

THE FUNCTION OF THE DOUBLE LOVE COMMAND IN MATTHEW 22:34-40

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Matthew used the pericope of the double love command, love to God and neighbor, to summarize Jesus' teachings, as well as the laws of Moses, and to continue to demonstrate Jesus' prowess as a teacher in the presence of his Pharisaic opponents. This article sets forth the reasons for his doing so as well as the method used to accomplish this.

Parallels to Matt 22:34-40 are found in Mark 12:28-34 and Luke 10:25-28. It is not necessary here to do a full analysis of these parallels nor to determine the exact tradition behind the Synoptics. This has been done by Furnish, Fuller, Hultgren, and numerous others.¹

The Setting of the Double Love Command

The quotations of Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18 are the nucleus of each of the commandments. Hultgren thinks these two commandments, introduced by "Jesus said," formed a "free floating" dominical saying in the early tradition.²

Matthew's setting for the saying follows Mark's order, which places it in Jerusalem during Jesus' last days and is preceded and followed by the same stories. Matthew opened the story by noting that the Pharisees "came together" (22:34) "to test him." Unlike Mark and Luke, Matthew made this a confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees. A lawyer (*nomikos*) addressed Jesus as a teacher and asked: "Which is the great commandment in the law (*nomos*)" (22:36)? Jesus quoted Deut 6:5: "You shall love the Lord your God," thus answering the lawyer's question.

¹Victor Paul Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1972), 70-90; Reginald H. Fuller, "The Double Command of Love: A Test Case for the Criteria of Authenticity," in *Essays on the Love Command*, ed. and trans. Reginald H. Fuller et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) 41-56; Arland J. Hultgren, "The Double Love Command in Matt 22:34-40: Its Sources and Composition," *CBQ* 36 (1974): 373-378.

²Hultgren, 375.

Jesus then continued: "A second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (22:39). The concluding comment (v.40) is usually included in the quotation as part of Jesus' statement, but may have been Matthew's redaction, designed to reflect rabbinical discussion.³ "On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets" is unique to Matthew's Gospel.

In summary Matthew pictured the Pharisees coming together in a hostile manner to test Jesus with the lawyer's questions. Jesus is addressed as "Teacher/Rabbi." Although he is asked for "the great commandment," singular, he gave them two, claimed to be the very foundation of all the law and prophets.

The First Commandment

The first commandment has come from Deut 6:5. Its setting and context contribute to the understanding of this commandment placed on the lips of Jesus. Carmichael has called Deuteronomy Moses' valedictory; in it Moses, the honored leader, gives his final testament to Israel.⁴ The book is divided into three addresses of Moses. The main part of the first (1:6-4:40) rehearses some of the events transpired since the exodus (1:6-3:29) which constitute the basis for Moses' appeal for absolute obedience to God's "statutes and ordinances" (4:1-40). This first speech reaches an intense climax in the last paragraph (4:32-40) when Moses challenges his audience to research all of human history to determine "whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of" (4:32). His intention was to convince his audience that they had experienced unique events in human history, which had shown them that "the Lord is God; there is no other besides him" (4:35). In v. 39 Moses repeated a second time "there is no other" to emphasize the importance of Yahweh's singular, unique role in the life of the people. Based on God's demonstrated power displayed on behalf of Israel, Moses demanded a response from the people: "Therefore you shall keep his statutes and commandments" (4:40).

Into this review and challenge, Moses introduced an explanation of God's motivation for doing so great a thing: "Because he loved your fathers and chose their descendants after them, and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power" (4:37). This statement

³On another aspect of this command David Daube comments that Matthew has adjusted this saying "to suit meticulous Rabbinic scholarship" (*The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* [London: Athlone, 1956], 250),

⁴Calum M. Carmichael, *The Laws of Deuteronomy* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1974), 17.

summarizes Moses' first speech: The power and presence of God as experienced by Israel were evidence of God's love for them. This summary paragraph has brought together the presence and power of God, his love for his people, and the challenge to keep his statutes. From a literary point of view, it is important to note that the theme of "love" has been emphatically introduced in Moses' first speech.

Moran has reminded us that "probably no subject in the book of Deuteronomy . . . has been so thoroughly studied as its teaching on love: Yahweh's love for Israel, and the imperative necessity of Israel's love for Yahweh in return."⁵ In searching for an understanding of the use of "love" in Deuteronomy, Moran finds the Deuteronomic use of the word adequately explained in extrabiblical literature. In the language of international relations, it can describe the friendly relation of two sovereigns, a treaty between a sovereign and a vassal where the vassal is required/commanded to love his lord, as well as the loyalty of subjects to their king.⁶ This last point is illustrated in 1 Sam 18:16: "But all Israel and Judah loved David." Here love declares the loyalty and allegiance of the people to David. This understanding of love, "defined in terms of loyalty, service and obedience," influenced the Deuteronomist in his use of the term.⁷ Furthermore, the book of Deuteronomy has been significantly influenced by the covenant model so well known from the second millennium B.C.E.⁸ When this definition of love is used to read Deuteronomy, the word is compatible with the legal and covenantal language of the text.

Moses' second speech (Deut 5-28) begins with Moses' summoning the people to listen to him (5:1). He reminded his audience of the scene at Horeb when "the Lord spoke with [them] face to face" (5:4). Then Moses reiterated the Decalogue, substantially as given in Exod 20:2-17. Moses introduced the decalogue by the phrase, "He [God] said." Moses further described the reaction of the people to that original recitation of the commandments (5:24-27). The people were so awed by God's glory that they instructed Moses "to go near and hear all that the Lord our God will say . . . and we will hear and do it" (5:27). Moses returned to God who gave him further instructions which are recited by Moses in chapter 6. After a brief introductory statement, the text identifies the importance of what is about to be said: "Hear, O Israel." Moses then reiterated, as it

⁵William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 77.

⁶*Ibid.* 78, 79.

⁷*Ibid.* 81, 82.

⁸*Ibid.*

were, the first commandment: "The Lord our God is one Lord." This identifies the object of the command that is about to follow. God is identified as the sovereign. The people are commanded "to love" him with the totality of their existence. This command "to love" is the basis of the relation between God and the people. Already in 5:27 they offered their loyal obedience, so in 6:5 Moses re-articulated in succinct fashion the basis of the relationship. "To love" is to be loyal, devoted, and obedient to the sovereign.⁹ Of necessity it involves additional instruction from the Lord. Further commandments are required by the very next verse: "And these words which I command this day should be upon your hearts" (6:6). The imperative to keep the commandments is repeated in 6:17. As one reads through the book of Deuteronomy, it becomes evident that the idea of keeping the commands is always co-joined with the word love.¹⁰

Even in his third and final address in Deuteronomy (chaps. 29-30), Moses continued to emphasize the demand to love God. In fact, three times in chapter 30 loving God is associated with choosing life. Deut 30:6, recalls 6:5: "So that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." Verse 16 paraphrases this. Verses 19 and 20 summarize the matter: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life . . . , loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him."

Early in the book of Deuteronomy the author affirmed that God acted on behalf of the people because he loved them (4:37). He in turn commanded love from them (6:5). This love is defined as "walking," "fearing," "keeping commandments," "obeying his voice," "serving him," "cleaving to him."¹¹ This definition is supported from the nonbiblical texts describing the relation of vassals to a sovereign. To respond positively brings life.

The Deuteronomist epitomized this love/obedience/ commandment relation by placing on the lips of Moses: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

III

Against this background it is understandable that by the first century C.E. the *Shema*, taken from Deut 6:4-9; 11:13-21 and Num 15:37-41, was a part of both synagogue and temple worship; its twice daily recitation

⁹Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 81, 333, 368.

¹⁰Deut 5:10; 6:5; 7:9, 12f; 10:19, requiring those who fear and serve God to love the sojourner; 11:1, 13, 22; cf. 13:4; 19:9.

¹¹Cf. 13:4.

was incumbent upon all Jewish males. The exact beginning of its use is difficult to date. Josephus claimed that it dated from the very time of Moses (*Ant.* 4.8.13 (212)). Be that as it may, there is ample evidence that the *Shema* was a significant part of Jewish religious thought as early as the first century B.C.E.¹² Both Josephus and the Qumran community were aware of the use of *mezuzah*, which later Tannaitic sources described as containing Deut 6:4-9 and 11:12-21 (*Menahoth* 3:7).¹³

The use of phylacteries also attests to the importance of the *Shema*. Shammai the Elder (ca. 50 B.C.E.) is said to have inherited phylacteries from his grandfather.¹⁴ Parchment fragments of small leather boxes have been found at Qumran and in the caves of the Judean desert.¹⁵ The Mishnah (*Tamid* 4:3, 5:1) records that after the priests had prepared the lamb for the daily sacrifice, "they came down and betook themselves to the Chamber of Hewn Stone to recite the *Shema*." Also the Schools of Shammai and Hillel debated the time and manner of the recitation of the *Shema* (m. *Berakoth* 1:3).¹⁶ This further supports the fact that it was already a part of Jewish tradition in the first century CE. Something of its importance is attested by the fact that the first order of the Mishnah begins with a discussion of the *Shema*.¹⁷

The command to love God, as amplified above from the brief treatment of the book of Deuteronomy, is consistent with the rabbinical interpretation of the text. The Targum of Onkelos is almost verbatim, changing only one word: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your possessions" (Tg. Onq. Deut 6:5).¹⁸

Rabbinic interpretation amplified each of the three aspects mentioned, recognizing the absolute, comprehensive nature of the command to love.

'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God' etc. It has been taught: R. Eliezer says: If it says 'with all thy soul', why should it also say 'with all thy might', and if its says 'with all thy might', why should it also say

¹²Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), rev. and ed. Geza Vermes et al., 2:455.

¹³S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., *The Jewish People in the First Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 2:796.

¹⁴Safrai, 799.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., 916f.

¹⁷Schürer, 449, 481; Safrai, 905.

¹⁸Israel Drazin, trans., *Targum Onkelos to Deuteronomy* (Ktav, 1982), 108.

'with all thy soul'? Should there be a man who values his life more than his money, for him it says; 'with all thy soul'; and should there be a man who values his money more than his life, for him it says, 'with all thy might'. R. Akiba says: 'With all thy soul': even if He takes away thy soul (b. *Berakoth* 61b).¹⁹

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God (6:5):" Perform (God's commandments) out of love. . . . "With all thy heart (6:5):" With both your Inclinations, the Inclination to good and the Inclination to evil. . . . Your heart should not be divided in regard to God. "And with all thy soul (6:5):" . . . love him until the last drop of life is wrung out of you.

R. Eliezer says: Having said 'with all thy soul', why does Scripture go on to say 'with all thy might?' And if it says 'with all thy might', why does it say 'with all thy soul?' There are men whose bodies are more precious to them than their wealth, and 'with all thy soul' is directed to them. There are other men whose wealth is more precious to them than their bodies, and 'with all thy might' is directed to them.

R. Akiba says: Once Scripture says 'with all thy soul, with all thy might' follows by inference from the major to the minor. Why then 'with all thy might?' Because 'might' (*mē'ôd*) implies whatever measure (*middab*) God metes out to you, whether of good or of punishment (*Sifre Deut*, 32).²⁰

While these commentaries are later than the Gospel of Matthew they certainly attest to the importance attached to this text in the rabbinic tradition. The commandment to love God is central in the book of Deuteronomy, it was emphasized in synagogue readings, and was amplified by later commentators. As portrayed in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus quoted an important commandment in the Jewish tradition.

So when Matthew recorded Jesus' giving paramount importance to the commandment to love God, the audience would be aware of the presence and importance of the command in their religious life.

The Second Commandment

The second law regarding love for neighbor is taken from Leviticus. An examination of the context of the command "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18) is in order.

The narrative framework of the book of Leviticus is limited. During the sojourn at Sinai, Moses receives instructions from Yahweh. Throughout the book the formula is repeated: "The Lord said to Moses." The book consists almost totally of instructions from God, broken in

¹⁹Quotations from *The Talmud* are from I. Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino, 1948).

²⁰Reuven Hammer, trans., *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1986), 59f.

chapters 8-10 and 24:10-23 with brief narratives. Most of the instructions are of a cultic and ritual nature, but chapters 18-20 turn to matters of conduct within the community. Chapter 19:9-18 deals with rules for harvesting the fields; restates the ban on stealing, lying, swearing; prohibits oppressive conduct against the hired servant, the poor, the blind, the deaf; enjoins impartiality to all; and expresses concern for reason rather than hatred and vengeance.

Although a first reading of this paragraph leaves the impression of limited coherence, a second reading proves more satisfying. Throughout the paragraph the commands are spoken by Moses in the second person, directing specific conduct toward a third person. This underscores the interpersonal nature of the conduct being required. This interpersonal dimension is heightened by the references to specific categories of persons: poor, sojourner, one another, hired servant, blind, deaf, etc. The word "neighbor" appears frequently in the paragraph, five times between verses 13-18. Other terms are used as synonyms for neighbor: one another, your people, brother, sons of your own people, adding emphasis to the intense concern for community relationships.

This brief recitation of rules governing interpersonal relations is summarized in verse 18 "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love, then, is not an empty command, but rather a command to act in a specific way towards one's neighbor. It assumes that "you" of the commands can perceive of herself/himself as both the subject and object, actor and recipient, of the commands.

This section (19:9-18), like nearly all of Leviticus, is in the form of the words spoken to Moses by God. At the end of each short section in vv 9-18, God adds: "I am the Lord." This line appears fifteen times in chapter 19 following the individual commands. It is the concluding line in each of the five subdivisions of vv 9-18. It is the writer's way of emphasizing that the people are to be holy as God is holy.²¹ It follows immediately after the command to love one's neighbors: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." This design on the part of the writer certainly emphasizes the importance of the commands and the summary of this paragraph.

This command does not receive as much attention in rabbinic literature. *Sifra* on Leviticus applied it to "the love of your own people,"²² and extended it to the "proselyte who accepted responsibility for all the teachings of the Torah."²³

²¹John Piper, "Love Your Enemies" (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 10.

²²Jacob Neusner, trans., *Sifra: An Analytical Translation* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 109.

²³*Ibid.*, 128.

Previous Joining of the Two Commands

Perkins has called to our attention references to love of God and love of neighbor in noncanonical literature before the common era.²⁴ The Covenanters of Damascus admonished their adherents "to love his brother as himself . . . to seek each one the well-being of his brother" (CD 6.14-7.2).²⁵ The manual makes it apparent that these admonitions as well as Lev 19:18 were designed to regulate the conduct within the sect (cf. CD 9.2-5). In the book of *Jubilees* Noah requires that his sons:

do justice and cover the shame of their flesh and bless the one who created them and honor father and mother, and each one love his neighbor (Jub 7:20).²⁶

In the same book, Isaac comes close to commanding the double love command when he speaks to his sons, Jacob and Esau:

And among yourselves, my sons, be loving of your brother as a man loves himself, with each man seeking for his brother what is good for him, and acting together on the earth, and loving each other as themselves. . . . Remember, my sons, the Lord, the God of Abraham, your father, and (that) I subsequently worshipped and served him (Jub 36:4-7).

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs brings the love of God and the love of neighbor together in the Testaments of Issachar, Dan, and Benjamin.

Keep the law of God, my children;
achieve integrity; live without malice,
not tinkering with God's commands or your neighbor's affairs.
Love the Lord and your neighbor. (T. Iss 5:1-2)

The Lord I loved with all my strength;
likewise, I loved every human being as I love my children. (T. Iss 7:6)

Throughout all your life love the Lord,
and one another with a true heart. (T. Dan 5:3)

Now, my children, love the Lord God of heaven and earth; keep his commandments; . . . Fear the Lord and love your neighbor. (T. Benj 3:1-3)

These texts inform us that noncanonical Jewish literature before the

²⁴Pheme Perkins, *Love Commands in the New Testament* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist, 1982), 13-21.

²⁵Translation from Philip R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1982), 249.

²⁶Quotations from the Pseudepigrapha are from *OTP*.

common era was concerned for both love of God and love of neighbor.²⁷ While some references to love of neighbor are concerned for persons within the group, Issachar claims to have “loved every human being.” From these texts, one cannot draw the conclusion that there is a verbal parallel with the wording of Deut 6 regarding love for God; on the other hand, where else would one find the origin of “love of neighbor” than Lev 19:18. These references inform us that, when Jesus spoke the double love command, Matthew was not presenting unique subject matter. Rather Matthew was portraying Jesus as the master teacher reformulating traditional material in a different configuration.

There is no way of knowing whether or not Matthew or Jesus was aware of all the traditions before their time, or whether or not they considered all of the background possibilities for these two commandments as we have done. In Matthew, Jesus gives these two commandments as foundational to all others. This implies more than a narrow application of these words. “To love” will require further explanation.

A Summary of the Law

From the point of view of first-century context, Matthew portrayed Jesus as one able to deal with questions of the law as well as his contemporaries. Rabbinical sources discuss the importance of single laws or the summary of the law. The Babylonian Talmud describes how the 613 precepts of Moses were reduced by David to eleven, by Isaiah to six (and later to only two); Micah had only three principles, Amos had one, “but it was Habakkuk who came and based them all on one [principle]” (b. *Makkoth* 24a).

Not only was Jesus’ summary of the law in keeping with contemporary practice of the rabbis, but also his formulation, “On these two commandments depend [hang] all the law and prophets,” was similar to rabbinic discussion. Donaldson has argued that the use of *keremannumi* “was deliberately echoing a rabbinic formulation.”²⁸ This Gk word is used

²⁷The date and Christian influence on *T. 12 Patr.* is much debated. Here I follow the dating of Howard Clark Kee, “The Ethical Dimension of the Teaching of the XII as a Clue to the Provenance,” *NTS* 24 (1978): 259-270, and *OTP* 1:77f. While there are Christian interpolations at some points, M. DeJonge notes that parallels to the parenthesis in *T. 12 Patr.* will be found in the Wisdom literature of the LXX, Hellenistic philosophers, or late Christian parenthesis (*Jewish Eschatological, Early Christian Christology and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* [Leiden: Brill, 1991], 158). The texts quoted here are not judged to be Christian interpolations.

²⁸Terence L. Donaldson, “The Law That ‘Hangs’ (Matt. 22:40): Rabbinic Formulation and Matthean Social World,” *SBLSP 1990* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), 16.

to translate the Heb *tala / talah* in the LXX. Matthew has chosen a word without parallel in Mark and Luke, and this is the only place in the NT that it is used in a figurative sense.²⁹ The most direct parallel in rabbinic sources is from the Babylonian Talmud:

Bar Kappara expounded: what short text is there upon which all the essential principles of the Torah depends [hangs]? "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He will direct thy paths" [Prov 3:6]. (b. Berakoth 63a)

It is always risky to argue that a rabbinic formulation was already in use in the first century. Donaldson posits, however, that another reference in the Mishnah to "rules hanging" (m. *Hagigah* 1:8) pushes the possibility of a rabbinic formulation earlier, and that the discussion of summary laws goes back to Hillel.³⁰ When a proselyte asked Hillel to teach him the Torah while he stood on one foot, Hillel replied: "What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is commentary thereof; go and learn it" (b. *Shabbath* 31a). While we cannot resolve all questions of dating such sources, it does seem arguable that Donaldson is right to state that: "the conclusion is quite probable that in describing the whole Torah as 'hanging' on the commandments to love God and neighbor, Matthew was deliberately echoing a rabbinic formulation."³¹ Even if we are not able to accept a direct connection between Matthew's formulation and early rabbinics, we can conclude that Matthew portrayed Jesus involved in the same efforts of interpretation present in the rabbinic sources.

Matthew's Portrayal of Jesus

Why then did Matthew portray Jesus in this manner in this pericope? First, it is consistent with the overall portrait of Jesus in this gospel. By design Matthew has presented Jesus as a master teacher.³² While there are various ways of analyzing the entire Gospel, there is no way to avoid the fact that large blocks of material are given over to the teachings of Jesus. In this Gospel, Jesus is recognized as a teacher of standing by his contemporaries. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount the crowds compared Jesus with their scribes (7:25). More than once the reader is told that Jesus went throughout the country "teaching in their synagogues"

²⁹Ibid., 15.

³⁰Ibid., 16.

³¹Ibid.

³²See my article, "Matthew xxviii 16-20 and the Design of the First Gospel," *JSNT* 10 (1981): 2-18.

(4:23; 9:35). Furthermore, Jesus' peers addressed him as teacher (Matt. 8:19; 9:11; 17:24; 19:16; 22:23).³³ This Greek title is the translation of the Hebrew *rab*. Throughout the Gospel Jesus, with his disciples, functions as a rabbi. So here Jesus was presented to Matthew's audience as one who was able to discuss questions related to the Torah as competently as any contemporary rabbi. He was aware that there were summary laws at the foundation of all other laws.

Second, this pericope brings closure to the ongoing verbal debate between Jesus and the Pharisees, his chief opponents throughout the Gospel.³⁴ There had been an increasing tension between Jesus and his opponents since his entry into Jerusalem and his cleansing of the temple (21:1-17), expressing itself in a challenge to Jesus' authority (21:23-27) and continued efforts to discredit Jesus (22:16-40). Matthew made it explicit that earlier the Pharisees were attempting to entangle or entrap Jesus (22:15), and in our immediate paragraph we are told that the lawyer is "testing" Jesus. The reader cannot ignore the fact that Matthew places the double love command in a hostile context. On the positive side, the crowds were "astonished" (22:33) when they heard Jesus' response to the Sadducees. At the same time the Pharisees recognized that Jesus had "silenced" or "put down" the Sadducees. Apparently their spokesman, this lawyer, assumed he could come off better than the Sadducees. Matthew records no immediate response from anyone regarding Jesus' answer to the lawyer's question. Instead, Jesus immediately asked the Pharisees, who had interrogated him, a question which no one could answer. The conclusion in v. 46 must be applied to the Pharisees since Matthew has made them the main recipients of the question in v. 41. In other words, Jesus was portrayed as silencing his opponents. The quarrel that had been building since 21:1 was now resolved. Jesus had verbally overcome his adversaries. A reasonable interpretation of this pericope would suggest that Matthew was attempting "to show the Pharisees up as hypocrites."³⁵ If that is the case, it anticipated, as Montefiore noted, the stringent attack of Jesus on the Pharisees in chapter 23 where he more than once called the Pharisees "hypocrites."³⁶

³³For the difference between the way opponents and true disciples addressed Jesus, see Jack Dean Kingsbury, "On Following Jesus: The 'Eager' Scribe and 'Reluctant' Disciple (Matthew 8.18-22)," *NTS* 34 (1988): 51.

³⁴Cf. David E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 43ff.

³⁵Alan F. Segal, "Matthew's Jewish Voice," in *Social History of the Matthew Community*, ed. David L. Balch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 8.

³⁶C. G. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels: Edited with an Introduction and Commentary* (London: Macmillan, 1909), 2:46; cf. Garland, 26.

The closure to Jesus' debate with his opponents in Jerusalem is further indicated by the change in Jesus' audience after this pericope. In chapter 21-22 there were Sadducees, Pharisees, chief priests, elders, crowds, and disciples listening to Jesus' teaching. In 23:1, the audience was reduced to "the crowds and his disciples." In 24:1 Jesus spoke only to his disciples what is recorded in chapters 24 and 25. In other words, Jesus' answer of the double love command was his last statement addressed to all factions in his audience. We cannot ignore the fact of this closure and the significance it suggests for the content of this paragraph.

"Law and Prophets"

In this pericope (Matt 22:34-40) Matthew affirms that these two commandments are foundational to all sacred writings: "On these two commandments depend [hang] all the law and the prophets." This summary does not appear in Mark or Luke. Matthew has made a special point by deliberately adding "prophets"; he desired to include all writings sacred to his audience.³⁷ The combining of "law and prophets" appears only four times in Matthew's Gospel, each time in a significant context. The first is 5:17, early in the Sermon on the Mount. Here Jesus claimed that his intention was not to set aside the law and prophets but to fulfill them. He then amplified a selection of the laws in 5:21-48, showing his interpretation of fulfilling the law and prophets. It is not clear from 5:17-20 whether Matthew intended that 5:21-48 or the total Sermon fulfilled the totality of the Hebrew Scripture. There is no question, however, that what follows must be taken as an interpretation of Hebrew Scripture. Jesus is presented in the Sermon as beginning a completion of former teachings.

"Law and prophets" are joined together a second time in 7:12 where at the end of the "golden rule" the text declares: "for this is the law and the prophets." The recurrence of the phrase would prod the reader to reflect on what has been included between 5:17 and 7:12. The antitheses certainly addressed the relationship of one person to another—neighbor to neighbor. They addressed the issue of respect for persons (5:21-26), the relation of the opposite sexes (5:27-32), the concern for truth between parties (5:33-37), retaliation and peacemaking (5:38-42), and love for enemies (5:43-48). While one's relation to God is alluded to in this section, the text addresses primarily the way the individual should treat her/his neighbor, and so gives content to "Whatever you wish that men would do

³⁷Stephenson H. Brooks, *Matthew's Community* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 26, f.n. 4; cf. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 1:484.

to you" (7:12). The teaching in chapter 6 may be summarized as the practice of good conduct as one is committed to the heavenly Father. Such teaching contributes to right conduct towards others. The phrase "law and prophets" in 5:21 and 7:12 frames, as it were, a block of teaching that interprets and even goes beyond the teaching of the traditional scriptures of that day. It was by design, not accident, that Matthew placed this phrase thusly; it is consistent with his placing the Sermon in the early part of his Gospel as the "platform" speech of Jesus. Matthew intended for this Sermon to be accepted as an authoritative position, so he comments at the end of the Sermon: "For he taught them as one having authority" (7:29).³⁸

The third time "law and prophets" appear in Matthew is 11:13. There the terms are reversed: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John." There do not seem to be any parallels to this order.³⁹ The writer "has probably reversed the order to underline the prophetic side of the scriptures,"⁴⁰ since his reference in verse 14 is to the prophet Malachi (4:5), who predicted the return of Elijah.⁴¹ It is interesting that Malachi has brought together Moses the lawgiver (4:4) and Elijah the prophet (4:5) at the end of his book where he predicts the return of Elijah. The larger paragraph (Matt 11:7-15) describes Jesus' evaluation of the Baptist. While there are interpretive options on some of the words and phrases, one thing seems clear: With the Baptist "something new, God's great turning point has come."⁴² This turning point was prophesied by "the prophets and the law." That is to say the "prophets and law" and/or "law and prophets" verified that something new was taking place in the ministry of Jesus.

Such an interpretation enhances the interpretation of "law and prophets" in 5:17 and 7:12. In Jesus' teaching something new happened. The turning point had come. The dramatically new dimension of Jesus' preaching/teaching/healing ministry was recognized by the new departure in 4:17, "from that time."⁴³ The Sermon on the Mount is an explicit

³⁸For a discussion of "authority" vis-a-vis Rabbinic backgrounds see Daube, 212 ff. Davies and Allison, relate "authority" to Jesus' claims in 11:27 and 28:18 (1:727f.).

³⁹Davies and Allison, 2:256, f.n. 93.

⁴⁰Ibid., 256.

⁴¹Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 210.

⁴²Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 263.

⁴³This point has been well established by Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), esp. 7-11.

statement of the substance of Jesus preaching/teaching. Early in the Sermon, Jesus claimed that he was fulfilling the "law and prophets." Then he later in 7:12 reiterates that his teaching is "the law and prophets." Each time "law and prophets" are used together it is in a context where Jesus projected his awareness that his teaching and ministry are a new departure. Where the reference was specifically to his teaching, Jesus claims that it epitomizes or fulfills the totality of Hebrew Scripture. So when this term, which appears in limited use, is used to add weight to Jesus' last ethical utterance in public, surely we are justified in concluding that the double love command is being given maximum significance by Matthew.

The Double Love Commandment a Summary of Jesus' Teaching

To what extent does this pericope summarize Jesus' ethical teaching? Davies argues that "the concept of love is undoubtedly the best summation of the ethical teaching of Jesus," and significant priority is given to such a summary when all God's demands are stated in the double love command.⁴⁴ Furnish claims that "for Matthew the most important epitomization of the law is clearly the double commandment."⁴⁵ The question confronting us, however, is how did Matthew design his Gospel to demonstrate that he intended the double love command to be a summary of Jesus' ethical teaching?

In considering the love-of-neighbor command, Matthew has given no application or suggested parameters in the context of 22:34-40, unlike Luke who elaborates the command by the parable of the Good Samaritan. Surely Matthew and his readers had some common understanding of what love of neighbor included. As noted above, this text reflects Lev 19:18, the context of which gives rules for fair play among the members of the community, and the content of which is the summary of the individual rules.

Matthew addressed the issue of the content of love the first time he introduced the command to love in 5:44. There the command is specifically to "love your enemies". In this context the content of love has already been suggested in the preceding antithesis. There, in each paragraph, the behavior of the disciple toward other human beings is described. Briefly, the disciple must not be angry (5:22) nor have lustful thoughts (5:28). She/he must be devoted to truth (5:37) and reconciliation (5:38-42). To the extent that the antithesis of 5:21-41 represents Jesus'

⁴⁴W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: University Press, 1966), 431.

⁴⁵Furnish, 33.

basic ethical teaching for Matthew, the love command summarizes his teaching. If the reader has made the connection between the ethical ideals in the antithesis in 5:21-41 and the summary in the love command of 5:42-48, the reader will have some content or reference point when he/she encounters the love command in subsequent paragraphs in the Gospel.

When the unidentified person in Matt 19:16 asked Jesus about eternal life, a second question prompted Jesus to reply by reciting a list of commandments, one of which was: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (19:19). Even the unidentified character in the story, presumably from the Pharisees (19:3), would have some understanding of the conduct required by love. That person would be aware of the traditional interpretations of Lev 19:18. Because the reader of Matthew's Gospel has been exposed to Jesus' ethical teaching and its summary in 5:21-48, as well as the golden rule of 7:12, the content of the command to love your neighbor is evident. The same can be said when one comes to the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" in 22:39. The love command has not been given without adequate insight into the meaning of love when applied to the neighbor.

When we consider that part of the double love command that requires love for God, we find a similar situation. It is appropriate to recall the application of law given above in the discussion in Deuteronomy where love was amplified to mean loyalty, allegiance, and obedience. From the very beginning of his teaching Jesus demanded loyalty (5:11). At his first reference to the law and prophets (5:17), he required obedience to his commands (5:19). At the end of his Sermon, he required that the listeners "do" his works. In the first antithesis (5:21-26), the main focus is on the relation of one neighbor to the other; however, God is present at the altar. Thus, one's relationship to God accompanies one's relation to the neighbor. The presence of God and neighbor appears again in 5:33-38 and is quite emphatic in the final antithesis (5:43-48). Thus God and love are brought together. Although "love for God" was not commanded in that paragraph, why else would the disciples be motivated to love their enemies if they were not loyal and obedient to God whom they loved? By the time the first command to love is given, God's presence and involvement are obvious. It is impossible to separate love of neighbor from love of God.

The demand to love God does appear by itself in 6:24 in the segment of the Sermon of the Mount that is describing absolute loyalty and allegiance to God (6:1-34). God must be loved rather than mammon. Even this emphasis on loving God comes between love for enemy in 5:44 and the golden rule of 7:12. While the use of the word "love" in reference to

God appears only twice prior to 22:37, it is enough to remind the reader that love for God demands loyalty and obedience, the very essence of the injunction, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (22:37).

What then is the function of the double love command in the Gospel of Matthew? (1) It was used to summarize the use of "love" in this Gospel. (2) By emphasizing love of God and love of neighbor, it has encapsulated the basic demands of Jesus on his would-be followers. (3) It re-iterated Jesus' prerogative to give his own interpretation to the law and prophets, the totality of Hebrew Scriptures. (4) It was Matthew's way of showing that Jesus silenced his opponents, the Pharisees, in preparation for Jesus' criticism of them. All of this was done in the last public ethical teaching by Jesus; the only remaining public dialogue questioned the Pharisees understanding of the Messiah (22:41-46).