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Enemy-Love: An intentional Radicalization of the Commandment to
Love your Neighbour as Yourself from Leviticus 19:18.

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A. Research Question

Depictions of war and explicit commands to commit genocide in the Old Testament (OT) have been a source of legitimate concern for both scholars and churchgoers alike since the early Church in the first century.¹ In modern times it has also attracted the attention of atheists who argue that the God depicted in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures is unworthy of being followed even if he is real.² As such, a great deal of excellent work representing a wide range of perspectives has been undertaken to try to ease this tension and answer questions about God's character and divine will as it relates to war, hatred, prejudice and violence. In recent years there has been a wealth of books tackling the question of God's goodness as depicted in Scripture and trying to wrestle with the more negative actions he is associated with in Scripture.

A key Biblical figure who features prominently in both scholarly and popular writing, as it relates to this subject, is Jesus of Nazareth, and in particular the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount (SM) recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7. The SM seems to speak plainly against hatred towards enemies and thus in many ways presents itself as a remedy to the violent narratives present in the OT. It has been read and studied by heretics, Church Fathers, skeptics, atheists and devoted Christians. Even Gandhi said that next to the Bhagavad Gita he held this teaching in the highest possible regard.³ However, the precise interpretation of the SM, and in particular the enemy-love passage in Matthew 5:43-48, has continued to be the subject of some debate in terms of its

¹ Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 200. Marcion is one of the best known examples of an early follower of Jesus (later classified as a heretic) who felt that there was a disconnect between what seemed to be an angry vengeful God in the Old Testament and a loving forgiving God in the New Testament. Not incidentally, it was Marcion who first coined the term 'antithesis' which has since been used widely to discuss the literary style that the writer of Matthew uses in Matthew 5 (Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 200).

² Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam Press, 2006) et al.

³ Warren S. Kissinger, *The Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1975), xi.

function and its relationship to the OT. Considering its significance to the broader questions of peace and justice in the Bible, and in an effort to enter the ongoing discussion on the relationship between Matthew 5:43-48 and the OT, this thesis addresses the following question:

Are the teachings of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 5:43-48 concerning enemy-love an intentional radicalization of the command to love your neighbour from Leviticus 19:17-18?

Within the context of this research the term 'radicalized' is not meant to imply a sense of the OT losing something or being diminished in any capacity. It is not what is taken away from the teaching of Leviticus 19:17-18 that is key to this discussion, but what is being added. Radicalization suggests an amplification of an existing teaching in terms of the expectations and the outcomes. By radicalization I mean the intensification of a command's requirements. This intensification can involve making the desired behaviour more difficult to perform. It might also involve widening the scope of the command's applicability, so that it must be observed in a larger number of contexts. The result is that a radicalized law is not only intensified but it taken to its extreme. Rather than the law representing spontaneous human behaviour or a commonly shared ethic, it represents the very opposite of the expected and common, so can be truly called radical.⁴

While such a research project will not answer all possible questions about war and violence in the OT it will hopefully establish more clearly the relationship between the SM and the OT. This will allow some more general comments to be made about

⁴The notion of radicalization will be discussed in greater detail following the treatment of both Leviticus 19 and Matthew 5.

how Christians are to interpret the OT war passages and thus how they are to behave as followers of both the OT and the NT.

B. Literature Review

If someone were to collect and list all the publications and studies that have been done on the SM since the foundation of the early Church, it would be a massive undertaking.⁵ Yet within that considerable body of work, other scholars like William Klassen have argued that the chapter on enemy-love would be disproportionately small. It was not really until the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth that there was a concerted effort in academia to study the enemy-love ethic more thoroughly.⁶

Early Church writers like Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, however, continue to hold significant sway over both scholarly and popular understanding of enemy-love. To this day the enemy-love ethic is often examined through the lens of Augustine's Just War theory, thus accepting the argument that the SM is not calling people to cease military service and become pacifists.⁷

The Reformations of the sixteenth century was another important moment in the study of the enemy-love ethic, for it is during this period that differences in interpretation of the SM divided the emerging protestant movement and created new denominations

⁵ Kissinger, 1.

⁶ William Klassen, "Love Your Enemies: Some Reflections on the Current Status of Research" in Swartley, Willard M., ed., *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.), 2.

⁷ G.H.C. MacGregor, *The New Testament Basis of Pacifism and the Relevance of an Impossible Ideal* (Nyack, NY: Fellowship Publications, 1954), 41.

as well as heretical movements in the Church.⁸ While pacifism in the post-Constantine Church has rarely ever held sway over the Church *en masse*,⁹ it is during the sixteenth century that Christian pacifist denominations began to emerge, famously including the Anabaptist Churches.¹⁰ Many who study the Sermon on Mount and the enemy-love ethic were trained in or influenced by the Anabaptist and Mennonite churches that descended from these early radical reformers.

At the turn of the twentieth century there was a flurry of new publications about the theology of peace as Europe was plunged into war.¹¹ It was also during this period that scholars more frequently began looking for comparable enemy-love texts in non-canonical writings such as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.¹² This marks an important development in the interpretation of the SM as scholars today continue give considerable attention to the importance and role of non-jewish influence on Matthew 5's enemy-love ethic.¹³ That said, while scholars have sought to find possible linkages between the SM and other religious and philosophical traditions, a considerable number of authors continue to maintain that the words of Matthew 5:42-48 represent a

⁸ Kissinger, 31.

⁹ Joseph T. Culliton, ed., "Non-Violence - Central to Christian Spirituality: Perspectives from Scripture to the Present." *Toronto Studies in Theology Volume 8* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982).

¹⁰ William Roscoe Estep, *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 159.

¹¹ Klassen, *Love Your Enemies: Some Reflections on the Current Status of Research*, 2.

¹² J. Julius Scott, "On the value of Intertestamental Jewish literature for New Testament Theology" *JETS* 23 no 4 D (1980), 318.

¹³ John Nolland, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary, The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 265. and Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 309. Of the Egyptian and Babylonian texts cited by modern scholars the Babylonian *Counsel of Wisdom* from 700 BC seems to be the one most commonly cited in relation to Matthew 5:42-28.

considerable leap forward from any other known teachings on the topic found elsewhere in the region of Palestine.¹⁴

Some of the major authors that continue to play a significant role in enemy-love scholarship generally include John Howard Yoder,¹⁵ William Klassen,¹⁶ John Nugent,¹⁷ Hans Dieter Betz¹⁸ and Richard Horsely,¹⁹ among others. The continued debates surrounding the interpretation of Matthew 5:42-48 centre on the following major questions: a. What relationship does the enemy-love ethic in Matthew 5 have to the OT?;²⁰ b. What is the relationship between Matthew 5 and the broader Ancient Mediterranean Basin?;²¹ c. What is the intended function of Matthew 5 and how is it meant to be read?;²² d. Who does Jesus have in mind when he says 'enemies'?²³; e. Are the words concerning enemy-love original to Jesus of Nazareth or are they an addition by a later editor?²⁴ Needless to say, with scholars debating so many important

¹⁴ William Klassen, *Love of Enemies: The Way of Peace* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 84; Nolland, 267; Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 311; Fred L. Fisher, *The Sermon on the Mount*. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1976), 91., John Riches, *The World of Jesus: First Century Judaism in Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 114; Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 50.

¹⁵ John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972).

¹⁶ William Klassen, *Love of Enemies: The Way of Peace* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984)

¹⁷ John C. Nugent, *The Politics of Yahweh: John Howard Yoder, the Old Testament, and the People of God* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and stock Publishers, 2011).

¹⁸ Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995)

¹⁹ Richard A. Horsley, *Ethics and Exegesis: "Love Your Enemies" and the Doctrine of Non-Violence* in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 54 no 1 (Spr 1986), 3-31.

²⁰ John A. Wood, *Perspectives on War in the Bible* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998), 133.

²¹ Joseph T. Culliton, ed., "Non-Violence - Central to Christian Spirituality: Perspectives from Scripture to the Present." *Toronto Studies in Theology* Volume 8 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 55

²² Horsley, *Ethics and Exegesis: "Love Your Enemies" and the Doctrine of Non-Violence*, 15.

²³ Albert Curry Winn, *Ain't Gonna Study War No More: Biblical Ambiguity and the Abolition of War* (Louisville, Kentucky: 1993), 13.

²⁴ Horsley, *Ethics and Exegesis: "Love Your Enemies" and the Doctrine of Non-Violence*, 9.

questions regarding Matthew 5, there is ample opportunity for contribution to the discussion.

This thesis will focus primarily on the relationship between Leviticus 19:17-18 and Matthew 5:43-48, thus answering both questions concerning Matthew 5's relationship to the OT and the nature of the term 'enemies.' A number of scholars, including Martin,²⁵ Resier,²⁶ Klassen²⁷ and Riches,²⁸ would argue, that there is a uniqueness or previously unseen boldness to the SM teaching that places it in relative contrast to the teaching of the OT concerning loving others as found in places like Leviticus 19:17-18. Other scholars, most notably Richard Horsley²⁹ and Hans Dieter Betz,³⁰ would argue that the teaching concerning enemy-love is really no different in application than neighbour-love in Leviticus and does not represent any form of radicalization. Betz and Horsley argue that the OT and NT represent a cohesive whole in terms of law and instruction for living and that while there is evidence of progressive revelation on some points (in Betz, rather than Horsley), the NT never radicalizes the OT. Beyond this major division there is also much that has been said within this group of scholars about the specific relationship between the two passages: Joachim Jeremias, for example, argued that Jesus is setting himself in opposition to the Torah

²⁵ Martin L. Brice, "Matthew on Christ and the Law" in *Theological Studies* 44 no 1 Mr 1983, 56.

²⁶ Marius Resier, "Love of Enemies in the Context of Antiquity" in *New Testament Studies*, Volume 47 Issue 04, 423.

²⁷ Klassen, *Love of Enemies: The Way of Peace*, 84.

²⁸ John Riches, *The World of Jesus: First Century Judaism in Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 114.

²⁹ Horsley, 15.

³⁰ Betz, 302.

with this new teaching,³¹ while Martin by contrast would argue the SM is an attack on the interpretation of OT scriptures as opposed to scripture itself.³²

C. Methodology

The research for this thesis centres on the exegesis and subsequent comparison of Leviticus 19:18-19 and Matthew 5:42-48 in order to establish whether they are saying something similar, or whether Matthew 5:42-48 is radicalizing the previous teaching. Some extra-biblical sources will be used in addition to the direct examination of the biblical sources to establish both the social and literary contexts of these passages. In most cases the extra-biblical sources to be used will be those that are most frequently referenced by other scholars in this field. The purpose here will be primarily about identifying cultural or historical contexts that the passages may have been written in and that while foreign to the modern readers are potentially assumed by the firsthand readers. In addition to providing context in some cases this will be done in order to discuss in detail various arguments concerning the relationship between Matthew 5:42-48 and Leviticus 19:18-19. The goal of this approach is a better understanding of the relationship between the two texts while acknowledging their different social and literary contexts.

D. Structure

In order to advance this argument systematically, this thesis will contain the following three major sections:

³¹ Joachim Jeremías, *New Testament Theology. Part One: The Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1971)

³² Martin, 59.

1) Chapter 1 will examine Leviticus 19:17-18 in its social and literary contexts. Central to this section will be an examination of the Hebrew words 'neighbour' and 'love' how they are being used in the Leviticus 19:19 and the preceding section.

2) Chapter 2 will focus on the primary text for this thesis, Matthew 5:43-48. The first sections within this chapter will mirror the discussion of Leviticus in that they will focus on the social and literary context of Matthew 5:43-48. Once this has been established, we will examine the statement "You have heard that it was said, 'you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'" (Matt. 5:43)³³ The primary question being asked here will be, what precisely is the SM responding to. Once the historical, textual and literary context of enemy-love ethic in verse 44 has been firmly established, the content of the verses themselves will be more thoroughly discussed. In particular, the ideas of 'love' and 'enemy' will be examined in order to establish whether or not the SM is indeed radicalizing the teaching in Leviticus, or whether verse 44 is simply a restatement of existing OT teaching. Finally, for this section, a few brief comments will be made concerning how this enemy-love ethic was lived out in the recorded life of Jesus in the Gospels.

3) The final chapter of this thesis will be an examination of the relationship between Leviticus 19:17-18 and Matthew 5:43-48. This will be done in three parts. First a comparison of the two sets of verses paying attention to both similarities and differences; secondly, a more focused discussion on the notion of radicalization and what exactly it means for this context, and what the resulting implications are; finally, some discussion of how this specific discussion fits in as part of the larger kingdom ethic.

³³ All references to Scripture are NRSV unless otherwise stated.

E. Limitations

Of course it would be impossible to address all of the many questions that a study of Matthew 5's enemy-love ethic might pose. For that reason this thesis will intentionally limit itself to a very specific question concerning the relationship to Leviticus 19:18, thus leaving aside other questions that simply are beyond the scope of this research. It also means that certain assumptions will need to be made.

A working assumption for the sake of this research is that the SM is meant to be more than an eschatological ethic that exists simply to point towards people's sin, but that it in fact is meant to serve as instructions for how to live in the Kingdom of Heaven, which is both now and not yet. For the sake of this paper the SM functions as an ethic which includes commands that need to be followed if one intends to participate in the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. While this is certainly not the accepted view in every part of the Church, it is a question that simply is beyond the scope of this paper.

This research will also make the assumption that Matthew was prepared and written for a specific reason, and that it reflects at least some of the ideas and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Since the focus of this thesis will be on the interaction between the SM and Leviticus 19:17-18, the degree to which these words reflect the actual historical Jesus remains secondary.

CHAPTER 1: Leviticus 19:17-18

17 You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:17-18 NRSV)

Like other Near Eastern writing of its kind, Leviticus blends ethical laws with instructions for ritual practice.³⁴ It is a book that speaks of how the Israelites are to relate to their God, each other and those outside their communities. Leviticus defines these relationships by referring to God's holiness and the holiness of his people. That holiness has often been understood and defined as separateness, Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew-English Lexicon for example, defines the Hebrew term *qôdesh* as "apartness, holiness, sacredness and separateness."³⁵ So at one level the text seeks to define for its readers a kind of separate community by outlining behavioral expectations such as those listed in Leviticus 19 and ritual practices such as those mentioned in Leviticus 17. Erhard Gerstenberger in his commentary notes that this separateness allows the Israelites to not become caught up with the gods of other nations, but solely partner and remain in relationship with Yahweh.³⁶ Holiness is thus not simply about behavioural expectations, ethics or ritual practices, but more broadly concerns the relationship between Yahweh and Israel.³⁷ Part of that holiness involves certain cultic and ethical teachings that are outlined in Leviticus which in various ways help to give practical

³⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Book of Leviticus: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections" in *The New Interpreter's Bible Volume 1* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 986.

³⁵ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 13th Edition, s.v. "Holiness."

³⁶ Erhard Gerstenberger, *Leviticus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 126.

³⁷ Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 202.

instruction on distinctiveness from neighbouring cultures and relationship with the divine. Those teachings referenced in the Holiness Code of Leviticus (Leviticus 17-26) include laws and instructions concerning: food (ch. 17); sex (ch. 18); neighbourliness (ch. 19); serious crimes (ch. 20); the priesthood (ch. 21); eating sacrifices (ch. 22); festivals (ch. 23); tabernacle (ch. 24:1-9); blasphemy (ch. 24:10-23); sabbath and the Jubilee (ch. 25) and an exhortation to obey the law (ch. 26). A specific example that shows how intermingled the teaching of ethics and cultic practices is the command to not steal in Leviticus 19:11 which functions as a social or community expectation. Just a few verses earlier in Leviticus 19:5-7 outlines acceptable sacrifices. Ritual and ethics are both connected and represent part of the larger teaching concerning the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Leviticus, as a whole, but also more specifically in the holiness code section repeatedly echoes the notion that this behaviour is required because the Lord is Holy. (Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:7; 21:8) "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. (Leviticus 19:2) The holiness required of God's people in Leviticus is thus at some level a reflection of the God defined in Leviticus.³⁸

In order to properly examine this important passage within its contexts, this chapter will be divided into three parts: the first of which will be a brief analysis of the social context of Leviticus 19:17-18; the second an examination of the literary context; and finally a discussion of the text itself. The function of this chapter will be as preparatory work for a comparison to be made in a later chapter between Leviticus 19:17-18 and Matthew 5:43-48 which will discuss the nature of the latter being a radicalization of the former.

³⁸ Jacob Milgrom, "Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics" In *A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 215.

Social and Cultural Context

It is difficult to say a great deal about the original social and cultural context of the Book of Leviticus since its exact dating remains somewhat unclear³⁹ and its final composition may have been as late as the post-exilic period;⁴⁰ much later than the period described in Leviticus.⁴¹ What can be said is that the Israel described in the Pentateuch, was a young nation, having just fled Egypt and still trying to find its identity. As a migrant people it was still very much influenced by its neighbours. In the post-exilic period, where as noted above many scholars would place the actual composition of Leviticus, a similar culture of newness and seeking a distinct identity from its neighbours would likely have been the case.

Israel as a self-conscious people group most likely appeared in the Late Bronze Age period⁴² and in the succeeding centuries seemed to exist in relatively small towns spread across the Palestine region.⁴³ According to Leviticus they were also at the point of Moses a nomadic people moving from Egypt towards Canaan. An example of this nomadic culture comes from the frequent references to the 'camp' rather than the 'city' in Leviticus. Lepers for example, in Leviticus 13:46, were to remain outside the camp. The central place of worship is also referred to exclusively as a tabernacle or tent, rather than as a physical structure as it would have been later during the post-exilic

³⁹ Kaiser, 996. See also: J. Maxwell Miller, "Introduction to the History of Ancient Israel" in *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume 1 General & Old Testament Articles Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1994), 257.

⁴⁰ Gordon Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 13.

⁴¹ Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1987), 7.

⁴² Miller, 247.

⁴³ John Rogerson and Philip Davies, *The Old Testament World* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989), 28.

period. Despite aspects in Leviticus of what may have been a nomadic culture at one time in Israel's history, there are also examples of laws concerning agriculture which would tend to suggest a more sedentary and possibly urban life. Leviticus 25:4 is a good example of this implied sedentary agricultural life: "But in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard." Agriculture was a prominent theme in the writing of Leviticus, telling the reader something about the daily life experience of many of the firsthand readers. Leviticus 19 for example, references harvesting in verse 9, raising animals in verse 19 and planting in verse 23. Agriculture was part of the basic fabric of social life in Israel through most of its history, and thus must be kept in mind when reading it.

Related to theme of agriculture is the assertion that Israel was predominantly a tribal society prior to the exile and thus during the period described in Leviticus. Tribalism here denotes a society based on the importance of kinship, common ancestry and non-formalized community leadership. In effect, tribalism is a social extension or a broadening of household kinship into wider community.⁴⁴ Family-ties in a tribal society are thus extremely important and form the basic fabric of society. Examples of this from within the OT include the emphasis on kinship and genealogy as prerequisite for community leadership. 1 Samuel 9 for example gives emphasis to the family origins of Saul in verse 1 and 2b: "There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish son of Abiel son of Zeror son of Becorath son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. He had a son whose name was Saul." Beyond the importance of kinship for leadership,

⁴⁴ Robert Coote, "Tribalism: Social Organization in the Biblical Israel" in Esler, Philip F., ed. *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in its Social Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 39.

family was also significant in tribal culture as far as social obligation and duty in times of need prior to the exilic period. While this teaching is present throughout the OT, particularly in the book of Ruth, a succinct example could be taken from Leviticus 25:25: “If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells a piece of property, then the next of kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold.” As a tribal society during the time described in Leviticus, Israelites were duty bound to care for each other in times of need.⁴⁵ That said, this tribal and familial bond is extended in Leviticus (more on this following) and also particularly in the prophets to include all Israelites and in different capacity aliens in the land. Meaning that by the time of the post-exilic period when all notions of tribe have really disappeared within Israel on account of the occupations, the bond to care for one another regardless of tribe has already been well established.

Israel exists historically and geographically surrounded by a number of major empires in the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean that had rich and diverse cultural histories that would have impacted Israel.⁴⁶ Of these empires those of the Egyptians and Babylonians (despite its lateness in developing) feature most prominently in the literature and narratives of the OT itself.⁴⁷ Egypt for example, in addition to being the principal antagonist in the Exodus story also held political influence over Palestine at various points throughout Israel’s history.⁴⁸ In addition to writing about Babylon, Egypt and other neighbouring nations directly, there is also evidence of more subtle influence. Common Ancient near Eastern idioms, for example, including the notion of a royal line lasting as long as the sun and the moon appear both in Psalms 89:36-37 as well as a

⁴⁵ Rogerson and Davies, 48.

⁴⁶ Miller, 247.

⁴⁷ Rogerson and Davies, 63.

⁴⁸ Rogerson and Davies, 70. See also: Miller, 247.

Phoenician inscription of King Azatiwada.⁴⁹ Similar connections have been made between the Israelite legal system and the laws of Hammurapi, one example being the common teaching concerned with how to handle an ox who gores someone to death.⁵⁰ Israel exists within a broader historical and cultural context and shows in a variety of places evidence of influence and interaction with other neighbouring cultures.

One of the functions that seems to have motivated the writers of Leviticus is the desire to create an identity for the people of Israel within this broader social context, which was separate and unique from their neighbours. Most modern scholars would argue that the book was not in fact written by Moses but by a later priestly editor, potentially in the post-exilic period, where there seems to be an intention to create a sense of separateness from neighbours, particularly in light of the recent Babylonians captivity.⁵¹ Separateness, even to the point of a ban on intermarriage in places like Ezra 9-10, can be understood within the context of Israel attempting to recreate a nation following a long period of captivity. This can be seen in a variety of ways throughout Leviticus as it relates to food laws in Leviticus 11, the consumption of blood in sacrifices in Leviticus 17:10-16 or the giving up of children to foreign gods in Leviticus 20:2. Most telling concerning the notion of the desire for a unique and separate cultural existence however, because of its direct reference to other nations, is Leviticus 18:1-5:

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: I am the Lord your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not follow their statutes. My ordinances you shall observe and my statutes you shall keep, following them: I am the Lord your God. You

⁴⁹ Simon Parker, "The Ancient Near Eastern Literary Background of the Old Testament" in *New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume 1 General & Old Testament Articles Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1994), 236.

⁵⁰ Parker, *The Ancient Near Eastern Literary Background of the Old Testament*, 238.

⁵¹ Kaiser, 996.

shall keep my statutes and my ordinances; by doing so one shall live: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 18:1-5)

The notion of Leviticus' functioning to prescribe a separate identity for the Israelites from those around them, while perhaps historically important for the formation of a people, has further significant implications on how broadly, or narrowly, the teaching of Leviticus 19:17-18 can be read. The laws, stories and teachings of Leviticus all seem to be crafted in such a way as to help create a separate and monotheistic identity for the people of Israel who may well have just returned to their 'promised land' following a period of captivity in an otherwise polytheistic society.

Literary Context

Leviticus is developed within a larger framework in which it serves to focus its readers on the holiness of God and the resulting response of his chosen people.⁵² Chapter 19, the primary text to be examined here, begins with an important overarching theme statement: "The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." (Lev. 19:1-2) Humanity's holiness, or more specifically for this discussion, their behaviour as defined by the teaching found in Leviticus, is set up as a direct response to God's holiness or set apartness from His creation.⁵³

Following these opening verses, chapter 19 goes on to include a wide array of topics in its 37 verses, each in some way relating back to the broader theme of

⁵² Gane, 335.

⁵³ Albee, 164.

holiness.⁵⁴ This includes anything from teachings relating to a wheat harvest (Lev. 19:9), to a discussion on proper breeding practices (Lev. 19:19), sexual relations (Lev. 19:20), respect for the elderly (Lev. 19:32) and of course the passage central to this thesis: the command to love your neighbour (Lev. 19:17-18). In many of these verses there is a focus on doing good towards others, as God does towards his people. They also continue to define for the likely post-exilic people of Israel the way in which their society will now be set up, structured and led. Leaving a portion of the grain harvest is not mere ritual, but about caring for the poor within the community and on the fringes of society.

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 19:9-10)

Holiness as characterized by Leviticus 19 has to do with caring for others, separating one's self from harmful or dangerous things, and ultimately behaving in this way because God is God. (Lev. 19:4) Various authors have argued for different structural analyses of the text.⁵⁵ Most authors, however, note that the primary anchor points in the repeated appearances of the refrain, "I am the Lord your God" on account of its use

⁵⁴ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22 for The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1596.

⁵⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics*, 212 and Wenham, 263. See also: Calum M. Carmichael, *Laws of Leviticus 19* (Harvard Theological Review 87 no 3 JI 1994), 239. For reactions and criticism of Carmichael Calum ideas see: Bernard Levinson. Calum M. Carmichael's Approach to the Laws of Deuteronomy. (Harvard Theological Review 83, 1990) 147-166. Calum puts forward a most interesting hypothesis that Leviticus, and the majority of OT law was written in reaction to narratives within the culture of the Israelites. Leviticus 19 for example is said to be a reflection of the story of Joseph from Genesis 42. The climax of loving your neighbour in Leviticus 19:18 according to Calum reflects the interaction between Joseph and his brothers when they unknowingly visit him in Egypt. Although fully evaluating such an argument is far outside the purview of this paper it is interesting nonetheless consider the implications of reading Leviticus 19 as a reaction to Genesis 42.

throughout the text and within some variation as the opening passage.⁵⁶ This is not simply a matter of structure, but of emphasis. Instead of outlining an extensive list of extrinsic benefits here, the actions are undertaken simply because God is the lord, which continues to develop and strengthen the larger theme introduced in the opening lines of Chapter 19. Whatever the specifics of the key verses being examined here in Leviticus 19:17-18, the overarching theme of God's holiness, and the resulting holiness of his people needs to be kept in view. The command to not mix seeds in a field or fabrics in a garment in Leviticus 19:19 could at least at a broader level be teaching about the relationships between Israel and its surrounding cultures as above discussed. Not having sexual relations, nor covenanting with other ethnicities is certainly something written about elsewhere in the OT.⁵⁷ While an initial reading of Leviticus 19:19 seems to be about clothing and farming, examining it through a lens of holiness provides a second possible meaning. In the same way Leviticus 19:17-18 needs to be read through the lens of holiness in order to examine whether there are any further implied meanings that might have been heard by the firsthand audience. Additionally the focus on holiness raises the question of whether there are any limitations that exist to the command to love one's neighbour on account of the passage's focus and theme. Because the book as a whole focuses on God's holiness, for example, the laws themselves in some senses place a secondary functioning in telling the reader about God's character as well as what is actually expected of his followers.⁵⁸ The laws also

⁵⁶ Wenham, 263. See also: Albee, 149.

⁵⁷ Genesis 24:37; 28:1, et al.

⁵⁸ Wenham, 16.

speak primarily to the Israelite community, and seem less concerned with the holiness or behaviour of other nations.⁵⁹

Leviticus 19 can be divided into several helpful sections as follows: Introduction and restatement of the theme of holiness (1-2a), Religious Duties including items from the Ten Commandments and specific references to the issue of sacrificing to God (2b-10), Good Neighbourliness which again restates items from the Ten Commandments and lists specific ways in which one can be kind to one's neighbour (11-18) and other miscellaneous duties ranging from dealing with foreign religions to not prostituting your children (19-37). Each of these sections, following from the introduction, is connected together by the repeated phrase, "I am the Lord" (with occasional slight variations), and can be further divided into smaller sections (4,4,8). Verses 11-18 then can itself divided into honesty towards others (11-12), commands that speak of not exploiting those who are weak (13-14), justice in the legal system (15-16) and finally Love Your Neighbour (17-18). The final section stands as a kind of culmination of the broader section of good neighbourliness.⁶⁰ Part of being a good neighbour as far as Leviticus is concerned is evidently not simply taking care of healthy neighbours, but a special obligation to the underprivileged and helpless both in how you treat them and how you do not treat them.⁶¹ The various examples in the section on Good Neighbourliness then stand not as an exhaustive list, but as practical examples and implications of verses 17-18.⁶² Neighbour love is seen as an overarching or general teaching as is comes at the end

⁵⁹ Leviticus 4:2; 7:23,29; 11:2; 12:2; 23:24; 23:34; 24:15

⁶⁰ Wenham, 263.

⁶¹ Leviticus 19:9-10, 13-16.

⁶² Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics*. In *A Continental Commentary*, 216.

and thus the natural summative point of this particular passage,⁶³ while something like leaving grain for those in need is seen as one way to actively demonstrate that love. Each of the various other commands of this section can in some ways be seen as manifestations of the neighbour-love command. The main driving point is what each verse seems to be anticipating and explaining, that is, love of neighbour. In fact, the entire section of Leviticus 19:11-18 seems filled with a list of 'do not's until suddenly and quite dramatically in verses 17-18 the writer adds what people are supposed to do, that is, the command to love your neighbour.⁶⁴ Rhetorically this adds emphasis on the command to love one's neighbour and further suggests that this passage has some larger significance within the wider whole as it gives meaning to the Israelites not causing the blind to stumble (14), to not steal (11) to be just in dealing with all people (15) and so forth. The examples listed throughout Leviticus 19:11-18 each in their own way demonstrate practical opportunities to show love, which forms one part of the greater holiness teaching in Leviticus 17-26.

A Close Reading of Leviticus 19:11-18

Having established the broader social and literary contexts within the world of Ancient Israel and within the holiness writings of Leviticus, a more detailed examination of Leviticus 19:11-18 will be undertaken in order to establish the immediate context and rhetorical position of the key verse for this paper, Leviticus 19:18. As above, the verses concerning good neighbourliness will be grouped into the following related topics: Honesty (11-12), No Exploitation (13-14), Justice in Court (15-16) and finally, Love Your Neighbour (17-18).

⁶³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22 for The Anchor Bible*, 1646. See also: Wenham 264.

⁶⁴ Wenham, 269.

Deception and Harm Towards Others (vs. 11-12)

You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:11-12)

Leviticus 19:11-12 at some level, deals with issues of deception and harm being done to others and in so doing picks up on themes from at least 3 laws from the Decalogue including profaning the name of God (Exodus 20:7), stealing (Exodus 20:15) and bearing false witness against a neighbour (Exodus 20:16).⁶⁵ In addition to being a rephrasing of the Decalogue, the final line, "I am the Lord," amplifies the connections to the above discussed theme of holiness as it does elsewhere in Leviticus. The passage also places additional emphasis on people's relationships with the word *'āmîyth* (Strong's 5997) in verse 11 by commanding they "not lie to one another." The significance of this Hebrew word in understanding who neighbour refers to will become increasingly clear when viewed alongside other near synonyms later in the passage.⁶⁶ Themes of the holiness of God and the posture one is to have towards others are present here and will continue to be so in the coming verses.

No Exploitation (vs 13-14)

You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:13-14)

⁶⁵ There are certainly other layers and ideas represented in these verses in addition to the theme of honesty. What is critical to this thesis however is broader than the simple notion of honesty and instead rests on the basic connections to the Decalogue and the the connections to the Decalogue, whether defined by honesty, or something else, that are what is most significant to this thesis. Leviticus 19:11-12 in a number of ways deals with human relationships and how to preserve and create healthy relationships without violating the laws of holiness.

⁶⁶ Wenham, 267.

Like Leviticus 19:11-12, there is a connection harkening back to the Decalogue, in this case concerning the exploitation of workers and the need to be fair to employees and those who find themselves at a disadvantage. Though still very much about honesty, these two verses, beyond the opening injunction, focus on being honest with those who are at a disadvantage whether by positional authority, as in labourers, or by nature of some other disadvantage, as in blindness. The imperative tone and subject matter of these verses is reminiscent of the Decalogue with phrases like: “you shall not defraud your neighbor.” Verse 13 also uses the same word *rêya'* (Strong's 7453), for neighbour as the Decalogue's “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour” further connecting the two. An implication of the usage of 'neighbour' in this way is that it not only includes what could be considered your peers or family members, but also those in a lower social hierarchy or position of relative disadvantage such as labourers and the blind.

Justice in Court (vs. 15-16)

You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:15-16)

An important development that needs to be noted here is the progression from verse 11 through to verse 18 in terms of the vocabulary and the ultimate articulation of who *rêya'* refers to. In verse 11 the word, *'âmîyth* is used to describe others, “do not deceive *one another*” and then in verse 13 the word *rêya'* is often translated as neighbours in the English translation. Here in verses 15-16 not only are both *'âmîyth* and *rêya'* used but an additional word *'am* (Strong's 5971) is introduced. *'Am* when

understood within this context implies a people or national identity.⁶⁷ Wenham and others note that this progression is likely intentional and is meant to not only build towards the climax of Leviticus 19:18 but to add additional meaning and parameters to the term *rêya'* with each successive section.⁶⁸ While *rêya'* continues to imply neighbours, each section adds an additional layer of who is meant to be included as the recipients of just treatment. Neighbour then in its final iteration in v 17-18 functions as an almost 'all of the above' on account of the structure and use of near synonyms. Visually the progression of language concerning neighbours in this passage looks like this:

vv. 11-12	associate (<i>'âmîyth</i>)	
vv. 13-14		<i>friend (rêya')</i>
vv. 15-16	associate (<i>'âmîyth</i>)	people (<i>'am</i>) <i>friend (rêya')</i>
vv. 17-18	brother (<i>'ach</i>)	associate (<i>'âmîyth</i>) people (<i>'am</i>) <i>friend (rêya')</i>

In addition to playing an important role in this development and moving the text forward to the climax of verse 18, verses 15-16 also provide further connections backwards to the Decalogue. This is true particularly for verse 16 which rephrases the command to not murder in Exodus 20:13 and the command to not bear false witness in Exodus 20:16.⁶⁹ This passage calls for justice towards others, which admittedly is no easy task. Based on the context and the movement of the passage it is reasonable to assume that justice and the equal treatment to all, whether rich or poor, can be applied as one of the characteristics of neighbour-love from verses 17-18. Justice as defined here relates to

⁶⁷ John Hartley, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books Publishers, 1992), 309.

⁶⁸ Wenham, 267.

⁶⁹ Hartley, 310.

the overarching theme of interaction with one's neighbours and thus ultimately plays a role in defining love of neighbours as it is described in verse 18.

Love Your Neighbor

You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:17-18)

As it has been noted above, one of the important features of this set of verses in the wider context of the ethical teachings of Leviticus 19:11-18 is the use of four separate words 'ach (Strong's 251), 'âmîyth, 'am and rêya' that all convey some element of nearness. In addition to most general term used in verse 11, and the terms suggesting both close relationship and fellow-countrymen in verse 16, Leviticus adds the term 'ach implying close familial connection. In considering the question of who neighbour refers to it would seem logical based on the above that the neighbour, for Leviticus, includes anyone from as broad as all fellow-citizens to a close family member and everyone in between. The love you would show for your own nuclear family, is now extended to include your whole ethnic group.

In addition to discussing the importance of the various words that help to answer the question of 'who?' in the above passages, it is also important to consider what might be intended by the use of the word 'love,' or 'âhab (Strong's 157), thus helping to establish what precisely is being called for in this command. 'âhab notably is one of the most commonly used words for love in the OT and is used some 208 times throughout the OT. It is often used when describing God's affections for his people. "I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them." (Hosea 14:4)

Deuteronomy 10:12 uses the same word to speak of the love to be offered in return to God, “So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

The passage’s content and structure also make *’âhab* a very practical deeds-based attitude in addition to an emotional antithesis of hating and grudge-holding. One prominent way in which this is accomplished is by the contrast set up in verse 18: “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, *but* you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” Loving others is not merely an emotional response here, but an action directly contrasted with the taking vengeance or bearing of grudges.⁷⁰ Said differently, verse 18 could read, ‘Love your neighbor by not holding a grudge or taking vengeful action against them.’ Another example of this could be found in verse 17: “You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself.” In this case, openness is contrasted with keeping something private in one’s heart. Speaking to an extended family member openly can be a direct and practical remedy for hating them privately. While speaking openly and reproving others can certainly in other cases be seen as escalating hate, here by contrasting the “in your heart” with the out loud nature of “reproving your kin” the context seems more about dealing with problems than escalating them. It would seem then that more than just raising the issue, there is an implication of a process leading towards reconciliation. One often-cited scholar, Jacob Milgrom, has pointed out that the Hebrew word for “love” here is introduced by the preposition *le*, which could be translated as ‘for’, thus rendering a possible translation, “do good as you would do for

⁷⁰ Wenham, 268.

yourself.” A similar use of the word love being paired with this preposition can be found elsewhere in the OT,⁷¹ and in each sense seems to imply the same wholistic love that is both action-oriented and emotional love.⁷² The phrase ‘for yourself’ suggests a sense of supplying for ones needs either for yourself or for others. Love in Leviticus is not merely about the attitude towards others; it expresses a commitment to care for the practical needs of others.

Leviticus 19 is a passage that calls for love towards fellow citizens on the grounds that God is holy and thus requires His followers to be the same. In seeking to understand its relationship to the SM however, sometimes it seems as though Leviticus is silent on whether that love extends to foreigners.⁷³ In Leviticus 19:33-34 there is a call to love (*’âhab*) aliens living among the Israelites. Aliens, however, for the Israelites did not refer broadly to all non-Israelites but referenced only those other nationalities that were living amongst the Israelites and in some cases following the rules of the Torah.⁷⁴ Leviticus 24:16 for example states: “Aliens as well as citizens, when they blaspheme the Name, shall be put to death.” Loving aliens thus does not equate also loving those people living outside the land of Israel.

⁷¹ Leviticus 19:34; 2 Chronicles 19:2

⁷² Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics in A Continental Commentary*, 218.

⁷³ D.A. Carson & G.K. Beale, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publisher, 2007), 27; John Riches, *The World of Jesus: First Century Judaism in Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 28.

⁷⁴ Kaminsky, 124.

CHAPTER 2: Matthew 5:43-48

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:52-48 NRSV)

The central question of this research has to do with the relationship between Leviticus 19:17-18: is Matthew's Jesus radicalizing the Leviticus passage? Having examined Leviticus 19:17-18, Matthew 5:43-48 must now also be evaluated in order to make it possible to ultimately examine the relationship between the two. This chapter will begin by examining the social and literary contexts of the SM and in particular Matthew 5:43-48. I will then make a more focused analysis of Matthew 5:43-48 itself. Finally Jesus' life, as recorded in Matthew, will be used as a lens to understand how this passage may have been originally interpreted.

Social and Cultural Context:

The people of Israel, following years of unrest, failed rebellions, and increasing Roman presence officially became the Roman Province of Judea in 6 AD.⁷⁵ Though political control was still relatively arm's length for a typical Roman province until the Siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the fact of the matter was Israel remained both relatively unstable (to varying degrees throughout the period) and ultimately under foreign rule

⁷⁵ Robert H. Pfeiffer, *History of the New Testament Times* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1949), 33.

during this period.⁷⁶ Roman political intervention during the period ranged from the direct, including Pompey's seizure of Jerusalem in 63 BCE, to far more indirect tactics like the appointment of Hyrcanus and Antipater over the Jewish territory as a reward for their support in Caesar's campaigns in Egypt and of course the direct action of appointing Herod the Great as King over the region by Rome.⁷⁷ Jewish people throughout this period certainly never seemed to embrace any of these leaders as fully their own. Herod the Great who was king of Judea at the birth of Jesus, was considered by some a "self-seeking tyrant, a hypocritical 'half-Jew' wholly pagan at heart, a bloodthirsty oppressor and a robber of the people by those he ruled over."⁷⁸

Beyond the broader context of the Roman influence it is important to note that another aspect that would have informed the hearing of the SM, was the Jewish expectation that the Davidic line and the Israelite Nation was to be restored, a hope that remained unmet during this period. (2 Samuel 7:10-13) There was continued anticipation throughout this period that God was still going to liberate Israel from the control of alien nations.⁷⁹ Whether people were expecting a restored nation-state, a moral/ethical restoration or an apocalyptic-style world order change, the reality was continued occupation and suffering. John the Baptist, likely one among many, echoes Isaiah's words that God had not forgotten Israel's plea and that he was coming in power and might to free them:

"Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made

⁷⁶ Josephus, Antiquities 17:9-11; War 2:1-6

⁷⁷ Pfeiffer, 24-25.

⁷⁸ Pfeiffer, 32.

⁷⁹ Riches, 91.

straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” (Luke 3: 4a-6)

Jesus’s words on the SM speak not simply into a culture influenced by Roman ideas, but a Jewish culture anticipating salvation from their God in a very real, tangible and immediate way.⁸⁰ As has been hinted at already with the discussion of the Roman influence and political oppression of Israel there was throughout this period continued sectarianism in the region. Some groups supported the Roman leaders, others were diametrically opposed to them. Some fought to regain Israel as a nation state others retreated to create their own sub-community within Israel. While values of hospitality and community remained key components of the Jewish (and Biblical) tradition throughout the period, sectarianism and Roman influence had some amount of effect on this culture.

Ultimately, in discussing social context, it is not about proving direct influence, but rather a matter of acknowledging the shared experiences that likely defined many of the early listeners, and thus also defined how it was likely heard.⁸¹ Those shared experiences included Roman influences, repeated revolts against the ruling governments and a continued hope that salvation from oppression was close at hand.

Thus far much has been said about the period of the 30’s AD and the life of Jesus. While many of these social and cultural factors would have stayed the same,

⁸⁰ Riches 94.

⁸¹ Horsley, *Ethics and Exegesis: “Love Your Enemies” and the Doctrine of Non-Violence*, 7. - A great deal of emphasis in scholarship has been placed on possible linkages between Jesus and the Essenes as well as Jesus and the Zealots. Horsley is right to point out here that such linkages are by no means certain or necessarily self-evident. This thesis however does not set out to prove a relationship between one particular group and Jesus, but instead to reiterate that while Judaism had many common elements, it was at this time by no means a homogeneous monolithic movement, but rather contained various ideas and worldviews within it.

there are also some significant differences and historical events that may have also shaped the writing and reading of Matthew itself. For starters, while Jesus seems to have spoken predominantly to a Jewish audience, Matthew was likely received by a mixed audience of Jews and gentiles who were part of the early church. Matthew also would have been read and written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD and so the hoped for restoration of Israel age would likely have significantly diminished. These historical events and circumstances all ought to be kept in mind as we approach the text of Matthew 5:43-48.

Literary Context:

The Sermon on the Mount is a distinct literary unit formed by parallel bookending statements found in Matthew 4:23-5:2 and 7:28-8:1. In these bookend verses we find the repeated notions of great crowds following Jesus, going up (and later down) the mountain, and finally and perhaps most importantly the repeated notion of teaching those who were gathered. Within this larger literary whole the SM can be further divided into a number of major sections as follows based on both content and structure: Introduction (5:1-2); Blessings (5:3-12); Law and Prophets (5:17-20); Jesus and Torah (5:21-48); Almsgiving, Prayer and Fasting (6:1-4); Social Issues (6:19-7:11); Law and Prophets (7:12); Warnings (7:13-27) and Conclusion (7:28-8:1).⁸²

The underlying theme or principle idea being conveyed throughout the SM, and in much of Jesus' teaching elsewhere, seems to centre around the notion of The

⁸² Dale C. Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount: inspiring the Moral Imagination* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 36.

Kingdom of Heaven.⁸³ The common definition of kingdom would be a community led by a King, in this case it seems people are meant to believe that the king here is God. In addition to referencing the kingdom elsewhere in the book of Matthew,⁸⁴ Matthew 4:23 states explicitly in the verses leading up to the SM that once Jesus had selected his followers he went around healing and “The Kingdom of Heaven is near; Repent and believe the good news.” In many cases the Kingdom of Heaven is spoken about and explained in parable. In many of these parables the teaching seems to indicate some amount of preferential treatment to the poor and oppressed. “Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God;” (Matthew 19:24) or “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3) In addition to what seems to be a Kingdom made up of those rejected by worldly kingdoms, there are a number of passages which seem to suggest that a certain behaviour is expected of those who claim this kingdom as their own. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21) Although much more will be said about The Kingdom of Heaven in chapter 3, it is important to note that the teachings of Matthew 5:43-48 are all a part of this larger kingdom teaching.

Since the primary task of this research centres on the relationship between Leviticus 19:17-18 and Matthew 5:43-48, the section on Jesus and the Torah in Matthew 5:21-48 will need to be given further attention. It should be noted initially that

⁸³ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Literary Genre and Function*, 286. More will be said about the Kingdom of Heaven in chapter 3 of this thesis.

⁸⁴ Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 4:23; 5:3; 5:10; 5:20; 6:10; 6:13; 6:33; 7:21; 8:11; 8:12; 9:35; 10:7; 11:11; 11:12; 12:25; 12:25; 12:26; 12:28; 13:11; 13:19; 13:24; 13:31; 13:33; 13:38; 13:41; 13:43; 13:44; 13:45; 13:47; 13:52; 16:19; 16:28; 18:1; 18:3; 18:4; 18:23; 19:12; 19:14; 19:23; 19:24; 20:1; 20:21; 21:31; 21:43; 22:2; 23:13; 24:7; 24:14; 25:1; 25:14; 25:34; 26:29.

this section is delineated by an introduction in Matthew 5:17-21 that not only reiterates the theme of Kingdom living discussed above, but it also anticipates what is to follow in a number of ways. First, it conveys to the reader or listener that this section will be concerned with righteous living in Matthew 5:20 by referencing the righteousness expected of those who claim the kingdom as theirs; second, it anticipates and addresses the potential incorrect understanding of what follows as somehow abolishing the existing OT law.⁸⁵

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. (Matthew 5:17)

It is hard to ignore the directness of this passage as it defines its relationship to the OT. Matthew tells us that Jesus is not abolishing anything of the law, but rather fulfilling them. While this passage alone does not say much about what fulfilling the law might entail, it does help to make clear what The Sermon on the Mount is not doing - that is abolishing the law.

For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:18-19)

Continuing on with the theme expressed in Matthew 5:17, Matthew 5:18-19 restates that the teaching that follows is not erasing the law of the OT. As above, within the text itself it is unclear exactly what is meant by “until all is accomplished,” but it is sufficed to say that Matthew wants to be abundantly clear that the SM is not simply an

⁸⁵ Allison, 31.

anti-law sermon. In addition to making this point, these verses also connect the teachings of the law to participation in the Kingdom of Heaven. If it were not already clear from the other verses mentioned above, these verses help further articulate that the teaching that is to follow is intimately connected to Matthew's teaching on the Kingdom of Heaven.

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)

This final verse of the introductory comments in Matthew 5:17-20 further connects the theme of OT law and resulting behavioral expectations to the Kingdom of Heaven. In this case the word being used is righteousnessness, and though it connects behaviour to the kingdom of heaven it seems to also suggest that it is near impossible to be perfect enough to be accepted based on your deeds alone. This in and of itself is a further comment on the law of the OT, and functions as a preamble for what is to come.

Following the introduction, this passage divides itself into two triadic subsections as follows: 5:21-26; 27-30; 31-32 and 5:33-37; 38-42; 43-48. In each case there is a teaching of the Torah that is cited followed by an amplified version of the teaching presented by Jesus. For example, Matthew 5:27-28 directly refers to Exodus 20:14 and then amplifies the original teaching beyond what would have been the plain reading of the text. Exodus 20:14 for example reads, "You shall not commit adultery." Matthew 5:27-28 references this teaching and then amplifies it:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28)

In every case, following the radicalized⁸⁶ version of the teaching would not cause anyone to break the original teaching of the Torah and in no way do they cancel out the Torah as was explicitly stated in Matthew's introductory comments in 5:17-20. The relationship is one of radicalizing, thus adding to the original intention and meaning as opposed to cancelling. As far as adding to the original meaning it does so by increasing the level of sacrifice required and so in a sense "ups the stakes." The way in which this is done is by a series of antitheses, which take an existing OT law making use of the formula, "You have heard it said... but I say..." In considering this antithesis structure, the relationship between the Torah and the Matthew 5:21-48 of the SM might look something like this:

The Sermon on the Mount

The Torah

Matthew 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'

Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder"

Matthew 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

Exodus 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery."

Matthew 31 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'

Deuteronomy 24:1 "Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce..."

⁸⁶ Again, by radicalization I mean the intensification of a command's requirements. This intensification can involve making the desired behaviour more difficult to perform. It might also involve widening the scope of the command's applicability, so that it must be observed in a larger number of contexts.

Matthew 5:33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.'

Leviticus 19:12 "You shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD."

Matthew 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

Deut 19: 21 "Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." See also: Leviticus 24:19 and Exodus 21:24

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

Leviticus 19:17 "You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."

As the final antithesis in this set, and the only one to address both an OT teaching and something not explicitly stated in the Torah, Matthew 5:43-48 can be seen as a kind of literary climax or centerpiece to this section.⁸⁷ In each of the preceding sets the SM is responding to something that is actually found in the OT - the last one moves away from this pattern leaving modern readers with the question, "Where was it heard that you 'should hate your enemy'?"⁸⁸ What follows the instruction on loving one's enemy also says something about the importance of this topic as it is a shift away from the antithesis structure completely and a move towards a new topic centering on how followers of Jesus are to care for the poor. Furthermore, each of these antitheses in one sense or another could fulfill the command from Leviticus 19:18 to love your

⁸⁷ John Dear, *Our God is Non-Violent: Witnesses in the Struggle for Peace and Justice* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1990), 37.

⁸⁸ More on this following.

neighbour as yourself.⁸⁹ Every negative action mentioned is ultimately and fundamentally arguably an issue of hate, or said differently, a lack of love. Matthew 5:21, for example, speaks of murder which in some circumstances might be thought of as a symptom of hate. The SM makes a direct connection between murder and unresolved issues between two people as well as slanderous words in 5:21-26 which certainly further strengthens any connections between hate and murder.

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. (Matthew 5:21-22a)

By pairing murder with anger in this way, Matthew is suggesting a connection between the two.⁹⁰ Within the broader rhetorical pattern of the passage, Matthew suggests that at least at some level murder is to anger as adultery is to lust. (Matthew 5:27-28) Similar connections could be made with the rest of the antitheses since at some level these laws deal with healing broken relationships whether they be on a personal level between spouses (Matthew 5: 27-32) or siblings (5:22-26, 47) or on a larger scale (Matthew 5:38-45). So the final antithesis sits as the ultimate solution to the preceding list of problems relating to broken relationships. Love is set up as the direct antidote or remedy to anger, selfishness and hate.⁹¹

The command to enemy-love also sits in a position of rhetorical privilege on account of the preceding list being predominantly negative and it by nature of its

⁸⁹ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 205.

⁹⁰ A similar connection between anger and murder is made in I John 3:15: "Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him"

⁹¹ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 204.

command to do something as opposed to not doing something.⁹² After being told not to become angry, not to look wantonly at women, not to take oaths, not to get a divorce, not to take revenge, the listeners are finally told to *do* something. That is, to love their enemies.⁹³

Its function, language and placement within the SM have led some scholars to conclude that not only does the Kingdom of God begin here on earth, it is a kingdom free of violence and where suffering and persecution are not used as justification for violence or revenge.⁹⁴ In addition to what has been mentioned here, there are other examples and ideas throughout the rest of the NT that potentially supports this conclusion.⁹⁵ Not having any anger towards others (Matthew 5:22), the call to live at peace with others (Romans 12:18 and Hebrews 12:14), working towards peace and unity (Romans 14:19), the call for repeated forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-22) and the general commendation of peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) are but a few of the examples scholars could look to as support for the arguments for nonviolent peacemaking and pacifism in the NT.

Hate your Enemy

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matthew 5:43,44)

⁹² Fisher, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 90.

⁹³ Matthew 5:21-48; One additional point on the rhetorical style being used in Matthew 5:42-48 is that the antithesis structure was common in the later rabbinic tradition of the time, so people may have been familiar with the structure and form in other aspects of Jewish pedagogy, even if the ultimate conclusion came as a surprise. Joachim, 253. See also Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 206.

⁹⁴ Michel Desjardins *Peace, Violence, and the New Testament* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 43.

⁹⁵ Desjardin, 37.

One difficulty of this final antithesis is that while the first half of the phrase seems to be a direct reference to Leviticus 19:18 in a similar manner to the preceding five antitheses, the latter half is not found in this precise form anywhere in the OT.⁹⁶ The question then, is why the SM would misquote such a familiar passage? It is possible that it was an accident or bias on Matthew's part, and therefore does not reflect the words of Jesus.⁹⁷ It is also possible that Jesus intentionally alters the original reference for rhetorical reasons including the need to fit within the antithesis structure established in the preceding verses.⁹⁸ In either case, the question is what precisely is the SM responding to? There are five possibilities.

First, since in any of the known ancient interpretations of Leviticus there is no evidence that enemies were included within the neighbourly love command. In fact, some have concluded that the SM is responding to the implications of Leviticus 19 itself.⁹⁹ Since this is the only time in the list of antitheses where Jesus so dramatically changes the citation from Leviticus, it does at least seem plausible that the SM is responding strictly to Leviticus and its exclusive use of the word 'neighbour.' Leviticus, while progressive in many ways in extending familial love to include all Israelites, still seems to have fallen short on the question of including other nations and enemies in the

⁹⁶ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 309.

⁹⁷ Horsley, *Ethics and Exegesis: "Love Your Enemies" and the Doctrine of Non-Violence*, 9. While Horsley is correct in pointing out that there is an important distinction to be made between actual words of Jesus of Nazareth and what is recorded in each of the Gospels, for the sake of this research the distinction is somewhat less relevant since in either case someone, whether it be a redactor or Jesus, is interpreting Leviticus. It is that interpretation and its impact that is the primary focus of this investigation. An additional possibility could be that it is simply be a scribal error. However given the context of the larger passage, and the antithesis structure it would seem that whoever put the words of Matthew 5:43-48 intended it to be here.

⁹⁸ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 302-303.

⁹⁹ Fisher, 91.

love command.¹⁰⁰ The exclusive use of the term 'neighbour' sets up a loving community, but by implication still allows for outsiders undeserving of love to be left out. True, there is accommodations made for aliens who reside within the Israelite community, but as discussed earlier, this term was used very narrowly within Leviticus and was not applied in the broader context of alien nations as a whole. Enemies, while not explicitly excluded from being loved, are also not explicitly included. It also does not appear that enemies were intended in any kind of implicit way. The SM might in fact be addressing this gap and pushing the love command further to extend beyond Israel to include all people, of all nations, including enemies. Since it has already been demonstrated that enemies were not intended to be included in the love command, and in light of verse 44, serious consideration needs to be given to this possibility. In this scenario Jesus is by definition radicalizing, by both in some sense changing the original command as well as broadening it. That is to say, he is moving beyond simple mild affection towards one's neighbour (change) and extending the boundaries of who is to be loved (broadening).

Second, a related possibility is to see the addition of 'hate your enemy' not so much a critique of Leviticus itself, but a comment on the interpretative tradition of Leviticus 19:17-18.¹⁰¹ In this case, scholars argue that Jesus is totally affirming the original command and only changing or challenging what had become popular interpretations of it.¹⁰² However, for this to work there would have to be evidence that the original intention of Leviticus was to include enemies in the command to love

¹⁰⁰ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 304.

¹⁰¹ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 296.

¹⁰² Nolland, 264.

neighbours, and that it was only later modified to become exclusive; something that seems unlikely based on what has already been addressed at greater length above. Some scholars have noted that the command to care for the animals of their enemies in Exodus 23:3-5 is evidence that Leviticus 19:17-18 implicitly included enemies,¹⁰³ but on the whole there does not seem to be enough evidence from within the history of interpretation, nor the original text of Leviticus to make such an argument. Leviticus 19:17-18 was a powerful, radical and sweeping command to love all neighbours as yourself. In many ways it moved the trajectory of Israel's social conscience forward, but it was almost certainly not originally intended to be as broad and sweeping as the SM was in its inclusion of the enemy.

Third, others have proposed that what the SM was responding to was not necessarily just Leviticus and its interpretive tradition, but the OT as a whole, which at least on some level seems to glorify and celebrate the destruction and slaughter of enemies.¹⁰⁴ While there are undoubtedly instances of God's love and patience throughout the OT,¹⁰⁵ there is nonetheless a frightening number of passages that refer to God's encouragement of the Israelites to take violent action against their enemies.¹⁰⁶ There is also most certainly a division between who is a friend or neighbour and who is

¹⁰³ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 302.

¹⁰⁴ There is a chillingly high instance of passages in the OT that deal with attacking or destroying enemies making it impossible to deal with each of them in term. However there are a number of helpful books that discuss at great length the occurrence of enemy-hate and violence in the OT. Including: Stanley N. Gundry, ed., *Show the No Mercy: Four Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); David Lamb, *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?* (Westmont, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2011); and Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 306.

¹⁰⁵ Nolland, 268.

¹⁰⁶ DA Carson and GK Beale, 27.

an enemy.¹⁰⁷ Some scholars have therefore proposed that Jesus is not only radicalizing Leviticus, he is putting forward a corrective teaching for the OT as a whole. That said, not all scholars will take this position and some will instead argue that it is still the misinterpretation itself being challenged.¹⁰⁸ However, this argument fails to take into account the apparent contrast between God commanding the slaughter of enemies in the OT, and the command selflessly to love them in Matthew 5:43.¹⁰⁹ It also would, if taken seriously, mean that it is the only antithesis to command something that would actually require not keeping the original command since some of the hatred passages were part of OT law. However, this seems incongruent with the introductory comments made in Matthew 5:17-21.

The fourth possibility is that Jesus was referring to Essene teaching. There are no references to the community of the Essenes in the canon of Christian Scriptures, and until the discovery of the Qumran scrolls very little was known about them.¹¹⁰ That said, scholars examining the relationship between the enemy-love teaching of Jesus and the historical interpretation of Leviticus have discussed them at length.¹¹¹ One of the main reasons they are so regularly referenced in the literature is their relationship to Leviticus

¹⁰⁷ Resier, 418. Resier does a great deal of excellent work in examining the various traditions parallel in some way to enemy-love. He not only examines the tradition of Leviticus 19 specifically, but also takes time to see the differences and similarities in the treatment of enemies in other neighbouring cultures.

¹⁰⁸ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 303.

¹⁰⁹ While there is an important distinction between passages in the OT which describe God's anger and vengeance (Isa, Jer, and Ezek) and those which command violent action to be committed by the Israelites (Joshua). There is nonetheless a sufficient number of passages that encourage violence towards enemies which would seem to stand in contrast to the teaching of Matthew 5:43-48.

¹¹⁰ Donald E. Gowan, *Bridge Between the Testaments* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1976), 212. There is a lively debate concerning the relationship between the Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls that could have further implications on this particular possibility. However, since this possibility is ultimately rejected for a number of other reasons as listed above, those implications do not affect the eventual conclusion of this chapter.

¹¹¹ W.D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 245. See also: Wood, 133.

19:18 and the Manual of Discipline that seemingly commands hatred towards all outsiders.¹¹² While often referenced in modern scholarship, it is unlikely that this group is the primary subject of concern for the SM. While the SM surely stands in contrast to any printed rule that requires hatred of enemies, the evidence for direct correlations and the likelihood that this very private sect is where the people “heard it said,” is unlikely.¹¹³ At best, the SM had passing familiarity with the Essenes as one of many groups who one of the many groups who had interpreted the OT teaching, including the neighbour-love present in Leviticus 19:18, for their own contexts.¹¹⁴

The fifth possibility concerns the broader Hellenistic culture of the region. The importance of noting the socio-political influence of the Hellenistic world on both the SM and its original audience have already been discussed above. Some scholars have suggested that Jesus might in fact be making a direct comment about Hellenistic teaching in his “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’”¹¹⁵ One fairly commonly referenced example is that of, Xenophon who said “A man’s virtue consists in outdoing his friends in kindness and his enemies in mischief.”¹¹⁶ While the teaching of the SM contrasts at some level Xenophon’s maxim, it should be noted that even within Greek history such a teaching was argued against as early as Plato.¹¹⁷ The Stoics who had more contemporary influence during the first century emphasized the notion of being a ‘world citizen’ and thus giving up group

¹¹² Fisher, 91.

¹¹³ Klassen, *Love of Enemies: The Way of Peace*, 62.

¹¹⁴ Jerome William Rausch, *Principle of Nonresistance and Love of Enemy in Matt 5:38-48* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly 28 no 1 Ja 1966), 36.

¹¹⁵ Nolland, 265.

¹¹⁶ Xen. Mem. 2.6.35.

¹¹⁷ Plato, Republic I, 332. See also: Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 305.

prejudices.¹¹⁸ There are many examples of Greek philosophers writing against the mistreatment of enemies, the need for mercy and the cessation of senseless violence.¹¹⁹ To presume then, that in the midst of a list of corrective teachings on the OT that the SM's primary reference point for enemy-love was a Hellenistic maxim that was already refuted by other elements of Hellenistic Philosophy, is not the best interpretation. While Jesus may have been familiar with the teaching concerning hatred in Hellenistic society, and could likely have intended his comments to be seen as possible arguments against them, this is not the primary object of his concern. Jesus is focused throughout the SM on His vision of the Kingdom of God, and enemy-love is part of that. He, and perhaps even more so the compiler of the SM in Matthew, is also focused solely on the teachings of the OT as they relate to the immediate Jewish and Gentile-Christian audience. Shifting suddenly to a direct commentary on Hellenism would seem out of place in the SM, and particularly in the list in which it finds itself.

Based on the evidence presented, it would seem that while Jesus may well have been aware of Hellenistic philosophy and the teaching of the Essenes, these groups do not seem to be the primary subject of the SM's focus. That said, of the five possibilities discussed here¹²⁰ it seems most probable that Jesus is commenting on a combination of the limitations and interpretations of Leviticus 19:17-18; and also commenting on the view that Leviticus 19:17-18 is compatible with the hatred towards enemies that is

¹¹⁸ Derek Heater, *World Citizenship: Cosmopolitan Thinking and Its Opponents* (London: Continuum, 2004), 31.

¹¹⁹ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 308.

¹²⁰ One could make the case that by understanding hate as a rhetorical device, as in Luke 14:25-27, that hate here could also mean a lack of preference or priority for. Certainly at some level there could be truth to this in that Jesus corrections could be addressing the lack of preferential treatment being given to enemies. Ultimately though the consequences of this possibility would be the same as it relates to an amplification of the original intention - do not hate, or ignore your enemies, but love them.

common in nearly every society.¹²¹ In this way Jesus is acting as a new Moses and the Sermon on the Mount to some degree acts as a new, or updated, Torah.

Following the antithesis structure of the text of the SM, Matthew 5:43-44 shifts from what has been heard, to what ought to be done.

Love Your Enemies

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44)

This phrase comes as the opposite of the second half of preceding idea in verse 43 which spoke of loving neighbours but hating your enemies. Instead of hating your enemies, the SM calls followers of Jesus to love them and pray for them. Two central ideas that need to be given specific attention in this verse are that of ‘love’ *agapaō*, and ‘enemies’ *echthros*.

It is helpful to note in terms of defining *echthros* that the command to love your enemy is paired with the notion of *diokein*, or ‘persecute’ as it is often translated in English. ‘Enemies,’ as it is used here in connection with Matthew 5:44, includes those who actively persecute you. *Diokein* is used throughout the NT in various ways, the most frequent is as a way to depict some form of mistreatment or attempted harm towards others. Persecution here is not restricted to harm against a minority group as it is often interpreted in English, but can refer to the mistreatment of individuals (Matt. 10:23), of people groups (Matt. 5:12) and even of God himself (Acts 9:4). Again, the notion of enemies and those who persecute you intimately connected by both position and context in this passage. One idea flows immediately into the other. An enemy is,

¹²¹ Rausch, 36.

at least at some level, someone who aims to bring harm to you or persecute you in some way. Enemies are also those who do not reciprocate love: “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” (Matt. 5:46) Additionally, the word typically translated as ‘resist,’ *anthistemi* (Strong’s 436), a few verses earlier in Matthew 5:39, may have political and military connotations.¹²² “But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer.” Or said differently, “do not rebel against an evildoer.”¹²³ Considering the context of continued political revolts against Roman political influence in Judea throughout this period as discussed above, this idea of not resisting evil may likely have been heard with predominantly political and military connotations by the first audiences of the SM. Based on the association with *anthistemi* (Strong’s 436) and *dioko* (Strong’s 1377); the restatement that enemies also includes those who do not love back in Matthew 5:46; and the overall context of the teaching, it is reasonable to say that *echthros* (Strong’s 2190) in this context refers to political and military enemies in addition to the local ‘ordinary’ enemies that are already assumed by the term ‘neighbour.’

Having established who is the object of the enemy-love teaching, the focus can now shift to examining what implications the use of the term love, *agapaō* bring to this teaching. In the immediate context of the SM that love explicitly includes praying for others. (Matt. 5:44) The SM later goes on to speak of prayer not as an empty and meaningless ritual: “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.” (Matt. 6:7) But instead emphasis is given to prayer as a means of not only asking for

¹²² Dear, 34.

¹²³ Wood, 132.

forgiveness, but also restating our willingness to forgive others. “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,” (Matt. 6:12) and later: “for if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matt. 6:14-15) Seeing Matthew 5:44 concerning the importance of prayer for persecutors, alongside Matthew 6:8-14 helps to establish that loving your enemies likely includes forgiving them for their trespasses and sins against you as well as perhaps praying for their wellbeing. This applies to both enemies as individuals and as a larger group.

The preceding verses in the antithesis structure can also help define in more direct terms what loving an enemy looks like. See Matthew 5:39-42 for example:

“But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.” (Matthew 5:39-42)

Matthew does not describe enemy-love using vague philosophical language, but rather uses practical examples of how you can return love and kindness even when persecuted or scorned by someone else. Love is the response proposed by the SM for the appropriate reaction to violence when it appears. To love an enemy is to both tolerate them and give sacrificially to them. Sacrificially giving to others, means at some level that rather than seeing material things as yours or mine, the audience of the SM is called to a live for a world where “what’s mine is yours.” Rather than clinging to worldly possessions that separate and divide, the SM here calls people to put people above property. If, as it has been argued above, enemy-love is the climax of the antithesis passages in Matthew 5:17-48, then love is further defined and given clarity by the SM in

Matthew 5:23-24, which requires that you seek reconciliation when wrong has been committed, and to resist becoming angry with them:

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.
(Matthew 5:23-24)

Enemy-love includes prayer, forgiveness and the supplying of material need's for the enemy and simultaneously prohibits the seeking of revenge or the holding of a grudge against one another. This love is extended not simply to fellow kin and countrymen but to all people, including military and political enemies.

How was the Enemy-Love Interpreted and Lived out in the life of Jesus?

The SM states that Jesus is not cancelling out or abolishing the Law, but rather fulfilling it (Matt. 5:7). It stands to reason that the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels functions as an important step in understanding the relationship between the law (Lev. 19:18) and the 'new' teaching of Matthew 5:44. If there were any new implications to the enemy-love teaching of the SM over and above the neighbor-love command presumably there would be some evidence for it in the recorded life of Jesus in Matthew and the other Gospels.

In the teaching of the SM, and in the life and death of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, there is a continued implicit assertion of the enemy-love ethic. According to the Gospels, Jesus endured shame, torture and persecution at the hands of enemies. (Matt. 22) Despite claiming to be able to call down a legion of angels (Matt. 26:53) to fight on his behalf, in Matthew 26:52 Jesus is recorded as saying: "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword." Jesus is characterized in

Matthew as maintaining the enemy-love ethic even to the point of a shameful death. In commenting on the work of Jesus of Nazareth, Paul also states that Jesus died and sacrificed himself for the world even while they were still sinners, and thus effectively enemies of God. (Rom. 5:8) Jesus, it seems, understood the teaching of enemy-love to be immediate and practical: love enemies, even to the point of the cross. As people choose to follow Jesus they too are choosing to love their enemies amidst persecution and in view of the possible future of a cross. If death at the hands of an enemy, however, is the fate of a Christian, the model of Jesus would seem to demand words of forgiveness be spoken, not those of vengeance. This way may seem contrary to the functioning of societies, both modern and ancient, but to some degree is this not the point? The way of the Kingdom is not meant to be the way of the world. This model of selfless enemy-love seems to be, not only at the root of the enemy-love ethic, but at the root of the teachings of the SM.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ W. Michael Slattery, *Jesus the Warrior: Historical Christian Perspectives & Problems on the Morality of War and the Waging of Peace* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2007), 54.

CHAPTER 3: A 'New Command'

Thus far, the texts of Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 5:43-44 have been examined separately. It is now possible to approach directly the question of their relationship to each other, and specifically whether the latter is a radicalization of the former. In order to do so this chapter will be divided into four sections. The first two will be dedicated to examining the similarities and differences, followed by a discussion of radicalization within this context. Finally, a more general commentary on kingdom teachings and the implications of the enemy-love ethic will be made.

Comparison

Similarities:

The most obvious and straightforward similarity between Matthew 5:43-48 and Leviticus 19:17-18 is that they both command love of others. Neither command is an easy task, and both require an element of sacrifice for someone who is quite possibly not your immediate family. Both passages in different ways seem to push their audiences to extend their vision of love beyond what was likely expected in their original contexts. Whether that be familial love being extended to all neighbours or that same love again being once again extended, this time to all humanity (including enemies). There seems to be in both passages a progression from what is, to what could be as far as inclusion.

Both passages also feature prominently references to who God is as part of their command to love others. "I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:18) and "Be perfect, therefore, as *your heavenly Father is perfect*" (Matt. 5:48). Loving others is not made in isolation but

as part of the audience's understanding and relationship with God. Both passages ought to be read within this lens. These are not stand alone verses, but parts of larger teachings on ethics, laws and living in Holy community.

Although somewhat more indirect of a reference, Matthew tells us elsewhere that Jesus supported and agreed with the teaching of Leviticus 19:18 when he was asked by a group of pharisees about the most important commandment in the OT and responded by saying:

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:36-40)

In noting the similarities between Matthew 5:43-48 and Leviticus 19:17-18, it is important to note that Matthew 5:43-48 among other things affirms the command to love your neighbour as called for in Leviticus 19:18. Evidence for that comes not only from later in the book of Matthew as noted above, but from the introduction of the antithesis teaching:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17,18)

The greatest similarity between the passages of Matthew 5:43-48 and Leviticus 19:17-18 then is that the latter assumes all of the former and agrees with it. To love your enemy is also to ‘love your neighbour as yourself.’ Jesus, as it has been shown here,

supports the initial command to love your neighbours and lists it as the second most important command.

Both teachings, while captured in short memorable phrases, are also the literary climax or theme of a larger portion of scripture. In the case of the command to 'love your neighbour' from Leviticus that larger supportive passage is Leviticus 19:11-18 and for 'love your enemy' Matthew 5:21-48. In addition to being central to their immediate passages, both phrases exist as part of a broader teaching on Godly living. In the case of Leviticus 'Godly lifestyle' is articulated as holiness and in the case of Matthew, it is expressed as righteousness, or even more broadly 'kingdom living.' Functionally these themes act as relative similarities since in each case the teaching defines and emphasizes earthly relationships in light of divine relationships. This is most obvious in Leviticus with the repeated and varying phrasing of: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy." (Lev. 19:2) While less explicit, the same arguments could be made for the teachings on the SM as they follow immediately the healing of many, (Matt. 4:23-25) and the more general theme of Jesus as loving saviour and King present throughout Matthew.¹²⁵ Loving enemies and loving neighbours are in both cases commands given to those seeking to follow Yahweh and do his will.

One final and important similarity that should be noted is that in both cases there seems to be a similar use of the word love. Based on the contexts provided in both cases the love being called for is one of practical, compassionate and action oriented love.

¹²⁵ Matthew 12:15-21; 16:15-17 et al.

There is much that is similar between Leviticus 19:17-18 and Matthew 5:43-48. Those similarities that have been noted above include: their literary placement as the climax to a larger section; the theological context; and finally the most basic, yet significant, similarity being that both passages call for a love that is extended progressively towards a wider community than might have been expected in their respective time periods. Both passages challenge their readers to love an increasingly broad group of people.

Differences

The single greatest difference between Leviticus 19:17-18 and Matthew 5:43-48 is the notion of to whom love is extended and the contrast with the old Torah. For Leviticus, neighbour-love seems exclusively intended for those of similar ethnic background, that is fellow Israelites and aliens residing within the laws and customs of the people of Israel. The passage in Matthew 5:43-48 however not only assumes the love of fellow citizens and neighbours, but as it has been demonstrated above extends this teaching to include your enemies who by nature do not reciprocate your love and sacrifice. On account of the dramatic shift in the recipient of love, it can be said that Matthew 5:43-48 is in effect a radicalization of the previous teachings of Leviticus 19:17-18.

Radicalization

First and foremost it needs to be restated that the term 'radicalized' does not take away or diminish the OT in any way. In fact, it is quite the opposite. By extending the definition of who is included in the command to love from Leviticus 19:18 the SM is

extending, further intensifying and building upon the original command.¹²⁶ The SM does not simply restate Leviticus, as the original Leviticus passage did not intend to be used to describe enemies.¹²⁷ Also, it does not create an entirely new love ethic in a vacuum apart from the history of Jewish thought. Quite the contrary, by extending the passage of Leviticus 19:18 and radicalizing the command to be even broader, the SM is providing specifically a new enemy-love ethic that builds upon the existing love ethic of Leviticus. This radicalized version of the love command is as part of the SM an important part of the new Kingdom of Heaven movement. A move that scholars have noted breaks away from the original context of the OT and the standard Rabbinic interpretation of Leviticus 19:18 of that time,¹²⁸ and one that amplifies the kindness towards enemy tradition that is present throughout the canon of the OT.¹²⁹

What is important to note here is that Leviticus 19:18, while in many ways progressive, fell short of loving enemies.¹³⁰ Jesus, through the SM however does not replace it entirely, but builds upon it to correct where it fell short and radically redefine who is included in the love ethic. (Matt. 5:46-48) This ethic, while founded in the ancient teachings of Torah, no doubt bears influence from the prophetic literature of the OT, and from other non-OT socio-political movements. But none of that takes away from the fact that the key function was to radicalize the teaching of Leviticus 19:18 to embrace a

¹²⁶ Horsley, *Ethics and Exegesis: 'Love Your Enemies' and the Doctrine of Non-Violence*, 21.

¹²⁷ DA Carson and GK Beale 28-29.

¹²⁸ DA Carson and GK Beale, 29. Scholars have further remarked on the fact that although there are partial parallels to much of the teachings of Jesus in the Rabbinic Haggadah, there are no such parallels to the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) which expounds on the idea of enemy-love. Enemy-love seems at least at this moment in the scholarship to be a radicalizing or an innovation on Leviticus 19:18 that is not found outside the teaching of the SM in any of the comparable Jewish writing.

¹²⁹ Fisher, 92; Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 307; Brice L. Martin, *Matthew on Christ and the Law* (Theological Studies 44 no 1 Mr 1983), 56.

¹³⁰ Nolland, 230.

broader range of people including all people, not the least of which are your enemies. As has been argued above, the centuries preceding the SM helped to further demonstrate how to love others. What the SM does is dramatically change the 'who' to love.

This is not the only place where OT laws and teachings are seemingly changed or radicalized.¹³¹ This is not the only place where OT laws and teachings are seemingly changed or radicalized. One other example of Jesus radicalizing the OT is his teaching concerning divorce. Matthew 5:21-32, just a few verse earlier in the SM says this: "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery." Speaking on the same topic later in Matthew, Jesus says to his audience, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." Jesus is in these passages changing the way divorce was thought about and again perhaps taking on texts that were seen as deficient. Rather than being something that was a matter of legal course as in the teachings of Moses, he is now arguing that to do so is to commit adultery. This kind of progression radicalization where the latter builds upon or replaces the former is the kind of shift that seems present in the enemy-love teaching. Perhaps like divorce law, loving your neighbours was all that was commanded by Moses because "their hearts were hard," Jesus however radicalizes the expectations and says love your

¹³¹ Ferguson, 3.

neighbour and your enemy. In light of examples of this kind of radicalization outside the enemy-love teaching, there should be no fear of Marcionist heresies in saying that Jesus' interpretations in the SM provides new teaching that supersedes the teaching of the OT. In fact, it is quite the opposite. The SM teaching on divorce does not cancel the previous law, it does however raise the behavioural expectations and thus both adds to and amplifies what was originally intended. The same is true for enemy-love, loving enemies does not take anything away from the OT command to love neighbours, however it most certainly adds to it. It is this kind of addition and amplification that seems so commonplace within the teaching of the SM.¹³² It is for this reason that scholars have further noted that what is being described in the SM, and in particular Matthew 5:43-44, is a distinctly Christian commentary on the Torah,¹³³ and as a result a distinctly Christian love-ethic. Those who follow the teachings, and only those people, are commanded to love their enemies. Christians, like Jesus was portrayed in the Gospels, are not to totally disengage from the political structures of the world, but to engage them with the foolish, unselfish, sacrificial love that is commanded of them, until death if required.

Kingdom Teachings

The enemy-love teaching of the SM stands primarily as a radicalization of the OT, and in particular, Leviticus 19:18. As such, it becomes a defining characteristic of the Kingdom of Heaven teachings of the SM, and not only that, stands as the means by which the Kingdom is established.¹³⁴ In addition to radicalizing Leviticus, it is worth

¹³² Wood, 133.

¹³³ MacGregor, 32.

¹³⁴ Riches, 116.

noting that enemy-love as a means to Kingdom building seems to also run counter to the OT notion that it is humanity's role to enact justice on behalf of God in order to extend His will on earth.¹³⁵ Unlike the teaching of the OT that was defined by a different love-ethic, Christians are no longer responsible for enacting God's life and death judgement on the world. Christians are called to be the ambassadors of God's kingdom, to love the unloved, to love the enemy, deeply and sacrificially. Jesus says that only loving those who love back is a limited ethic of the tax collectors, not the way of his followers. (Matt. 5:46) To follow Jesus is to love unconditionally, knowing that ultimately God chooses who to bless and who to judge. (Matt. 5:45) The consequences of loving enemies are not what are at stake. Followers of Jesus' teaching are essentially given the same reason for the command to love: because God is perfect. (Matt. 5:48) As John puts it in 1 John 4:19, "We love because he first loved us." Christians, like Christ before them, do not wait for enemies to be worthy of love, they love them while they are still enemies.

¹³⁵ Riches, 115.

CONCLUSION:

While Leviticus 19:18 is itself a radical teaching against hating your neighbour, it does not in its original intent seem to command against hating one's enemies. Thus, when the SM references Leviticus 19:18 and amplifies it to include the love of enemies it is a form of radicalization. This radicalized version of Leviticus 19:18 now stands as one of the pillars of Christian ethics and ought to define how Christians interact not simply with their peers, but with their persecutors and enemies. This means that, any time OT passages concerning war are examined, at some level they need to be viewed through the new radicalized love command that not only prohibits the hatred of enemies, but commands they be loved.

The research for this paper began by seeking answers to the questions of war and violence in Christian Scriptures. While it would be impossible to answer all of these questions in such a paper of such limited scope, the reality of the SM and its radicalization of Leviticus seems to provide at least a partial answer. If the SM has radicalized perhaps one of the most loving passages of the OT to include an even broader group, then what can be assumed of the teachings of the OT that seem to allow for holy or sanctified violence. While this no doubt requires further study, it seems in light of the SM's radicalization that enemy-love at least at some level limits how holy war in the OT can be interpreted. If enemy-love is to be taken seriously it also must challenge the way Christians participate in politics generally, and warfare specifically. Even to those who subscribe to a Just War Ethic the question of how love is being demonstrated to the opposing side must be asked.

More could surely be said about enemy-love and modern international conflicts. This paper, however, has not set out to prove unequivocally that pacifism is the necessary outcome of the SM, though it has certainly implied it at times. What this paper has hopefully accomplished is to sufficiently demonstrate that an OT teaching regarding the love of others has been amplified and radicalized in the SM to create a Christian love-ethic that expressly calls followers of Jesus to do more than love neighbours, but also to love enemies. Those enemies while no doubt including local adversaries, also more directly refer to international and political enemies.

Much has been said, and needs to continue to be said, about how precisely enemy-love is lived out by Christians in the world that is plagued by injustice. Participation in humanitarian relief, medical and education provision to enemy forces or a greater emphasis from pulpits regarding the need for Christians to take seriously the call to enemy-love could all be specific ways Christians engage the world with the enemy-love ethic. Whatever the immediate action required in any given circumstance the contexts of both Leviticus and Matthew imply a certain level of action as a consequence of love. In the SM that means positive loving action towards enemies. Ultimately there are many ways to interpret the call to enemy-love in the SM and how that is to be acted out in any given situation.

Regardless of the conclusion of such a discussion, or of further academic study to the same ends, what cannot be made within Christian ethics is a reversal back to the original intention of Leviticus that only those who are fellow citizens or living as aliens under the law of our land are to be loved. The enemy-ethic of the SM calls for an unlimited and radical love that is extended towards enemies of all manner, including

terrorists, soldiers, dictators and anyone else who could possibly be considered an enemy.

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