

TOWARDS SELF-GIVING LOVE

A Biblical Model of Seven-Stage Development of Inter-Personal Dynamics

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1. INTRODUCTION

Man¹ was thought of primarily as an *individual*² existing as a separate and distinct entity with rights of his own, “an island in a sea of islands.” However, there is a growing awareness that man is not only an individual with his inalienability and essential separateness, but he is also a *person*³

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¹Throughout the article the term “man” is used in the sense of human being without intending any gender discrimination.

²From the Latin word, *individuus*, meaning ‘indivisible’. “An individual is a being distinct from every other being and undivided in itself,” L. M. Corvez, “Individuality,” in Thomas Carson and Joann Cerrito, eds., *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second edition, vol. 7, Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2003, 422.

³The term “person” is derived from the Latin word *persona* which originally means “a mask used by an actor,” or “the character played by an actor.” In its philosophical sense, a person is “an undivided whole existing independently and not interchangeable with any other,” Max Müller and Alois Halder, “Person,” in Karl Rahner, Juan Alfaro *et alii*, eds. *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, vol. 4, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, reprint, 1989, 404. In the light of the Existentialist philosophy, man is “a being-in-the-world” and he is to be seen in the “totality of his being” and “the relationship to the other and society arises from the very essential nature of man. Man knows himself from the start as open to the world and in communication with his fellow-men,” Joseph Möller, “Man” under “Person,” in *Sacramentum Mundi*, 411. A person is one who stands in relation to the other. In this sense, a person is actually realized only in relationships: to himself, to the world around him, and to God. Kurian Kachappilly, *God of Love. A Neoclassical Inquiry*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002, 68-69. In this sense, “no man is an island.”

capable of participating in the consciousness of the other and thus entering into relations with the other. It is our 'body dimension' that pins us down to our own individuality, whereas it is our 'spirit-dimension' that makes us interpersonal.⁴ It is by the power of the spirit that we are able to transcend the limitations of our individuality. Each one has to accept his own identity, but at the same time each should be able to transcend his limitations by his openness to the other. Man is a social being. His existence is essentially an existence with, and for, the other. He cannot live without relating himself with the other. According to Johann Adam Möhler, one of the great German Catholic theologians of the 19th century, "the most vital core of a man does not consist in the solitary affirmation of his individual autonomy, but in availability, welcome, receptivity."⁵ What distinguishes man from other created beings is his ability to know himself and enter into relationship with other persons. "Man's humanity essentially consists in this ability to open out to people and welcome them into his life... What makes a man a person is his entering into relationships with other persons."⁶ The Trinity is a model for human relationships. Trinity is a community of Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, eternally existing in a dialogue of love, and communicating to humanity. The Christian God is not a monistic God. Christian monotheism implies a communion, a community in Godhead. That is to say, the inner life of triune God is a *communion, relation, and movement*. The whole creation is fundamentally a 'communication' – the outpouring of the Trinitarian *communion*.⁷ God is a mystery of personal

⁴The distinction between 'individual' and 'person' does not mean "there are two kinds of man, but two poles of humanity. No man is pure person and no man pure individuality," Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, ET, Second Edition, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958, 65. Each human being lives in the tension between the poles of individuality and personhood, Kachappilly, *God of Love*, 70, note 39.

⁵Quoted from John Dalrymple, *The Christian Affirmation*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971, 25.

⁶Dalrymple, *The Christian Affirmation*, 26. The text continues: "Psychologists of all schools are agreed that the realization of a man's personality comes about by relating well and healthily to other men and not by remaining solitary."

⁷Antony Kalliath, "Communication Theology: Inter-Cultural or Inculturational?" in Joseph Palakeel, ed. *Towards A Communication Theology*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2003, 96

communication; open, not shut; inviting, not repelling, including, not excluding; giving, not taking; in a word, loving without any limit.⁸

Man as a person is called to a twofold relationship: vertical and horizontal, namely, relationship with God and with his fellow beings. First of all, he wants to establish authentic relationship with God. But he cannot establish authentic relationship with God unless he strives to grow in healthy relationship with his fellow beings. Jesus has illustrated this important truth very well in his Sermon on the Mount. In Matt 5:23-24 we read, “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.”⁹ God is more interested in the way people live with others, in the way they treat each other, than in the sacrifices they might offer him; worship can never take the place of love.¹⁰ Worship can be an expression of our good relationship with God, only if it is also an expression of our good relationship with our neighbour. Our success or failure in life depends, to a large extent, on how we relate with the other.

If one goes through the Bible, from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation, one could trace a seven-stage evolution in biblical thinking on the question of interpersonal relationship which begins with the most primitive form of unlimited revenge and develops in a positive direction climaxing in the supreme expression of self-sacrificing love. The first three stages are found in the Old Testament Books and the last four stages are found in the New Testament Books. The seven stages that are seen in the Bible will be of great help to anyone who wants to develop a sound value system in his life. One has to avoid the negative examples that are portrayed in the Bible, while the positive ones will have to be acquired and made one’s own.

2. STAGE ONE: UNLIMITED REVENGE

The first stage of interpersonal relationship that we find in the Bible is the

⁸Dalrymple, *The Christian Affirmation*, 39.

⁹Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

¹⁰John Kurichianil, *Before Thee Face to Face: A Study on Prayer in the Bible*, Middlegreen (UK): St. Paul’s, 1993, 120.

violent and uncivilized form of Unlimited Revenge recorded in Gen 4:23-24 where we have a “boasting song” of Lamech. “Lamech said to his wives: ‘Adah and Zilla, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold.’” The song captures the violent spirit of Lamech. Lamech proclaims his complete independence from God by taking vengeance with his own hands. Lamech was not satisfied with the protection promised to Cain, his ancestor father (Gen 4:15). Lamech thought that if God promised “sevenfold” vengeance on anyone who kills Cain, he would give “seventy-sevenfold” on anyone attacking him. Thus, Lamech wanted to assert himself taking the law in his own hands. This “boasting song” is to be understood in the context of Gen 4:17-22 where we find a cultural evolution, namely, settlement of cities (v. 17), agriculture (v. 20), the arts of music (v. 21), and metallurgy (v. 22). This shows that the development of civilization is inherent in the growth of human race created by God. However, this flourishing of civilization also conceals the danger of an exaggerated sense of power (vv. 23-24).¹¹ In other words, the increased progress activated by human potential increases the possibility of mutual destruction and with the growth of one’s capacities, there is a growth of self-assertion which demands retribution without limit even for the smallest injury.¹²

Lamech’s attitude towards his enemy was that of unlimited revenge which finds its complete reversal in Jesus’ response to Peter’s question about forgiveness in Matt 18:21-22. The question of Peter and his own answer, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often should I forgive him? As many as seven times?” (18:21, RSV), already goes beyond the limits permitted by the Rabbis. In Tosephta, Joma 5.13, we read: “If a man sins once, twice, or three times, they forgive him; if he sins a fourth time, they do not forgive him.”¹³ When Peter suggested “seven times” as the limit, he would have thought that he had given a very generous offer, which could merit the approval and applause of his Master. The unexpected answer of Jesus was, however, a great surprise to Peter, an answer that removes all

¹¹Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, ET, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987, 36.

¹²Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, ET, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984, 337.

¹³Cited in Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew: A commentary*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981, 381.

limits, “Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times” (Matt 18:22).¹⁴ The reply of Jesus could mean: Just as in those old days there was no limit to hatred and vengeance, so among his followers there is to be no limit to mercy and forgiveness.¹⁵ Rejecting the unlimited revenge of Lamech, Jesus calls for unlimited forgiveness. This means that there is no question of keeping count: the spirit of forgiveness should be unlimited.

3. STAGE TWO: LIMITED REVENGE

The second stage is that of the limited revenge known as *lex talionis* (= the Law of Retaliation)¹⁶ which is given as a part of Mosaic Law in Lev 24:19-20 (see also Ex 21:23-25; Deut 19:21). “*Eye for eye, tooth for tooth*” was a standard ancient Near Eastern law which is also found in the famous Code of Hammurabi.¹⁷ According to this law, the punishment should be

¹⁴The corresponding Greek term for “seventy-seven” is also translated by some as “seventy times seven (= 490, so RSV, GNB, and NEB). What is being emphasized by Jesus is that one should forgive without counting (whether it is 77 or 490). The quality of Christian forgiveness requires that it should not be conceived in quantitative terms; see W. D. Davis and Dale C. Allison eds., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, vol. 2, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991, 793. In God’s kingdom unlimited forgiveness is to take the place of retaliation.

¹⁵T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957, 212.

¹⁶Some call this principle as *Ius Talionis* and translate it as the “Law of Equal Retribution.” This principle belongs to the most ancient stock of legal rules in Western culture. The original purpose of the *talio* principle was to limit revenge. Justice was no longer obtained by revenge but by proportionate punishment given to the offender. See Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, ET, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, 275-76. The acceptance of this rule or principle represented one of the most important steps in the development of human civilization. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 512.

¹⁷Hammurabi was the king of ancient Babylon who ruled it from 1795 to 1750 BCE. He was the earliest known lawgiver who became famous for his Code of Laws, arranged in orderly and thematic collections so that all people might read and know what was required of them. The code was carved upon a black stone monument, eight feet high, and clearly intended to be read by the public. The Code gives 282 laws which are followed by an Epilogue and the Code could have been promulgated about the year 1780 BCE. The Code regulates in clear and definite terms the organization of society. For example, if a man builds a house badly, and it collapses and kills the owner, the builder is to be slain. If the owner’s son was killed, then the builder’s son is to be slain (see numbers 229-230). According to number 196, “If a man put out the

proportionate to the offence. It is idiomatic for the principle of proportional justice. This “eye for eye” form of law provides the foundation for the whole civil law.¹⁸ It was never meant to sanction acts of personal vengeance, instead only to assist the judges in settling civil cases.¹⁹ Though the Law of Retaliation seems primitive and severe, it was actually a breakthrough for justice and fairness in ancient times when most nations used arbitrary methods to punish criminals. It seems that this law has not been enforced literally in the social life of Israel (see Ex 21:18-19,26-27). The only physical penalty mentioned in the law is flogging, and that too was limited to forty lashes (Deut 25:3). But Jesus, by invoking the law of love, corrected the popular misunderstanding of the law of retaliation (Matt 5:38-42).²⁰ In Matt 5:39-42 Jesus seems to be speaking in hyperbolic terms to teach the lesson of non-retaliation. When we are wronged, often our first reaction is to retaliate in the same measure or more. But Jesus says that we should do good to those who wrong us. As followers of Jesus we must not let our conduct be determined by the conduct of those who treat us badly.²¹

eye of another man, his eye shall be put out” [i.e., “An eye for an eye”] and according to number 200, “If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out” [i.e., “A tooth for a tooth”]. We can see here how the Hebrews might have learned their law of retaliation.

¹⁸Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount*, ET, London: The Athlone Press, 1961, 27.

¹⁹A society could recognize the justice of “eye for eye” while its sages warned against fighting evil with evil. For example, Plato portrays Socrates as warning against returning evil for evil since one should never do evil at all (*Crito* 49B), see Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999, 196.

²⁰Jesus does not overthrow the principle of equivalent compensation on an institutional level, but declares it illegitimate for his followers to apply it to their private disputes, see W. D. Davis and Dale C. Allison, eds. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, vol. 1, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 542.

²¹Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 158. Far from hitting back, Jesus tells us accept – or even invite – a second blow. This is an exaggerated way of insisting that we must not return evil for evil, see Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 158. There will be occasions when protest is in order, as when Jesus himself drew attention to an illegal action at his trial (John 18:22-23). But such occasions are never for the purpose of taking revenge, see Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992, 127.

Our desire should not be to keep score, but to love and forgive. This is not natural; it is certainly supernatural. Only God can give us the strength to love as he does. To many Jews of Jesus' day, these statements were offensive. Under Roman oppression, they wanted retaliation against their enemies, whom they hated. But Jesus suggested a new, radical response to injustice: instead of demanding rights give them up freely! According to Jesus, it is more important to *give* justice and mercy than to receive it.

4. STAGE THREE: THE SILVER RULE

The third stage is that of the Silver Rule which we find in Tobit 4:15a: “*What you hate, do not do to any one.*”²² This rule is called “*silver,*” because it is formulated in the negative and because it is less precious than the positive statement in the Gospel of Matthew (7:12), which we call the “Golden Rule.” The Silver Rule was widespread in the ancient world, ranging from Confucius in the East to Isocrates of Greece in the West. The thought contained in it is shared by great religious leaders of the world. In the Akkadian *Counsels of Wisdom*, dating to about 700 BCE, five hundred years before the Book of Tobit was written, we read: “Unto your opponent do no evil; ... Let not your heart be induced to do evil” (Lines 35-40).²³ Confucius, the great Chinese philosopher and founder of Confucianism, who lived between 551 and 479 BCE, taught: “What you do not want done to you, do not do to others” (*Analects* 15:23).²⁴ The Greek historian

²²Some scholars, like Betz and William Barclay, call it ‘the Golden Rule’ in the negative form and the moral principle that we find in Matt 7:12 they call ‘the Golden Rule’ in the positive form. See Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 509. Betz calls the *ius talionis* as a legal principle and the “Golden Rule” as an ethical maxim, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 513. Since there is a qualitative difference between these two principles, it is better to call the principle stated in Tobit 4:15a as “Silver Rule” and that stated in Matthew 7:12 as “Golden Rule.”

²³See James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament*, Second Edition, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955, 426.

²⁴Cited in Jennifer Oldstone-Moore, *Understanding Confucianism*, London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 2003, 55. The context of this saying is this: “Tzu Kung asked: ‘Is there any one word that can serve as a principle for the conduct of life?’ Confucius said: “Perhaps the word ‘reciprocity’; Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you.” It may be that the embodiment of the principle of reciprocity in a single maxim was an attempt in several cultures to distil the essence of ethical teaching. See R. J. Wyatt, “Golden Rule” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Gen. ed.,

Herodotus, who lived between ca. 484 and 425 BCE, mentions as the words of Maeandrius whom Polycrates had appointed as his deputy, “What I condemn in another, I will avoid myself.”²⁵ Isocrates, the Greek orator (ca. 436-338 BCE), tells how King Nicocles advised his subordinate officials: “Whatever angers you when you suffer it at the hands of others, do not do it to others” (*Nicocles [Cyprians]* 61).²⁶ In the Letter of Aristeas, who was an officer at the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 BCE), we find this maxim: “As you wish that no evil should befall you, but to be a partaker of all good things, so you should act on the same principle towards your subjects and offenders” (*Letter of Aristeas*, 207).²⁷ The Stoics had as one of their basic maxims: “What you do not wish to be done to you, do not do to anyone else.”²⁸

The great Rabbi Hillel (ca. 60 BCE - 20 CE), a contemporary of Jesus, said to a heathen who wanted to know the whole Torah and become a Jew: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour: this is the whole Torah; while the rest is commentary thereon; go and learn it” (*T. b. Šabb.* 31a).²⁹ Further, *Mahabharata, Anushasana Parva* 113.8 says: “One should never do that to another which he considers as injurious to his own self.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Fully Revised, vol. 2, Exeter: The Pater Noster Press, 1982, 523.

²⁵*The History*, Book III, art. 142, cited in William Benton, *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 6: Herodotus and Thucydes, Chicago: University of Chicago, 24th printing, 1982, 120.

²⁶Cited in Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew*, ET, London: SPCK., 1976, 174.

²⁷Cited in R. H. Charles, ed. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, vol. 2: *Pseudepigrapha*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, reprint 1979, 113.

²⁸Cited in William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 1, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, Reprint, 1987, 274.

²⁹Cited in Davis and Allison, *Matthew*, 687.

This, in brief, is the rule of virtue.”³⁰ *The Silver Rule* is a general moral principle. But it is not in itself an all-sufficient guide for daily living.³¹

5. STAGE FOUR: THE GOLDEN RULE

The fourth stage is that of the Golden Rule: Jesus, the greatest Teacher of humanity, has taught us what is known as “the Golden Rule,”³² which is preserved in Matt 7:12: “Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets” (RSV).³³ This formulation of Jesus in the positive form infinitely surpasses the negative one, because it puts no limit to one’s openness to do good to others and Jesus terms it the essence of the Law and the Prophets. It is not so hard to refrain from harming others; but it is much more difficult to take the initiative in doing something good for them. Instead of having the others’ actions determine our reaction, we should take the initiative and act toward them in love and kindness.³⁴ A person could satisfy the “Silver Rule” by simple inaction.

³⁰Cited in *Mahābhārata*, translated into English from original Sanskrit Text, by M. N. Dutt, vol. VII, Delhi: Parimal Publications, 1994, 250.

³¹There is a common acknowledgement of the social conventions concerning fairness and mutuality of favours as the Latin dictum tells us, *do ut des* (“I give so that you may give”). This is a principle of reciprocity which we universally find in the human social life. But genuine ethical action must be based on the goodness, understood as acts of generosity and philanthropy, regardless of what the other person has done or not done. See Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 512. This is what we find in the “Golden Rule” as given by Jesus in Matthew 7:12.

³²At least since a sermon of John Wesley in 1750, Matthew 7:12 has been known as the “Golden Rule.” Over a thousand year earlier, the Christian Roman Emperor Alexander Severus (who lived in the beginning of the third century) engraved the saying in Matt 7:12 in gold on the wall of his chamber. See Keener, *Matthew*, 248, note 233.

³³In the parallel passage in Luke 6:31 we read: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” This command of Jesus in Luke seems to presuppose the kind of eagerness for *reciprocity* in moral conduct which the following verses (vv. 32-35a) go on to condemn. Hence, according to Victor Paul Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1973, 57-58 the “Golden Rule” in Luke is to be understood as a separate counsel illustrative of the love command and its requirements mentioned in 6:27. In the light of the criticism of the commonly practised “reciprocity ethic” made in vv. 32-35a, one’s actions toward others should *not* be shaped by what he has received or can expect to receive from them.

³⁴Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 517.

But “a goodness which consists in doing nothing would be a contradiction of everything that Christian goodness means... When we are told that we must actively do to others what we would have them to do to us, a new principle enters into life, and a new attitude to our fellowmen.”³⁵ The “Golden Rule” could be seen as the practical application of Lev 19:18: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” What a man desires for himself is usually limitless, and the requirement of doing that for others represents the most radical of summons to love one’s neighbour. Matt 7:12 thus indicates that the Law and the Prophets are fulfilled in substance when we make the “Golden Rule” the guiding principle of life. In a sense, it epitomizes Jesus’ teaching concerning one’s duty to his neighbour.

The “Golden Rule,” as Jesus formulated it, is the foundation of active goodness and mercy and it is often seen as one of the distinctive features of Jesus’ ethic. But in fact the “Golden Rule” is present outside of and prior to Jesus’ teaching.³⁶ For example, Isocrates (Nicocles 49), already in the 4th century BCE, has said: “You should be such in your dealings with others as you expect me to be in my dealings with you.”³⁷ Again, Mencius, the great follower of Confucius, who lived in the 4th century BCE, gives a text similar to the content of the Golden Rule: “If one strives to treat others as he would be treated by them, he shall not fail to come near the perfect life.”³⁸ In the *Akkadian Counsels of Wisdom* (7th century BCE), we can find some of the positive ideas that are implied in the “Golden Rule”: “Unto your opponent do no evil; ... Give food to eat, give date wine to drink; ... Be helpful, do good.”³⁹ According to Victor Paul Furnish, following the position of the German scholar Albrecht Dihle,⁴⁰ the “Golden Rule,” in its origin, “is a bit of practical wisdom of the Greeks, from them taken over into Judaism, and

³⁵Barclay, *Matthew*, vol. 1, 275-76.

³⁶Furnish, *The Love Command*, 63.

³⁷Cited in Furnish, *The Love Command*, 63, note 123.

³⁸Cited in G. T. Bettany, *Encyclopedia of World Religions*, New York: Dorset Press, 1988, 131.

³⁹See Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 426. According to H. D. Betz, “the Golden Rule is neither non-Christian nor Christian; it is recognized as universal and is as such ‘Christianized’ by its insertion in the Sermon on the Mount,” *The Sermon on the Mount*, 518.

⁴⁰Albrecht Dihle, *Die goldene Regel: Eine Einführung in die Geschichte der antiken und frühchristlichen Vulgärethik*, Studienhefte zur Altertumswissenschaft, 7, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962.

subsequently into Christian teaching.’⁴¹ Jesus, however, through his life and teaching, has given it a new dimension and depth of meaning. The “Golden Rule” presupposes discipleship and submission to the rule of God. Its intention is that one is to be as concerned for the other person’s good as for one’s own.⁴² This is the law of love, the principle by which Jesus epitomizes the entire ‘humanward’ aspect of God’s law (Matt 22:39-40), a principle Jesus’ earliest followers never forgot (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8).⁴³ The “Golden Rule” could, thus, be seen as “the general principle for all ethical decision making” and presupposes as its foundation “God’s initiative of generosity, forbearance, and forgiveness. The disciples are to imitate this divine initiative.”⁴⁴

6. STAGE FIVE: LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR = LOVE OF GOD

The fifth stage is that in which Jesus brought the love of neighbour on the same level with the love of God. To the lawyer who asked, which commandment in the law is the greatest, Jesus said: “‘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 neighbour⁴⁵ as yourself.’⁴⁶ On these two

⁴¹Furnish, *The Love Command*, 63.

⁴²Frank Stagg, “Matthew,” in Clifton J. Allen, General Editor, *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, *General Articles Matthew-Mark*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Ltd., 1969, 121.

⁴³Keener, *Matthew*, 249.

⁴⁴Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 518.

⁴⁵It seems that the Jews understood by the term “neighbour” one’s fellow Jew (“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against *any of your people*, but you shall love *your neighbour* as yourself,” Lev 19:18). But Jesus certainly meant more than loving the person of one’s own religion. Jesus extended the term as widely as possible to mean one’s fellow being. See Morris, *Matthew*, 563-64. Jesus even extended the term “neighbour” to include one’s own enemies; in other words, he wanted to include all people in the solidarity of love. See Albert Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, Quezon City: Clarentian Publications, 1976, 61. It is true that in the Old Testament we could see that the love of neighbour is extended even to the strangers who dwell in the land (see Lev 19:34; Deut 10:19).

⁴⁶The expression, “as yourself,” in both the Old and New Testaments, is not a limitation placed by the commandment, as if self-love were to be the measure of neighbourly love. The sense of the term is not that of limitation, but of removal of

commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt 22:37-40).⁴⁷ It is striking that Jesus is asked for one commandment (“which commandment in the law is the greatest?”), but he responds with two. Matthew alone specifically adds that the second is “like” the first. “Like” here does not mean that it is ‘similar’, but that it is of ‘equal importance’ and inseparable from the first.⁴⁸ The great command to love God has as its inseparable counterpart the command to love the neighbour. It is significant that it is Jesus who, for the first time, combined the commandment on the love of God (Deut 6:5) with the less known command on the love of neighbour (Lev 19:18) and brought the love of neighbour to the same level as the love of God.⁴⁹ By adding Lev 19:18 to Deut 6:5 Jesus has reinterpreted Deut 6:5 to mean that it is precisely by loving one’s neighbour as oneself that one truly loves God with all one’s heart. If we compare Matthew’s version with that

limitation. Thus, as the care that a man lavishes on himself and his affairs knows no limits, so much the more should be the care which he bestows on others. See Karl Hermann Schelkle, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 3: *Morality*, ET, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1973, 125. The man who loves himself (since he knows that he is loved by God) can love others because he has a firm base from which to do so. Only when the value of self has been taken for granted can a real relationship with the other be possible. See Dalrymple, *The Christian Affirmation*, 124-25.

⁴⁷The rabbis had counted 613 commandments; out of these 248 are positive commands and 365 are negative commands.

⁴⁸See Furnish, *The Love Command*, 31. In Matthew it is made clear beyond doubt that the ‘second’ is of the same rank as the first. See Furnish, *The Love Command*, 33.

⁴⁹In the late first century Rabbi Akiba and other Jewish teachers conjoined love of God with love of neighbour. Philo, the Hellenist Jewish philosopher and historian who lived between ca. 20 BCE and 50 CE, headed the most essential laws under two categories of Godwardness and humanwardness. In Late Judaism love of God and love of neighbour are combined in a single commandment: “Love the Lord and your neighbour,” *The Testament of Issachar*, 5:2. Similarly, in the Egyptian piety as reported by Diodorus Siculus, the Greek historian who lived in the late first century BCE, we find that the supreme offences were impiety toward gods and sin against mortals. See Keener, *Matthew*, 531 also note 227. “Yet Jesus’ combination of the two as the greatest commandments, which exercised an authoritative influence on subsequent Christian formulations ... is distinctive ... Only Jesus wielded the moral authority among his followers to focus their ethics so profoundly around a single theme ... the one Teacher who united them. Thence comes the early Christian ‘law of love’.” Keener, *Matthew*, 531.

of Luke (10:27), the latter's description is very distinctive. In Luke, it is the lawyer who gives the answer and Jesus commends him for it. Rather than make the love of God as "the first" commandment and love of neighbour as "the second," Luke combines them into a single unified command so that *love of neighbour* has the same force as *love of God*: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." The idea that love ought to be the governing principle in human relationships did not originate with Jesus (see Lev 19:18); in Jesus' teaching, however, the love command is given a central, determining role as the principle for *interpreting* the moral requirements of the whole law.⁵⁰

The two love commandments belong together, covering the vertical and the horizontal dimensions: the relationship with God and the relationship with others. The first contains the second; the second presupposes and depends on the first.⁵¹ In both cases, love is not understood merely as an emotion. Love for one's neighbour means acting toward one's own fellow beings with their good and their well being as the primary motivation and goal of all actions.⁵² Such love is constant and takes no regard of the merit or demerit of the other person. Love of God, on the other hand, is to be understood as a matter of commitment and obedience. With orientation toward God and others, the law and the prophets have reached their ultimate goal.

Jesus, in his words and actions, teaches us that it is impossible to love God without loving one's neighbour. Love for people in need,

⁵⁰Furnish, *The Love Command*, 64-65.

⁵¹R. T. France, in *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 1), Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985, 320, writes: "Neither is to be raised above the other; each depends on the other for its true force." Loving God and loving the neighbour are the two inseparable parts of the *total* response to the sovereign claim of God under which man stands. See Furnish, *The Love Command*, 63.

⁵²The Synoptics present Jesus as the one who "commands" love and not as one who "inspires" it. Hence, the *command* to love involves one's affirmation of the other (including the enemy). To affirm the other person, even when he is my enemy, necessarily carries with it the acknowledgement that his finite existence is caught up and bound up with my own finite existence. To affirm him in the love Jesus commands means to be constructively and compassionately extended to all his needs, see Furnish, *The Love Command*, 66-67.

indeed, is not secondary to love for God. Years later, the First Letter of John would formulate this in a way that could not be misunderstood: “If any one says, ‘I love God’, and hates his brother, he is a liar” (1 John 4:20, RSV). Love of God, in Jesus’ ministry, is interpreted by love of neighbour. In a sense, the neighbour represents God for us and loving our neighbour could be seen as the way to love God. Neighbour is, so to say, the sacrament of our encounter with God. Here it is to be remembered that love of neighbour is not a substitute for the love of God; but it draws its meaning and strength from the love of God. It is true that the Christian loves God in loving his neighbour, but he loves his neighbour because he loves God. Both love are interrelated and go together. It is significant to note that St. Paul, later, goes to such an extent that he reduces these two commandments into one: namely, the love of neighbour. In Rom 13:9-10 he writes: “The commandments ... are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’. Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law” (see also Gal 5:13-14).

7. STAGE SIX: LOVE OF ENEMIES

The sixth stage is that of love of enemies given in Matt 5:44. The sixth antithesis in the Sermon on the Mount begins thus: “You have heard that it was said, ‘you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy’. But I say to you, Love your enemies⁵³ and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5:43-44). The commandment “You shall love your neighbour” is found in Lev 19:18. It is not followed by any charge to “hate your enemy.” This clause is not part of the citation but may be taken from the sense in which the love of neighbour was commonly understood. There are some passages in the Old Testament, which at least seem to encourage hatred of enemies. The invading Israelites are charged not only to dispossess the nations of Canaan, but also to exterminate them: “When the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no

⁵³Certainly, the commandment of love of enemy is anticipated and rooted in Judaism. The Wisdom tradition teaches: “If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink” (Proverbs 25:21; see also Proverbs 19:11). This text shows that even in the OT we find the demand for the concrete, loving service to the enemy in need. But it is with Jesus love of enemy has become an ethical demand that claims universal validity beyond religious and national boundaries. See George Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, ET, Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 177.

covenant with them and show them no mercy” (Deut 7:2). A Psalmist will even say, thinking that God will commend him: “Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? ... I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies” (Ps 139:21-22). A midrashic comment (*Sifra* on Lev 19:18) interprets the command to ‘love your neighbour’ as meaning, “You shall not take vengeance or cherish anger against the sons of your people, but you may take vengeance and cherish anger against others.”⁵⁴ In the time of Jesus, the community of Qumran, situated on the northwest of Dead Sea, still makes it a duty on its members “to love all the sons of light ... and ... hate all the sons of darkness” (1 QS 1.9-10).⁵⁵ Since there is no commandment to hate one’s enemy in the Old Testament, and since hatred of enemies is expressly demanded in the Qumran community, it is possible that “Jesus may have formulated his command about love of enemy in reference to Qumran.”⁵⁶

Love of enemies is an invitation to moral heroism and sanctity.⁵⁷ This stage is a loftier one. The love that is demanded by Jesus is not one of sentiment and emotion, but of concrete action. Its meaning is found in the Lucan parallel (Lk 6:27-28, 35) where “love” is defined as “do good to,” i.e., practical concern for another’s well-being. In Luke we read: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Lk 6:27-28; see also Lk 6:35). In other words, love is to be expressed in acts, commitments, and deeds (1 John 3:18).

St. Paul, in his Letter to the Romans, gives us a beautiful exhortation, which is certainly influenced by Jesus’ teaching. In Rom 12, he writes: “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all” (12:9-

⁵⁴Cited in Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 161.

⁵⁵Cited in G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 2nd edition, Harmondsworth (England): Penguin Books, 1975, 72.

⁵⁶Schelkle, *Theology of the New Testament*, 126.

⁵⁷Loving those who love us is no virtue. Jesus here is appealing for an experience of solidarity with humankind, an experience that is non-exclusive and not dependent upon reciprocity. See Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, 61. “The commandment of love of enemy is of such unambiguous precision and radicality that it has plainly become the epitome of Christian teaching.” Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 177.

10,14,17). The closing verses of this chapter are very important. Paul describes how we should deal with our enemies in a very positive way: “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord’. No, ‘if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads’.⁵⁸ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (12:19-21).

The motive for Jesus’ disciples to love their enemies is the desire “to be” (Greek: “to become”) the children of the heavenly Father who himself acts in this way (Matt 5:45; see also Lk 6:35). The actions of God’s loving concern are not calculated according to the merits or demerits of the recipients; he bestows his love on all irrespective of their worthiness or unworthiness. God breaks through the law of retribution and practises the law of unconditional love. Those who respond to this God and practise the same unconditional love are “sons of God” (see 1 John 4:7; 2:29).

Jesus’ invitation to his disciples, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48), is a call to the completeness of love, a love that is not measured and limited by the character of those with whom we have to relate. Hence, the word “perfect” (Greek: *teleios*) is not used here in the sense of moral perfection (“flawless moral character”), but in line with its corresponding Hebrew word *tamîm*, meaning to be “wholehearted” or “undivided” in one’s love and devotion.⁵⁹ When we say that God is “perfect,” we have to understand it as God is undivided in bestowing his love and concern to all; that he does not make a distinction between good and bad; that he loves all totally and unconditionally. Hence, the radical call, “*Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect,*” means that we should wholeheartedly and unconditionally extend our love and goodness to our

⁵⁸The statement that “the person who feeds his hungry enemy and gives drink to his thirsty enemy heaps coals of fire on his head,” seems to point to an Egyptian penitential ritual involving a real change of mind. The enemy, receiving the unexpected goodness, will be humiliated and this will lead him to repentance. See Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, ET, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980, 349.

⁵⁹The *New English Bible* translates Deut 18:13: “You shall be wholehearted [Septuagint: *teleios*] in your service of the Lord your God.”

neighbours, as God is undivided in showering his love and goodness on all.⁶⁰

The parallel passage in Luke brings out this meaning well: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36).

8. STAGE SEVEN: THE SUPREME EXPRESSION OF LOVE

The seventh and the last stage is the supreme expression of love, a love that spends itself to the extent of sacrificing one’s life for the other. It is to this highest form of love that Jesus refers when he says in John 15:12-13: “This is my commandment, that you love one another *as I have loved you*. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Here we have the highest and noblest form of love. Before we interpret this passage let us go to another Johannine text which qualifies the commandment of love as “new”: “I give you a *new* commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34).⁶¹ John 13:34 is the only text in the Fourth Gospel where the commandment of love is qualified as “*new*.”⁶² The Greek word used for “new” is *kainos*, which means “*qualitatively new*.”⁶³ The Johannine Jesus is giving his disciples “a new commandment” and the newness is to be found in the qualification, “*as I have loved you*.” The essential newness of the Johannine understanding of love is its Christological reference: that we should love one another *as Jesus loved us*. The expression, “*as I have loved you*,” emphasizes two things: (1) Jesus is primarily *the source* of Christians’ love for another, and (2) Jesus is *the model* or standard of

⁶⁰The *New English Bible* translation of this verse (5:48) brings out its meaning very well: “There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father’s goodness knows no bounds.” The six antitheses which we find in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:21-48) illustrate well this basic attitude of love.

⁶¹Since the disciples cannot follow Jesus as he leaves this world, they receive the commandment of love (13:34-35), the observance of which will keep the spirit of Jesus alive among them.

⁶²Love itself is not a new commandment, but an old one; it was part of the Mosaic Law (Lev 19:18). But the manner and extent to which we should love our neighbour is new; we must love our neighbour *as Christ has loved us*. By his teaching and still more by his example Jesus imparted a new depth of meaning to it. F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983, 294.

⁶³There is another Greek word *neos* used for “new” and this means “*chronologically new*.”

Christian love.⁶⁴ Firstly, Jesus is the *source* of the disciples' love for one another. The love that Jesus has for his followers is not only affective but also effective; it brings about their salvation.⁶⁵ Even Jesus' love has its ultimate source in the love of the Father: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you" (John 15:9). Secondly, Jesus loved us by giving his life for us, by sacrificing his life for us. The divine love is absolutely *selfless*, *self-sacrificing* (15:12-13) and *self-giving* (3:16). This self-giving and self-sacrificing love of Jesus should be the *model* for the disciples to imitate. Jesus' love is an "example" (see 13:15) of all subsequent Christian love. The Christian love should possess these characteristics of love. Such self-giving and self-sacrificing love must be the distinguishing mark of Jesus' disciples (13:35).

Here we have to face an allegation that the "love of one another," of which the Johannine Jesus speaks, is love *between Christians*.⁶⁶ Further, nothing is said about loving "the neighbour" or "enemy." Hence, it is not Christian love in its fullest and finest form.⁶⁷ In the Qumran community, too, great emphasis had been given to fraternal love among its members (see 1 QS 1.9-11). But there is a difference: while for the Qumran community "love is a duty consequent upon one's belonging to the community, for John, Jesus' love for men is constitutive of the community."⁶⁸ The love command in John is given to a community which needs to find its own identity and maintain its own integrity in the midst of

⁶⁴Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI* (The Anchor Bible, 29A), New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970, 612. The newness of the commandment of love consists in the fact that it has as its source, model and motive Jesus' self-sacrificing love for his disciples. Antony Edanad, *Christian Existence and the New Covenant*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1987, 226.

⁶⁵Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, 612.

⁶⁶The "one another" is correctly defined in 1 John 3:14 as 'our brothers and sisters' ("We know that we have passed from death to life because *we love one another*"), that is, those within the Christian community. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, 613. According to Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, ET. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971, 528, the command of love seems to undergo a limitation through the expression, "*one another*." "It is no general love of mankind, or love of one's neighbour or enemy that is demanded, but love within the circle of disciples."

⁶⁷Furnish, *The Love Command*, 146.

⁶⁸Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, 613.

a hostile world. John regards God's love and the Son's mission of love to be extended to all who receive him; indeed, the Son's mission of love is conceived of as a mission to the whole world (see John 3:16; 4:42; 8:12). Hence, we must acknowledge that the commandment to "love one another" need not be regarded as excluding love for "neighbours" and "enemies."⁶⁹ For the Evangelist John, "love is the completely universal characteristic of the children of God."⁷⁰ The selfless love of Christians for each other will distinguish them from among others (see John 13:35), and draw the world to them and, thus, to Jesus.⁷¹ As long as the followers of Jesus live out their authentic Christian love in the world, one could very well say that the world is encountering Jesus.⁷²

The disciples in the Gospel of John are spoken of as loving Jesus (14:15, 21, 23, 28), but never God (in contrast to 1 John 4:20-21; 5:2; Matt 22:37) and they are commanded to love one another (John 13:34; 15:12, 17).⁷³ In the Johannine tradition the two commandments of the love of God and love of neighbour are fused into one: love of neighbour (see also Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8-10); the two commandments are joined, one within the other, and are inseparable.⁷⁴ The only sign that the Christian is in communion with the Son and the Father is that he loves his brethren (see 1 John 3:14; 4:20). Love and union with the Father flows into love and union with the brethren. "The love relationship of John's Gospel should not be understood as belonging primarily to the area of affection or feeling or emotion but rather to a deeper kind of communion, of interpersonal relationship, concern and communication. Its emotional side is joy, the joy of the salvation of Jesus (14:28; 15:11)."⁷⁵

⁶⁹Furnish, *The Love Command*, 148.

⁷⁰Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament*, ET. New York: The Seabury Press, 1965, 328.

⁷¹Michael J. Taylor, *John: The Different Gospel*, New York: Alba House, 1983, 165.

⁷²Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, 614.

⁷³J. N. Sanders, edited and completed by B. A. Mastin, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St John*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968, 129.

⁷⁴Séan P. Kealy, *That You May Believe: The Gospel according to John*, Slough (UK), 1978, 123.

⁷⁵Kealy, *That You May Believe*, 123.

In John 15:12-14, Jesus states the *quality* of his love. The greatest love is shown by one who lays down his life for friends. This is the supreme proof of love. In the Johannine context this must refer primarily to the love of Jesus shown on the Cross. There he laid down his life on behalf of us all. Jesus gave everything, even his own life, for others. There is no greater proof of love than this. Jesus' own love is given as the basis and the model for the disciples' love for each other. If 15:12-14 speaks of the *quality* of Jesus' love, 15:15-16 speaks of a new relationship between Jesus and his disciples. It is Jesus who has taken the initiative in drawing the disciples into a new relationship. In this new relationship the disciples are no longer "servants," but "*friends*," intimate and equal associates of Jesus who loves them without limit (see 13:1, "*to the end*")⁷⁶ and who lays down his life in love. They, in turn, must accept the commandment of Jesus, namely, they must love one another (see 13:35; 15:12,17). Jesus is not asking them to do anything more than he himself has done. Christ's sacrificial love is the ground and measure of their love towards their neighbour. St. Augustine's saying, "Love, and do what you will," is a clear expression of what Jesus is teaching here. If we love, in the sense in which Jesus uses the term, we need no other rule.

The Johannine Jesus gives radicality and a new depth of meaning to the commandment of love that is already given in Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18. In Jesus' teaching, love is not just *commended* as a noble way of life; it is actually *commanded* as the rule of the Kingdom. Love is, indeed, the law of life in the Kingdom. Love is, in fact, the power and the purpose of God's coming and reign. It is the duty of every human being to be bound first to God in love. To be bound to God is to be bound in a love which cares for others and serves them. *Service* is the watchword of this *love ethic* and the visible expression of the love Jesus commands.⁷⁷ The greatest expression of love is the sacrifice of one's own life for the other. But it is not necessary that we die for someone in a literal sense, but there are indeed other ways of

⁷⁶John 13:1: Jesus loved "*his own to the end*." The phrase "*to the end*" has a twofold meaning: (1) "*perfectly*" and (2) "*to the end of life*," that is, to the death. First, Jesus loved "*his own*" in a way that surpasses all imaginable loving and, secondly, Jesus loved them until the end of his life. Thus, the expression, "*to the end*," indicates the quality of Jesus' love, a love which is without limit, without measure. He loved them to such an extent that he accepted to die for them (see also 10:11,15,17).

⁷⁷Furnish, *The Love Command*, 68-69.

practising sacrificial love: listening, helping, encouraging, and giving our time and talents for the good of the other. A Christian culture of life should promote in our interpersonal relationships the great ideals that are set forth in the Bible.

9. CONCLUSION

Love, self-giving and self-sacrificing love, is the supreme expression of our interpersonal relationship and, hence, it is the highest stage in our relationship with our neighbour. *A loving person is always a good person and a good person is always a self-giving person.* He gives himself to others, by spending his time and energy for the good of the other. The one who loves is the one who does good to the other. That is what we read in Luke 6:27: “Love your enemies, *do good to* those who hate you.” Again, the one who loves is the one who gives himself to others (see John 3:16). In Acts 20:17-35, Paul summons all the elders of the Church of Ephesus at the port city of Miletus and there he makes a very emotionally charged farewell speech. He knew very well, like his Master, Jesus Christ, that he would be going to Jerusalem and that he would be arrested there. In the speech he reminds his audience how faithfully he preached Jesus Christ to them and how he worked hard with his own hands to support himself and his companions and, thus, gave them an example that by such work they must support the weak remembering the words of Jesus who said: “It is more blessed *to give* than to receive” (Acts 20:35).⁷⁸

Love, goodness, and self-giving are essentially related to each other. It is the nature of goodness to give itself. As a Scholastic axiom puts it, “*Bonum est diffusivum sui,*” i.e., it is the nature of goodness to diffuse itself, to spend itself, to give itself. *Good* is said to communicate its goodness. Since God is infinite goodness, he only knows to give; he never receives anything from his created world. But it is the nature of creatures to receive from others. The child knows only to receive; but as he grows up, he slowly

⁷⁸This is one of the *agrapha* (= “unwritten”), that is, one of the sayings of Jesus unrecorded in the canonical Gospels but found in other parts of the New Testament or in early Christian writings. Although this saying is not found in the Gospels, its spirit is seen in Luke 6:38. See also Sirach 4:31, “Do not let your hand be stretched out to receive and closed when it is time to give;” and *Didachē* 1.5, “Blessed is he who gives according to the mandate.” See F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 8th printing, 1975, 383.

learns the beautiful lesson of giving to others. Hence, the art of giving is the art of a mature person. When we begin to give ourselves to others we share in the very character of God. As the famous spiritual writer Faber has said, “when we give, we resemble the Creator; when we receive, we resemble the creature.” The sign of real love is giving, giving oneself to the other. This giving we find in its ideal form in a mother. The love of a mother is, so to say, boundless and un-calculating. The mother loves her child not calculating how much she will receive from it in return. Even if the child is suffering from a terminal disease, the parents will spend all their resources to treat the child. This is pure love, self-less love, un-calculating love. This is what we find in God in its sublime and un-surpassing form. God, in Jesus Christ, has given us the model of self-giving *par excellence*. It is this selfless giving, generous giving, that is emphasized by Jesus in John 15:13: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Thus, as we go through the Bible, from the Book of Genesis to the Gospel of John, we see how humanity is asked to move away from the most primitive form of unlimited revenge to the highest ideal of self-sacrificing love as it is revealed in the life of Jesus, the Greatest Master of humanity, and how this supreme expression of love is to be lived out in the lives of his followers.