs to Verses 28-30 and not to Verses 31ff.); Verses 31-33 contain the theological argument why one should love his enemies, being here the positive formulation of the Golden Rule. Verses 35-36 may be considered either Jesuanic or redactional, the latter being either pre-Lukan or Lukan.

4. The State of Research on Q 6:27-36:

Concerning the reconstruction of Q 6:27-36, the following authors have done research on it: S. Schulz, who offers a detailed and more classical tradition-historical study of Q,²⁹ Chr.M.

²⁶ See also Oegema, „Gebot“, in: Verheyden, *Unity*, 507-509.

²⁷ See on this also D. Lüthmann, „Liebet eure Feinde (Lk 6,27-36/Mt 5,39-48)“, in: *ZThK* 69 (1972), 412-438 and M. Sato, *Q und Prophetie. Studien zur Gattungs- und Traditionsgeschichte der Quelle Q*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1988, 222f. and 394 as well as Lohfink, „Sitz“, 240.

²⁸ For this we will use the *Critical Edition of Q* edited by J.M. Robinson et al. and refer to the discussion on Q of the last two centuries as documented in *Documenta Q*. See J.M. Robinson; P. Hoffmann; J.S. Kloppenborg (eds.), *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis, Including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas, with English, German and French Translations of Q and Thomas*, Leuven: Peeters 2000. See also the previous editions in *JBL* 109 (1990), 499-501; 110 (1991), 494-498; 111 (1992), 500-508; 112 (1993), 500-506; 113 (1994), 495-499; 114 (1995), 475-485, and 116 (1997), 521-525 as well as J.M. Robinson; P. Hoffmann; J.S. Kloppenborg (eds.), *Documenta Q. Reconstructions of Q Through Two Centuries of Gospel Research, Excerpted, Sorted and Evaluated*, Vol. 1ff., Leuven: Peeters 1996ff.

²⁹ S. Schulz, *Q. Die Spruchquelle der Evangelien*, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 1972, 120-141.

Tuckett, who situates the „Sitz im Leben“ of our pericope in the context of polemic and persecution,³⁰ D.C. Allison, who concentrates on the sources of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,³¹ S. Carruth, who offers a rhetorical-critical study of Q 6:20-49,³² as well as Th. Bergemann, who compares the Lukan and Matthean material on the basis of a word statistic.³³ According to S. Schultz the Saying about enemy love shows that the interpretation of the law on the one hand belongs to the oldest, apocalyptically inspired enthusiastic period of the Q community, and on the other hand has a clear sapiential structure.³⁴ Within this sapiential structure the call for enemy love, as found in, for instance, Lev 19:17ff., could be combined with an element from wisdom theology, like in Sir 4:9f., namely the *Imitatio Dei*.³⁵ Christopher Tuckett, however, stresses the fact that we neither know the precise wording of Q 6:27-35 nor the tradition-history of the passage.³⁶ Nevertheless, one thing is clear: „the secondary nature of the composition makes it implausible to regard the whole unit being originally composed/spoken (i.e. by Jesus himself) in just this form“.³⁷ Dale Allison, finally, argues that the text of Q 6:27-35 is „an old unit which preexisted Q’s editorial work“.³⁸ One argument for this observation is that the apostle Paul most probably knew the traditions closely related to Q 6:27-38.³⁹ From this we may conclude that, purely hypothetically spoken, there may have been several, possibly even four tradition-historical phases between Jesus’ Saying and its final redaction in Lk 6:27-35:

- 1) an oral tradition, i.e. an authentic Saying of Jesus
- 2) several pre-Q traditions, of which one may have been known to Paul
- 3) one or more Q redactions
- 4) the Synoptic redaction as expressed in Lk 6:27-36 par.

However, concerning the precise wording and the tradition history of Q 6:27-36 all five mentioned authors stress its uncertainty.⁴⁰ At the present stage and independent of the question whether the reconstructed text can be considered Jesuanic, pre-Q, Q, pre-Lukan or Lukan, the pericope, taken as a whole, i.e. as a separate text unit, can be divided into four parts:

- 1) a Word of Jesus representing a command (6:27)
- 2) a number of actualizations of this command (6:28-30.34)
- 3) a first theological argumentation, here the Golden Rule (6:31-33)
- 4) a second theological argumentation, here the call to act like God (6:35-36)

³⁰ Chr. M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity. Studies on Q*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1996, 300-307.

³¹ D.C. Allison, *The Jesus Tradition in Q*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press 1997, 67-95.

³² S. Carruth, *Persuasion in Q. A Rhetorical Critical Study of Q:20-49*, Ph.D. Claremont 1992.

³³ Th. Bergemann, *Q auf dem Prüfstand. Die Zuordnung des Mt/Lk-Stoffes zu Q am Beispiel der Bergpredigt*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1993, 102-159.

³⁴ Schulz, *Spruchquelle*, 124.

³⁵ O.c., 138.

³⁶ Tuckett, *Q*, 301.

³⁷ O.c., 302.

³⁸ Allison, *Tradition*, 84.

³⁹ O.c., 55-56.

⁴⁰ See the summary of the history of research on Q 6:27-35 in Tuckett, *Q*, 300-303. See also H.D. Betz, *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)*, Minneapolis: Fortress 1995, 294-328.

As actualizations normally point to very specific historical situations, in which the actualizations were felt necessary and were added, and therefore are a typical feature not only of the pre-Synoptic and Synoptic redaction of the words of Jesus, but of many other Jewish, especially Apocalyptic and Wisdom texts from antiquity, they can hardly be traced back to the historical Jesus himself, unless he himself was in such a specific situation, in which a saying of his needed to be actualized immediately.

Therefore, it is most plausible that only 1) Q 6:27, 3) Q 6:31-33 and 4) Q 6:35-36 are Jesuanic. However, as the Golden Rule was so common in Antiquity,⁴¹ it can hardly originate from Jesus himself, no matter how clearly it elucidates the meaning of the command to love your enemies: As you wish that enemies would do to you, namely love (and not hate) you, do also to them, namely love (and do not hate) your enemies. Therefore, only 1) Q 6:27 and 4) Q 6:35-36 may be Jesuanic. Q 6:35-36 finally formulates, and about this one can debate, either Jesus' or Luke's summary of the theological interpretation by referring it to a central topic of the theology of the Hebrew Bible, namely of the Holiness Code, Leviticus 17-26: (Try to) be as holy as God is holy.

Theissen dates Jesus' saying in 6:27ff. between 26/27 CE, when Pilate tried to place images of the Roman emperor into Jerusalem (cf. Jos., Bell II § 174), and 39 CE, when Gaius Caligula too tried to have his own statue placed in the Temple of Jerusalem (cf. Jos., Ant. XVIII §§ 271f. and Bell II §§ 195-198).⁴² According to Theissen, Jesus' saying must be understood against the background of these events, namely as an expression of critique and of provocation, however, demonstrably without using of violence.⁴³ The enemies are therefore the political enemies.

Theissen's socio-historical model of explanation shows that it is indeed possible to look from the early Christian tradition back to Jesus and formulate a plausible portrayal of the historical Jesus that can also be deduced from contemporary Judaism. Of course, this is only one model of explanation based on a hypothetical reconstruction of Q 6:27-35. However, the theological centre of this reconstruction, we may conclude, is the call to imitate God, a call, which is derived from the Hebrew Bible, was taken up by Jesus and transformed and actualized by the early Christians. This call for *Imitatio Dei* may have been the real intention of the Saying of Jesus found in the pericope of Q 6:27-36, no matter how the different stages of its transmission are reconstructed by modern scholarship.

If one reconstructs the redaction history of Q 6:27-36 now by dating the four text units, it could have been as follows: The Word of Jesus representing a command (6:27) may go back to Jesus himself (ca. 30 CE), actualizations were added to it in 6:28-30.34 in order to offer to the followers of Jesus a Halacha of Jesus' command and to meet a situation of increasing conflicts, polemics and persecutions (after 30 CE). Thereupon it was enlarged with a theological argumentation on the basis of the Golden Rule (6:31-33). This could have happened within the context of a community of hellenistically influenced Jewish and early Christian followers of Jesus, in which Jesus' command to love your enemies was „translated“ in the popular maxim of the Golden Rule (after the middle of the first century CE). The Lukan

⁴¹ See A. Dihle, *Die Goldene Regel. Eine Einführung in die Geschichte der antiken und frühchristlichen Vulgärethik*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1962.

⁴² See G. Theissen, *The Gospel in Context. Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1992, 203-234 and G. Theissen, *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums*, 3rd ed., Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck 1989, 79-105 and 160-197.

⁴³ Theissen, *Studien*, 191-195.

redaction finally adds a theological (or even some sort of christological) interpretation of the whole by emphasizing the relation between „sons“ and „Father“. It is understood as a call to become „like“ sons of the Father, i.e. sons of God. In other words: A call to be and act like your Father in Heaven (at the end of the first century CE).

Concerning the latter, however, one may doubt whether 6:35-36 may represent a Word of Jesus after all, if not his *ipsissima vox*, than at least his *ipsissima intentio*, as the call to love your enemies can only be understood from the point of view of the call to act like your Father and therefore must have been derived from it. Thus we have the following hypothetical reconstruction and dating of the subsequent textual units of Q 6:27-36:

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| 1) a Word of Jesus representing a command (6:27) | ca. 30 CE |
| 2) a number of actualizations of this command (6:28-30.34) | after 30 CE |
| 3) a first theological argumentation on the basis of the Golden Rule (6:31-33) | middle of first century CE |
| 4) a 2nd theological interpretation with a sons-Father relation (6:35-36) | end of first century CE |

5. Interpretation of Lk 6:27-35: *Be and Act like your Father in Heaven:*

Since we now consider the interpretation of the enemy-love command, we should apply the „Criterium of Double Similarity“ (as explained above in § 1) and question whether this demand is Jesuanic, i.e. whether it derives from early Jewish *and* early Christian traditions? To begin with, this phrase clearly stems from early Christian tradition, because all applicable first and second century writings (whether Q, Luke, Matthew or the Apostolic Fathers up to Justin) call it a „Word of Jesus“, and enlarge and actualize it without changing the root meaning.

But how should one typify this „Word of Jesus“? The Greek word „λόγος“ has many different meanings, but does not necessarily denote a written word. Indeed, it can also mean „interpretation“, to give but one example.

As far as Jesus' „Word“ on the Love Command is concerned, Acts 20:35 refers to the „λόγου τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ“. I. Clement 2:1 speaks of the „λόγου αὐτοῦ“. In the Gospel of Thomas 95 and I. Clement 13:2 Jesus „speaks“. What he says is then quoted. Quotations are also found in II. Clement 13:4, Ignatius' Epistle to Polycarp 2:1, Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians 12:3, and in the Didache 1:2-5. Justin, in his Apology I:15.9-13; I:16.1-2 and in his Dialogue 96:3, speaks of a „teaching“ („Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐδίδασκεν“), and the Epistula Apostolorum 18, like John 13:34, speaks of a „new commandment“.

In other words, the early Church was not unanimous about the genre of Jesus' „Word“ and the subsequent Love Command, although it eventually qualified it as an „authoritative teaching“ and later, quotable „Scripture“.⁴⁴

In summary, Jesus' „Word“ to love one's enemies was perceived as a kind of authoritative „teaching“, whether of sapiential or apocalyptic character, although the canonical Gospels probably polished and enhanced the original oral utterance, unlike those logions revealed in the Q Gospel. Furthermore, as the context of Lk 6:27-36 clearly indicates, this „Word“ of Jesus refers to the Hebrew Bible and thus the enemy-love command can very well be qualified scriptural interpretation, i.e. of Lev 19:18.

Is there any indication that we are dealing with a key moment in the (pre-Christian) history of the interpretation of the Love Command? Is it also a derivation of early Jewish tradition?

⁴⁴ See on the genre of „Q“ in general, Kloppenborg, *Formation*, 8ff.

Here we have to ask 1) whether there are parallels connecting the command to love one's neighbor with the command to love one's enemies, 2) whether parallels exist to connect one or both commands with the Golden Rule, and 3) where the formulation itself, „Love your enemies“, comes from.

Concerning 1), whether there are parallels connecting the command to love one's neighbor with the command to love one's enemies, one may point to Testament of Benjamin 4:3, „And even if persons plot against him for evil ends, by doing good this man conquers evil, being watched over by God“,⁴⁵ and Mishnah Abot 1:12, „Hillel said: Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving mankind and bringing them nigh to the law“.

The argument that the Testament of Benjamin may be Christian does not undermine the observation that in early Judaism, loving one's neighbor is applied to one's enemies, especially in lieu of the call for *Imitatio Dei*, as God himself loves his enemies.⁴⁶ The Testament of Benjamin 4:3 best expresses the original Hebrew ideal of countering someone's hurtful intentions with kindness. Thus one conquers evil, and wins God's protection.⁴⁷ Other, much older passages to be mentioned here, are Sir 4:3-5, and Tob 4:7-8.

This is, in fact, what Jesus himself says, according to Lk 6:35-36: Because God is kind and shows mercy to the ungrateful and selfish, man should act in the same fashion.

Concerning 2), whether parallels exist to connect one or both commands to the Golden Rule, one may refer to the Letter of Aristeas § 207, „‘What does wisdom teach?’ This next guest replied, ‘Insofar as you do not wish evils to come upon you, but to partake of every blessing, (it would be wisdom) if you put this into practice with your subjects, including the wrongdoers, and if you admonished the good and upright also mercifully. For God guides all men in mercy‘, Tobit 4:15, „And what thou thyself hatest, do not to man“, Jubilees 36:4, „And among yourselves, my sons, be loving of your brothers as a man loves himself, with each man seeking for his brother what is good for him, and acting together on earth, and loving each other as themselves“, Sirach 7:21, „A wise slave love as thyself. And withhold him not from (his) freedom“, and Targum Yerushalmi I on Lev 19:18b, „Be not revengeful, nor cherish animosity against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor

⁴⁵ Translations according to the RSV (Lev 19:2.18.34; Mc 12:28-34; Gal 5:14; Rom 13:9-10); J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 1-2, New York: Doubleday 1983-1985, Vol. 1, 786 (TestSim 4:6), 803-4 (TestIss 5:2 and 7:6), 806 (TestZeb 5:1), 826 (TestBenj 4:3); *ibid.*, Vol. 2, 26 (Arist § 207), 124 (Jub 36:4); R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 1-2, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1913, 1963, 1, 212 (Tob 4:15), 340 and 420 (Sir 7:21 and 31:15); J.W. Etheridge, *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum*, New York: KTAV 1968, 205 (Tg. Yer. I on Lev 19:18); H. Danby, *The Mishnah*, Oxford-London: Oxford University Press - Geoffrey Cumberlege 1933, 1949, 276 (mNed 9:4), 447 (mAb 1:12); I. Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud, Seder Mo'ed, Shabbath*, London: Soncino 1938, 140 (bSan 31a); H. Freedman, *Midrasch Rabbah. Genesis I*, London: Soncino 1951, 204 (BerR 24:7); F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated. The Qumran Texts in English*, Leiden-New York-Cologne: E.J. Brill 1994, 37 (CD 6:20-7:1); J. Neusner, *The Tosefta. Translated from the Hebrew. Third Division Nashim*, New York: Ktav 1979, 168-169 (tSot 9:11); J. Neusner, *Sifra. An Analytical Translation*, Vol. III, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1988, 109 (Sif, Qed IV:12).

⁴⁶ U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 1-7)*, EKK 1/1, Zürich-Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benzinger Verlag-Neukirchener Verlag, 4th ed. 1997, 307 (see also his note 18) says: „Die Meinung der Kirchenväter, daß das Feindesliebegebot Jesu ein Novum sei, ist nur bedingt richtig. Ähnliche Aussagen gibt es vielerorts, im Judentum, im griechischen, vor allem im stoischen Bereich, in Indien, im Buddhismus, im Taoismus“. See also Betz, *Sermon*, 294-328.

⁴⁷ The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs stands at the crossroads of Judaism and Christianity and, according to our model of explanation, expresses an authentic saying, just as Q 6:27 contains an authentic saying of Jesus, which can be derived as it is both from the Hebrew Bible and ancient Jewish tradition, as well as from the early Christian reception.

himself, as that though there be (cause of) hatred with thee thou mayest not do (evil) to him. I am the Lord“. The Golden Rule, as it pertains to Lev 19:18b in these and other examples, was a well known maxim in Hellenistic Judaism and a common theme to the Rabbinic movement. Concerning 3), where the formulation, „Love your enemies“, stems from, one may point to Leviticus 19:18b itself, where we also find the expression „to love“. ⁴⁸ If seen from the perspective of *Imitatio Dei*, however, the love of one’s enemies is the expanded interpretation of neighbor-love! Therefore, Lk 6:27-36 rightly stresses the intention of the Holiness Code of Leviticus 17-26, maintaining that loving one’s neighbor reflects God and therefore automatically mandates loving one’s enemies. Lk 6:35-36 adopts God’s point of view; „God is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish“ and hence advocates *Imitatio Dei*: „Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful“ (as found in the Holiness Code).

Lk 6:32-34, however, also contains a critique on the wrong interpretation of the Love Command, and thus is witness to another trend in this verse’s interpretative history. The Golden Rule should not be understood to support loving others for the sake of securing their love in return. It calls us, rather, to love those who most likely do not and will not love us in return. The Golden Rule has no device to promote popularity or boost the ego, and Luke criticizes any such misinterpretation. Humans should emulate God and love for love’s sake alone.

Jesus’ call for enemy-love is therefore a call for *Imitatio Dei*, an exaltation in the device which can be traced back to the Hebrew Bible and ancient Jewish tradition. This command is, in fact, an interpretation of the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26 especially of Lev 19:2.18.33). ⁴⁹ The authentic Jesuanic *interpretation*, as well as its later actualizations, were then adopted by the early Christian tradition.

When following the „Criterion of Plausibility“ or the „Criterion of Double Similarity“, the command to love one’s enemies is *not an altogether new and authentic saying* of the historical Jesus, as it is only his *interpretation* of the scriptural command to love one’s neighbor. Jesus, then, stands within the history of the interpretation of Lev 19:18.

To conclude, Lk 6:27-36 transmits a so called „Word of Jesus“, namely an exhortation to love one’s enemies, which should be understood as an *interpretation* of Lev 19:18b and which follows the theological intention of the Holiness Code, i.e. to be and act like the Father in Heaven. Jesus points to God as the One to imitate and follow. Within Jewish contexts, the command urged the practice of *Imitatio Dei*; in Jesus’ mouth it became an authoritative teaching.

His followers understood it in a twofold way, first as a call for *Imitatio Dei*, then as a call for *Imitatio Christi*.

This „Word of Jesus“ may not stem from Jesus himself, as the fundamental tradition derives from Judaism and its status as an authoritative teaching originated in early Christianity. Nevertheless, from the *interpretative* point of view, it exemplifies the multi-stratified evolution of the Hebrew Bible. In Jesus’ mouth, as it was put by his earliest followers, it is one of the phrases which bridges the gap between ancient Judaism and the early Church, a unique entity unto itself.

⁴⁸ The verb „to love“ (אהב in the Hebrew Bible and in Rabbinic Literature; ἀγαπάω in the Septuagint and in the New Testament) means to approach one’s fellow humans in a positive manner, whereas the „enemy“ (ἐχθρός) is more or less the opposite of „neighbor“ (πλησίον) or „friend“ (φίλος).

⁴⁹ See also Oegema, „Paulus“, in: Oegema, *Israel*, 253-255.