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THE LOVE FOR THE POOR NEIGHBOUR: IN MEMORY OF HER (MATTHEW 26:6-13)

ABSTRACT

This article explores whether the Jesus saying in Matthew 26:11 contradicts the Jesus tradition about caring for the poor. Bultmann's understanding of the love commandment provides a key to understanding this perceived paradox. On the one hand, in Matthew 19:21, Jesus says that to love one's neighbour as required by the Decalogue means, in practice, to dispose of all riches and give the money to the poor. On the other hand, in Matthew 26:6-14, Jesus pardons the woman who anointed him with precious oil in anticipation of his burial rather than selling the oil and giving the money to the poor. The article argues that the Matthean Jesus did not contradict himself. Bultmann's insight into the dialectical dissociation between Christian ethics and Stoic ethics supports the coherence in Jesus' view on caring for the poor.

> O Galilee, Galilee, thou hatest the law; thine end will be to have to deal with brigands (Yohanan ben Zakkai, *y. Shabbat* 15d, quoted in Elliott-Binns 1956:74).

1. MATTHEW AND GREEK WISDOM

On the one hand, in Matthew 19:21, Jesus states that loving one's neighbour as required by the Decalogue means, in practice, to dispose of all riches and give the money to the poor (πτωχοῖς). On the other hand, in Matthew 26:6-14, Jesus pardons the woman who anointed him with

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precious oil in anticipation of his burial rather than selling the oil and giving the money to the poor.

Bultmann's interpretation of the commandment to love one's neighbour provides a key to understanding these two pronouncements in the Jesus tradition. It means that the Matthean Jesus did not contradict himself. Bultmann's insight into the dialectical dissociation between Christian ethics and Stoic ethics supports the coherence of the Jesus tradition, also regarding the ostensible contradiction in Jesus' view on caring for the poor.

To discuss the Matthean Jesus in a framework of Greek wisdom does not detract from the "Jewish" social location of either Jesus or Matthew. I am convinced that Matthew was a "Hellenist Jew" (Van Aarde 2014a:134), with roots in Jerusalem (Van Aarde 2004a:713; 2008:175). Whether Matthew's intended audience was located in post-war Sepphoris (Gale 2005:57-62) or in southern Syria, bordering northern Galilee (Schweizer [1973] 1995:219; 1983:129-130) – the latter being my preference[1] – the Graeco-Roman influence on the scribal origins of Matthew's Gospel is clear. This influence also extends to the underlying oral tradition regarding the "division" between "the rulers and the ruled", the residue of which can be detected in family life, politics, economics, religion, and domestication.[2]

Freyne (2004:307) observes a "clear allusion to the Roman administrative presence" in Matthew. According to Freyne (2004:307), "[i]nevitably these conditions will give rise to internal strife and divisions, even within families". Beare deems the word παλιγγενεσία ("regeneration") in Matthew 19:28 to be a reinterpretation of the Stoic theory of the "commencement of the next cycle of the universe" (Beare 1981:398). Regeneration "was not periodic, nor was it the commencement of a cycle essentially the same as the old" (Beare 1981:398). Freyne (2004:307) interprets this as "a technical term taken over from Stoicism referring to the rebirth or renewal of all things in a great cosmic upheaval". I have also argued for the influence of Greek common wisdom on both the Sayings Source Q (9:58) and the Gospel of Matthew (8:20) (Van Aarde 2004b:423-438), referring to the tradition about the Roman senator brothers Tiberius and Gaius Grachus

1 I do not regard Antioch as the social location of the Matthean community, as many scholars suggest (for example, Schroedel 1991:154-177; cf. Meier 1983:22).

2 Horsley (2010:109) refers to "these texts" (both those in Mark and Matthew) as memories from a context in which "no split has yet taken place between 'Christianity' and 'Judaism'", but as

> stories of the fulfillment of Israel that has now expanded to include other, non-Israelite peoples … The division evident in the texts is between the rulers and the ruled, not between "Jews" and "Christians".

regarding poverty in the Roman provinces, as attested to by Plutarch (*c.* 46-120 CE).[3] Graeco-Roman influence can be noted specifically in the Stoic background to "kingdom" (βασιλεία) (cf. Diogenēs Laertios)[4] in Jesus' parables, and in those narrated in Matthew (Van Aarde 2014b). Harding (2003:198) describes this as follows:

> By Imperial times Stoicism was largely concerned with ethics. Seneca and Epictetus taught that one ought to live in accord with nature, that nature taught the fundamental equality of all humankind and that regardless of status, all were bound under the obligation to live in accordance with that universal law.

Harding (2003:198) points out that "[e]arly Judaism perceived the Torah in a similar way to the Stoic conception of a universal principle (see Sirach 24:5-8, 22)". In her book *Socratic Torah*, Labendz (2013:98) demonstrates the "cultural mixing that took place in Roman Palestine". Greek philosophical influence can also be detected in the rabbinic dialogues on the "idea that God guarantees loans to the poor" (Labendz 2013:46-48). Supporting arguments for Graeco-Roman influence on first-century Galilee are the fact that Flavius Josephus[5] calls the thought of the Pharisees the "fourth philosophy" (cf. Klawans 2012:163-164) and that Josephus reports that Nero reinstalled the royal bank and state archives in Sephoris in *c.* 61 CE, after it had been moved from Sephoris to Tiberias.[6] Sephoris lost

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3 Plutarch (*c*. 36-120 CE), Tiberius and Gaius Graccchus, IX. 3-5, in Capps *et al.* (1921:164-167), *Plutarch's lives*:

> The wild beasts that roam over Italy have every one of them a cave or lair to lurk in; but the men who fight and die for Italy enjoy the common air and light, indeed, but nothing else; houseless and homeless they wander about their wives and children … and though they are styled masters of the world, they have not a single clod of earth that is their own.

A parallel saying occurs in Plutarchus' *Life of Tiberius Graecus* (cf. Boring *et al.* 1995:208; Bultmann 1963:28; Horsley 1996:240). The quote from Plutarchus is an excerpt from a speech about land reform delivered in the Roman Senate in 133 BCE (cf. Stockton 1979:39). In his book, Stockton (1979:22) wrote that the agrarian policies of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus "provide the central themes of Roman political issues for the next century" (cf. Sandys 1910:268). According to Bultmann ([1931] [1968] 1972:98), what Tiberius had said was "applied to the person of Jesus for the first time, perhaps, in the Greek Church".

4 Diogenēs Laertios (*c*. 300 CE, [1853] 2008), which consists of anecdotes by Stoic philosophers such as Persaios (*Diog. Laert*. 7.36), Cleanthes (*Diog. Laert*. 7.175), and Sphairos (*Diog. Laert*. 7.178) (cf. Malitz 1988:161, n. 72; Shaw 1985:28, n. 23).

5 Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 18.4-10, 23-25; *De Bello Judaico* 2.118.

6 Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 20.159; *De Bello Judaico* 2.232.

its status as capital city when Tiberias became the new Galilean capital in 20 CE (cf. Chancey 2002:72).[7]

Matthew's Gospel is about the Torah. He regards Jesus as the "Torah Incarnate" (Gibbs 1968:38-46). He aims to preserve the Torah in accordance with how Jesus understands God's will. In the northern Galilee-southern Syria region, in post-war "temple-less" formative Judaism, village scribes guided communities as they tried to cope with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple state economy (cf. Horsley 1996:181-184). In the context of Roman imperialist exploitation (cf. Senior 2011:15-18; Carter 2005:145-165; Sim 2005:91-106), some village scribes were traditionalists who upheld the values of the "temple state", whereas others were messianists (Christ followers). During this time, Pharisees became the most influential cultural party in Roman Palestine (cf. Neusner [1973] 2003). Matthew was but a "marginal scribe" (cf. Duling 2012). The division between the scribes centered on the interpretation of the Torah.

According to Strecker (1966:45-49, 184-188), the Gospel of Matthew is about "the way of righteousness" in a dialectical "historizing" (referring back to Jesus) and "idealizing" way. Righteousness (in Greek δικαιοσύνη and in Hebrew/Aramaic, צְדָקָה), denoting "equity in the administration of justice" (Davidson 1967:640), includes God's care for the poor (cf. Van Aarde 2014a:139). However, there could also be a Stoic rationale to the seemingly paradoxical assertion by Matthew's Jesus: "The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me" (Matt. 26:11). Bultmann's understanding of neighbourly love can contribute to elucidating this paradox.

2. THE POOR IN THE JESUS TRADITION

In Early Christianity, wealth meant material prosperity and riches, just as it does nowadays. At that time, poverty or wealth was an indication of the quality of the support of kin. Family was the central social structure. The familial network was a buttress against deprivation. One's dignity, economic and political credibility as well as social honour were closely connected with family ties. Family also determined a person's religious acceptability. The destabilisation of the extended family as a social structure on account of military conquests, changes in land ownership, taxation, and agricultural exploitation – in short, the abuse of political power – resulted in an ever-widening gap between rich and poor. The "poor" were not only the landless and homeless, the day labourers, the vagabonds

7 Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 18.36-38; *De Bello Judaico* 2.16.

who survived on begging, or the peasants.[8] Aristocrats or retainers could also be "poor" if they were considered "sinners". They were also socially disadvantaged. This resulted in stigmatisation. As disgraced outcasts, they could lose their material comfort, land and family (cf. Luke 19:1-10).

In the New Testament, the difference in the degree of the disgrace of being poor was lexicographically captured by the terms πτωχός and πένης (cf. Stegemann [1981] 1984:14).[9] The Greek word πτωχός indicates social deprivation. Such people often became beggars such as Lazarus in Luke 18, the poor blind man Bartimeus in Mark 10, or the man in the ditch in the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. The possessed, paralytics and those who were sick or afflicted with pain were the socially disadvantaged. They were the marginalised who came to Jesus to be healed. They heard and believed his "gospel of the βασιλεία" (Matt. 4:23-24). They were not only from Judea or Galilee, but also from beyond the borders of the Israelite ἔθνος, such as Decapolis and the Transjordan (Matt. 4:25). In Matthew's Gospel, they were those who suffered persecution, were hungry, mourned,

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8 New Testament scholars and archaeologists differ as to the extent of poverty in first-century Galilee (cf. Freyne 2006:64-83). Jensen (2006) and Levine (2007:57-87) are not convinced of "dire poverty". Loader (2009:23) concedes to "diversity", "some ... extremely poor, but others for whom poverty was relative". He emphasises that

> While evidence does not suggest widespread abject poverty in Galilee, the people would surely have seen themselves as the poor and longed for the change for which their religious traditions encouraged them to hope (Loader 2009:27).

Sim (2009:75-90) is not convinced that all in the Matthean community were well-off. In mixed socio-economic contexts, Matthew warned against the accumulation of wealth.

9 πένης is the term most frequently used in ancient Greek literature. In the New Testament, it appears in 2 Cor. 9:9, quoting the Old Testament. A semantically related word, πενιχρός, is used in Luke 21:2. Josephus preferred ἄπορος. ἐνδεης is used in Acts 4:34. Other expressions are used metaphorically in the New Testament, for example ἀσθενής in Gal. 4:9, meaning weak or sick. According to Stegemann ([1981] 1984:14), πτωχός refers to the "desperately poor, wretched creatures who are fighting for their survival" (cf. Malina 1986:148-159; 1987:354-367; Hollenbach 1987:50-63; Stegemann & Stegemann 1995:90-92; Crossan 1998:320-322; Corley 2002:41). Loader (2013:233-266) questions this, since it "ignores ... its [πτωχός] broader use in the LXX and the Hebrew semantic ranges reflected there". However, these "ranges" of the Semitic equivalents of the Greek word πτωχός do not call into question the distinction between "being poor" and 'being disreputably poor", *i.e.* being destitute. These "ranges" vary from "without property, so dependent on others; poor, wretched, in a needy condition" to "the poor devoted to God as in the psalms" (cf. Loader 2009:3-35).

and longed for peace. They were the "poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3) of the Beatitudes and not "rich" (Q 6:24).

In the Synoptic Gospels, one can identify eighteen types of unhappy people who can be regarded as "poor" and in whose lives Jesus intervened (cf. Hollenbach 1987:50-63). The reason for their misfortune was either "natural" causes or social circumstances.[10] According to Matthew, the "poor" had many faces. The Canaanite mother with the possessed daughter who came from the other side of the border and pleaded for mercy (Matt. 15:21-22) was an example of the "poor in spirit". The lame, the maimed, the blind and the dumb, and people without familial support were regarded as outsiders. They were healed (Matt. 15:29-31) and satisfied (Matt. 15:32-39). In the "holiness code" in the Book of Leviticus, not only fellow tribesmen (רֵעַ) were "the neighbour" who should be cared for, but also foreigners (גֵּר) (cf. Meier 2009:494; Gerstenberger 2014:28 n. 2). The Jesus tradition affirmed this love for the neighbour and extended "neighbour" to include the "enemy".

The word "neighbour" should be used cautiously, taking different connotations in different cultures into account. In the Israelite (Eastern Mediterranean) context, the group to which people belong determines their social identity, role and value (cf. Malina & Neyrey 1996:151-201). To care for the group is to care for oneself. According to Philo Judaeus,[11] self-impoverishment is to inflict poverty on one's own blood relations (cf. Philips 2001:118). Protecting the group is protecting oneself (Gospel of Thomas 25:1-2). The body is a metaphor for the group.

10 The vast majority of them were ill or disabled: the blind (Luke 4:18; Matt. 11:5; Luke 14:13, 21); the lame (Matt. 11:5; Luke 14:13, 21); the lepers (Matt. 11:5; Luke 16:19-31); the deaf (Matt. 11:5), and the sick (Matt. 25:31-46). These are six of the eighteen types of socially scorned people. Those displaced from the family form a category of thirteen types: the mourning (Matt. 5:3ff.); the hungry (Matt. 5:3ff.; 25:31-46; Luke 16:19-31); the thirsty (Matt. 5:3ff.; 25:31-46); the lepers (Matt. 11:5; Luke 16:19-31); the deaf (Matt. 11:5); the dead (Matt. 11:5); the lame (Luke 14:13, 21); the widows (Mark 12:42-43); the orphans (Luke 16:19-31); the beggars (Luke 16:19-31; Matt. 25:31-46); the strangers (Matt. 25:31-46); the naked (Matt. 25:31-46), and the sick (Matt. 25:31-46). Those with economic problems form a category of five: the hungry; the thirsty; the homeless; the beggars, and those without clothes. According to Hollenbach (1987:50-63), only four types of the socially despised can be identified in that situation because of the use or abuse of political power: the prisoners (Luke 4:18; Matt. 25:31-46); the oppressed (Luke 4:18); the meek (Matt.5:3ff.), and the lepers.

11 Philo Judaeus [1 BCE-1 CE], *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit*/"Every good man is free", in Cohn & Reiter ([1896] [1915] 1962, Vol. 6, 21).

In the ancient Mediterranean world, borders would shift from the innermost circle outwards, from the extended family, to the ἔθνος (a 'tribal assembly' of kin such as the "house of Israel", also referred to as the "children of Abraham"), to beyond, for example, Judea, Galilee, Samaria, Syria, Asia Minor, as far as Rome. This shifting of borders manifested geographically, biologically and ethnically. Phenotipical aspects such as skin, eye colour or facial features were not the distinctive properties that established borders. In addition, in the multilingual Semitic-Hellenistic and Hellenistic-Roman worlds, language did not determine borders (cf. Duling [2003] 2008:799-818). Religion, along with other "natural" qualifications such as geography, biology and ethnicity, played a role in constituting groups. God is the God of Israel, as the *Shema* prayer puts it in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Jesus repeats this in the commandment to love one's neighbour in Mark 12:28-34 (cf. Meier 2009:490-495).

When "church" (ἐκκλησία) became the term (for, *inter alia*, Paul, Matthew and Luke [Acts of the Apostles]) for the new community of Christ followers, the "border" changed. The church was a "cross-border" group. In Leviticus 19:18b, the love of the neighbour (in Greek πλησίον; in Hebrew רֵעַ) is deliberately qualified in 19:34 to also include the sharecropper-stranger (in Hebrew גֵּר; in Greek ἀλλογενής) (cf. Meier 2009:494; Gerstenberger 2014:28, n. 2). In Christian ethics, there is no qualification, because of Jesus' understanding of what love for "the neighbour" means.

3. "THE POOR YOU WILL ALWAYS HAVE WITH YOU" – SOLVING AN ENIGMA

Bultmann's interpretation of the commandment to love one's neighbour provides a key to the pronouncements in the Jesus tradition in Matthew 19:21 and 26:6-14 about the poor. According to this interpretation, they should not be seen as a contradiction. For Matthew, this "apophthegm" is not about "Simon the leper" (Matt. 26:6), probably a "folk memory in the Gospel readership" (Nolland 2005:1051), about "Simon the Pharisee" (Luke 7:36-50), or about the "the disciples" (Matt. 26:8) who are portrayed throughout Matthew as people of little faith (Van Aarde 2013:187-212). It is about the woman who remains unnamed. With this in mind, Matthew changes Mark (cf. Nolland 2005:1051). Where Mark (14:3) simply says "a woman came", Matthew (26:7) records that she "came to him [Jesus]" and he adds ἐπί to the verb "poured out".[12] Matthew hereby emphasises the close relationship between Jesus and the woman. Nolland (2005:1051) comments correctly:

12 An accusative would be expected. Matthew, however, keeps Mark's genitive for Jesus' head (Nolland 2005:1051, n. 26).

"This woman's coming is like no other … Jesus interprets her action rather than the specifics of her intention" (Nolland 2005:1052). However, Nolland (2005:1053) misses the point when he mentions that, for Jesus, "the priority of the poor was not to be simply equated with the practice of austerity (cf. [Matt.] 11:19)" and that Jesus "recognised the validity of other priorities [than those of the poor] as well". Nolland allegorises by saying that the "absolute contrast" between Jesus' and the disciples' "valuation of her act" is that "what for them was the loss of a valuable resource was for him the makings of such a reputation as would gain worldwide currency" (Nolland 2005:1056).

Davies and Allison's ([1997] 2004:443) remarks are noteworthy, but do not contribute to resolving the enigma of an ostensible incoherence in Matthew's point of view on the care for the poor. They quote from Nineham's ([1963] 1992:372) commentary on Mark which refers to Jesus' "gracious humanity in his treatment of others". However, concurring with Bultmann's ([1931] [1968] 1972:37) concept of "biographical apopthegm", Davies and Allison hold the view that this Jesus saying probably reflects a factual biographical episode in his life, in which he responded to peoples' (in Matthew, the disciples') objection "by defending the woman's action with a thought-provoking revision of Deut 15.11" (Davies & Allison 2004:443, n. 11): "For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land."[13]

However, Keener, who also emphasises the allusion to the Hebrew Scriptures, correctly comments that, even if a Rabbinical use of Deuteronomy 15:11 (for example, The Babylonian Talmud, *Tractate Shabbat*, 63a-b)[14] was known to Matthew (or to the historical Jesus), this use "appears irrelevant to his [Matthew's] use of the allusion" (Keener 2009:620 n. 37). According to Keener (2009:620), Matthew's unnamed woman "supplied something for Jesus shortly before his death that no one else can exactly repeat". He refers to her act as "sacrificial love", by which he means "all their resources for the work of the kingdom (13:44), including serving the poor (6:2, 19-24; cf. Lk 12:33-34)" (Keener 2009:620). However, despite the theological desirability of seeing the woman's act as "sacrificial love", Keener's proposal does not solve the problem either.

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13 Deut. 15:11, *Revised Standard Version of the Bible* [1952] 1971.

14 Cf. Sinclair (1993:107):

> All Israel are obliged to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, but one has a stronger obligation in relation to one's own family members. A person should not stand by and watch his relatives descend into poverty, but should help them out with loans or in other ways.

Garland (1993:249) views the woman's ointment as pointing to the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross. He builds on Daube's (1956:315) reflection on the Rabbinical tradition in *Tosepta Pe'a* (4:9) and the *Babylonian Talmud Sukka* (49b). Daube interprets Matthew 26:11 as an allusion to these Rabbinic catalogues of good works: "[B]urying the dead surpasses almsgivings, putting up strangers and visiting the sick" (Garland 1993:249). In other words, the burying of the dead must be done today, but visiting the sick can be done tomorrow. According to Garland (1993:249), "[T]he incident affirms that neither the precious ointment poured out for Jesus nor his blood poured out for the many is a waste". This too, does not solve the problem.

In my view, Luz ([1989] 2005:337-342) comes closest to a solution. However, he dichotomises Matthew's appeal to "follow Jesus" and the disciples' "ethical praxis" (Luz 2005:337). Though Luz does not "want to devalue care for the poor", this is, in fact, what he does. One could concur with him that Jesus [and the male disciples] "have taken over the interpretation of her deed". According to Luz (2005:338), "[w]e no longer learn what the woman herself intended by anointing Jesus' head".

What, then, asks Luz (2005:339), could Matthew's intention with the "relationship between serving Christ and serving the poor" have been? I agree with Luz (2005:342) that the problem will not be solved by contrasting "alms and works of charity in the rabbinic sense, although the woman's total devotion has much in common with what the rabbis called ***nemīlut ḥesadīm*** (works of charity)".

According to Luz (2005:342), "the issue is the woman's relationship to Jesus". He describes it as follows: "[A] total commitment of herself to him who is going to his death." I agree that the issue at stake is *relationship*. This is the focal point of Matthew's interpretation of the episode. The woman's anointing of Jesus represents "an act of total and unlimited attention to the person of Christ". It is not "simply the enthusiasm of a new convert that Jesus lovingly permits with pastoral understanding" (Luz 2005:342). Luz (2005:343) puts it as follows:

> That is not what must be remembered everywhere the gospel is proclaimed. Instead, it is an expression of her relationship to Christ, not simply of the recognition of who he is but of devotion to Him.

However, Luz fails to show the congruence between Jesus' ethics of caring for the poor and the unnamed woman's "relationship to Jesus".

To me, Bultmann unlocks this enigma. The connection he makes between Jesus' command of neighbourly love and a person's relationship to Jesus provides the key. This understanding depends on the recognition of the Stoic ethics underlying the Matthean discourse.[15]

4. RUDOLF BULTMANN ON THE CHRISTIAN "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR"[16]

4.1 The essence of Christian ethics

In his Jesus book published in 1926 and a French article in 1930, Bultmann reflects on what Jesus could have meant with the commandment of loving one's neighbour.[17] This commandment is the essence of Christian ethics. For Bultmann, ethics refers to behaviour motivated by either the imperative of having to do something in a certain way, or by an "*Ich und Du*" relationship (Bultmann [1930] 1958:229). The former focuses either on the *result* to be achieved or on the *action itself*.[18] There is a distinct difference between "ought" and "must". The ethics of "ought" is about obedience to instruction rather than realising an ideal. It is also not about the transition from *sein* (where I am) to *sollen* (where I should rather be) (Bultmann 1958:230). It is not about improving one's circumstances or contributing to a better society. It is about submitting to an external authority. The external authority, rather than ideals or the realisation of an ideology, determines the here-and-now (*jetzt*) (Bultmann 1958:230). Over against this, the ethics of Christ followers is characterised by an "*Ich*

15 Bryant (1866:31) explains this common background:

> Both [Christianity and Stoicism] allowed and taught an universal law, by which all nature and all events are regulated; but while the one teaches that the universal law is the wisdom of an infallible Lord constantly superintending and ordering all things well, the other held that all were arranged according to the decrees of a blind and unalterable fate.

16 Mark 12:29-31; Matt. 22:37-40; Luke 10:27; *Did.* 1:2; *Gos. Thom.* 25:1-2; *Barn.* 19:5; Lev. 19:18 (LXX) (cf. Funk 1990:196-197).

17 Bultmann ([1926] 1983:77-84). His view on Christian ethics expanded on his earlier work on Pauline ethics (Bultmann 1924:123-124). In 1930, he discussed the matter again in an article entitled "Das christliche Gebot der Nächstenliebe", published in *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses*. In 1933, a German version was published, and, in 1958, it was included in the first volume of *Glauben und Verstehen: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (cf. Van Aarde 2014c:27-42).

18 Cf. Bultmann's (1958:229, n. 1 & 2) connection to Brunner's work *Der Mittler: Zur Aufgabe der Christologie*. As far as the "*Ich-Du*" relation is concerned, both Brunner and Bultmann follow Ebner (1882-1931) and Buber (1878-1965) in their use of terms (cf. Smith 2006:22-23; Casper 2002).

und Du" relation, a relationship with another, rather than by an external abstract claim to authority or ideology.

4.2 An "*Ich und Du*" (I and Thou) relation

Human action does not take place in a vacuum. It affects others, either directly or indirectly. Actions that affect human interrelationships have ethical implications (*Miteinandersein*) (Bultmann 1958:231). The "neighbour" is not only someone with whom one has an existing relationship, for example parent-child, fellow countryman, or compatriot – someone for whom one is obligated to care or provide. It is rather about being-with-others "unconditionally" (*Sein von vornherein [ist] ein Sein mit Anderen* – Bultmann 1958:231).

According to Bultmann, questions such as "Who is my neighbour?" and "What can I do for you?" may sound good, but can be misleading. They could imply that *I* am the agent who can exist in the world without the you being there for me. However, the *Ich* is not possible without the *Du.* In Heidegger's (1927:52-54) terms, this means that the "you" becomes simply a phenomenon to be perceived as an object that can be manipulated ("*ein vorhandenes Weltphänomen*" – Bultmann 1958:231, n. 2).

4.3 The influence of the Greek philosophical ethics

According to Bultmann (1958:233), Greek philosophical ethics still has an influence on the modern Western world.[19] In this frame of thinking, ethical actions are understood as "technique" (τέχνη). Objects are artfully formed and repaired. Being human is such a work of art (Bultmann 1958:232). The artwork has a purpose (τέλος), namely to reach an ideal final state. The aim is, for instance, what is "beautiful and the good" (καλοκἀγαθία), also known as justice (δικαιοσύνη). The ideal state is a "cosmos" that is a well-ordered, structured, harmonious whole, the end product of the technique (Bultmann 1958:232).

In Greek thought, interpersonal relationships affect the παιδεία (culture and education). The other is not my neighbour, but the object of my activity (ἔργον), which aims to realise the ideal or goal (τέλος) of that ideology. Individuals or communities are not taken into account. I (the *Ich*) and you (the *Du*) both exist for the sake of the realisation of the ideal (Bultmann 1958:233). There is, therefore no ethical relation between us. Both "good" and "evil" become part of the realisation of the ideal of a

19 This means the time when Bultmann published his essay about loving the neighbour, first in French in 1930 and then in German in 1933. He also included it in *Glauben und Verstehen* in 1958.

well-ordered cosmos. The ethical effects of actions are coincidental. The ethics as "*Miteinandersein*" (being with others) of the pre-Aufklärung (Stoic) period has been lost.[20] The "I" endeavours to free itself from the "*Du*" (Bultmann 1958:233).[21] In an "*Ich-Du*" relation, the other is not viewed merely as material substance (an object). There is an ethical relation that includes qualities such as justice and peace. This would constitute "*Miteinandersein*".

4.4 The love commandment

Jesus' commandment to love one's neighbour *can* be the answer to the question: "What am I to do?" The answer would be dialectical (Bultmann 1958:235). The commandment *cannot* be the answer to the question: "What am I to do?", unless love is the purpose and ideal of the action. It *can* be the answer if the person is more important than the formality, when *relationship* takes precedence over institutionalism, cultural conventionalism and tradition.

Love is not a theoretical matter designed to sanction an ideology or cultural custom. Love, as required in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) or the parable of the shepherd separating sheep from goats ("the heritage of the βασιλεία, since the foundation of the κόσμος")[22] (Matt. 25:31-46), is not about *what* I must do ("*ein Was des Handelns*" – Bultmann 1958:235) or virtues. It is a concrete expression of the *I* being in relationship with the *you*.

According to Matthew's "κήρυγμα of the divine βασιλεία", this relationship manifests primarily where there is an "I-Thou relationship" between Jesus and his follower. The result is seeing and feeding the hungry, seeing and

20 In Stoic ethics, the focus is neither on the individual nor on the fellow individual, but on humanity in its entirety (Bultmann 1958:232). In pre-Stoic ethics, the ideal of the πόλις or κοσμοπολιτεία was the focus. In the Stoa, the πόλις ideology was replaced by the concept "kingdom of God" (βασιλεία) as the "divine household" (cf. Shaw 1985:29; Van Aarde 2014b:1-3 of 11). However, also in Stoicism, reason takes precedence over love. Ferraiolo (2004:10) points out that for the Stoic

> ... love for others must be tempered by recognition of human frailty and a rational understanding of the loved one's susceptibility to danger. The stoic sage loves others, but also recognizes the mortality of his beloved.

21 In the (Bultmann's) 20th century Western context "justice" and "dignity" as personal qualities are no longer the focus. People rather tend to take advantage of others' fairness and faithfulness. Ideology dominates, be it national socialism, Christian democratism or Communism.

22 κληρονομήσατε τὴν ἡτοιμασμένην ὑμῖν βασιλείαν ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου (Matt. 25:34. In B. & K. Aland *et al*.), [1981] 1992:74).

welcoming the stranger, seeing and clothing the naked (Matt. 25:37ff.): "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least (τῶν ἐλαχίστων) of these of my kin, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40) (RSV [1981] 1992:74).[23] For Bultmann (1958:235), the meaning of Jesus' interpretation of neighbourly love is: You will find your neighbour where you find yourself and what you will discover, is that which you *must* do (my paraphrase).

The phrase "you shall love your neighbour as yourself" does not ask for a general human love, founded on an abstract idea of what human dignity is ("*die begründet wäre durch einen abstrakten oder idealen Wert des Menschen*" – Bultmann 1958:238). My love for real people on a grass-roots level is based on their being fellow human beings. I can really only understand the answer to the question: "Who is my neighbour?" if I am able to love tangibly (Bultmann 1958:238). The commandment of love does say what love is. Those who ask what it is, by asking the question, make it clear that they do not love sufficiently (Bultmann 1958:238). All of humanity is my neighbour (Bultmann 1958:236). I do not choose who I want to regard as my neighbour.

If humanity is viewed as an isolated subject and human beings as an abstract, love cannot be understood, because love manifests in togetherness and can only be understood in connectedness. Love is a manner of being with the other ("*eine Art des Miteinanderseins"*) (Bultmann 1958:240). As a possibility of human exsistence (*Liebe als Existenzmöglichkeit*), love can only be understood in the togetherness of human beings in the "*Ich-Du*" relationship (Bultmann 1958:240-241).

Human beings cannot explain their love to the other (Bultmann 1958:241). The other can only recognise love when they are loved in their togetherness ("*wenn er sich in seinem Mit-andern-sein als Geliebten zu verstehen vermag"*) (Bultmann 1958:241). There are no demonstrable criteria for the experience of love. Only those who believe that love exists can recognise and receive love (Bultmann 1958:241). Love is only received in love; and to be loved means to also love (Bultmann 1958:242, n. 1). To receive this love is an action, an action that implies faith. God's love forgives my lovelessness (Bultmann 1958:243). Forgiveness is love and frees one to love (Bultmann 1958:242).

23 Translation adjusted, from the *Revised Standard Version*, in Nestle (edited by B. & K. Aland *et al*.) ([1981] 1992:74).

5. STOIC ETHICS

If neighbourly love exists in relationship, then relational ethics can be viewed as embedded in Stoic ethics.[24] The Stoics used Plato's *Republic* (cf., for example, Long [1997] 2011:21; Brown [2003] [2009] 2011) to answer questions about ethical conduct, good and bad, and what makes one ill or healthy (Schofield 2003:240). Choices always had to be made. For Cicero, Rome could only become an empire, if Rome's interests took priority, irrespective of the injustice done in the process. Cicero mentioned that an example of a choice that goes against this convention would be when the owner of a slave who has run away (who has been disloyal), or the owner of a house full of germs and plague, wants to dispose of either the slave or the house and makes the problem (disloyalty or illness) known and gets a lower price. Such a person could be regarded simultaneously as a good person and a fool (Cicero, in Lactantius, *Div. Inst*. V, 16). The choice is, therefore, to either promote the interest of the divine's οἴκησις [25] or to be conventional (cf. Schofield 2003:252-253). Are you moral or are you a fool?

According to Crisippius (*Diogenes Laertius* VII.89), one's choices and judgements can be more predisposed toward the whole, the institution, than toward the individual. If the action is conventional, the institution will benefit. Actions that benefit the individual are unconventional. The knowledge of experience will motivate one to choose the unconventional (cf. Epictetus, *Dissertationes* III.24.84-87). The institution, the system, the ideology provides breathing space for individuals, but should not determine one's choices (Schofield 2003:255).

Epictetus and Seneca deconstructed the Stoic ethical system. This can be noted especially in their different understanding of reciprocity. One should not act in a certain way, because one expects dividends. Self-interest should not be the objective.[26] In the Jesus tradition, to love the

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24 Ferraiolo (2004:5) quotes from Marcus Aurelius:

> Neither can I be angry with my brother or fall foul of him; for he and I were born to work together, like a man's two hands, feet, or eyelids, or like the upper and lower rows of his teeth. To obstruct each other is against Nature's law – and what is irritation or aversion but a form of obstruction.

25 The Stoic concept "God's household of the world" (διοίκησις θεῖα τοῦ κόσμου) (cf. Shaw 1985:29; Long [1997] 2011:25-27; 2007:250-251) transformed the *poli*s ideology and its hierarchy and exploiting system (cf. Van Aarde 2014b).

26 The ball games during the Olympic Games are an example (Seneca, *De beneficii* 11.17.3-4, referring to Chrisippius). The one party throws the ball forcefully to the other so that the other cannot easily return it. The aim is to humiliate the other and to become the "victor". True victory would be if you were to throw the ball

poor or to love someone who is going to die and who cannot repay because of dire poverty or death would be non-reciprocal love. An example is the woman who poured ointment on Jesus' head and thereby "prepared his body for burial" (Matt. 26:12). The love for the neighbour that Bultmann describes is based on Jesus' commandment and shares Stoic values. The latter does not represent an ideology. On the contrary, it testifies to the love for the other arising from the "*Ich-Du*" relation. Love's aim is not reciprocity. It is not given in order to receive it in return.

"Neighbourly love" as such was known long before formative Christianity. However, the *novum* for Christ followers is expressed in: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". The difference is the New Testament grounding of ethics in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. Van Aarde 2013b). Just as the Christ, so the Christ follower; just as Christ, so yourself; just as yourself, so your neighbour; as for your neighbour, so for God. The distinctive of Christian love for the neighbour is that love for your neighbour is love as you love your inner self (ψυχή). Paradoxically, he who gives up the "self" (ψυχή) saves the "self" (Mark 8:35). Matthew (16:24) recaps this Jesus tradition: to follow Jesus is to carry a cross. For what profit could there be in gaining the world but forfeiting one's life? (Matt. 16:26)

According to Bultmann, love becomes possible if human existence is experienced as being grounded in God through Christ. As a reordering of history, love becomes an eschatological reality (Bultmann 1958:243), just as rightneousness is "*ein eschatologisches Heilsgut*" (Bultmann 1924:123): "der *dikaōtheis* [the righteouss person] ist der neue Mensch der Heilszeit". Love follows from re-creation based on the resurrection of Christ (Bultmann 1958:243). In this sense, love is not a novelty in the history of humanity, but is the *new* commandment for people who are a *new* creation in Christ. When Christ makes the love of God a new reality in the lives of human beings, then love becomes a reality (Bultmann 1958:243).

This love can be understood as "eschatology", in the sense of *Entscheidung* – the decision to detach oneself from philosophical ideas or cultural conventions that provide only false security. Neighbourly love as an *Entscheidung* (in the sense of detachment) presupposes a μετάνοια, a παλιγγενεσία, a regeneration, a reordering of values. Then people understand themselves to be in the same situation as the neighbour (Bultmann 1958:244), namely determined by their transience and κατὰ

so softly that it lands in the hands of the other, who is then able to return the ball. There is no reason to humiliate or conquer the other (Schoffield 2003:256). This would be loving one's neighbour (cf. Stephens & Freezell 2004:200-201, 208).

σάρκα existence. Both my neighbour and I are "sinners" bound to the law of nature and both are pardoned (Bultmann 1958:244).

6. IN MEMORY OF HER (MATTHEW 26:13)

Relational ethics constitute the foundation of neighbourly love. Devotion to God is tantamount to loving the neighbour, specifically the *poor* neighbour. Love gives the person in need dignity in the eyes of God.

One of the influential theologians responsible for the "ecclesial conversion" of the Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum Secundum (1962-1965), Yves Marie-Joseph Congar (1904-1995), stated that real love does not assert itself "in the masked and apparently disinterested form of serving our Church" (Congar [1962] 1967:40). Mallon (2010:211) expands on Congar's (1964:35) reflection on "power and poverty in the church". Similar to the ethics of Bultmann (1924), Brunner (1927) and Kierkegaard ([1890] 1924), she coins the concept "agapic love" to illustrate authentic love as a detachment from power and self-interest. She puts it as follows (quotes from various publications of Congar):

> The agapic love of God in Jesus Christ transforms the human experience of otherness (*exteriorité*) and orders human relationships such that for the Christian, the other is no longer stranger but neighbour. "Christianity could not but inspire a new order in the world, since it involved a new way of looking at life and the regarding of others as one's neighbours." In this manner, Christian service can approach, in however small a measure, the agapic quality of divine love, a "love that seeks not itself but gives itself, and for this very reason is directed towards the weakest and the most wretched".

In Jesus' time, dispossession took various forms. Loss of land and loss of life both meant deprivation. Poverty and death form two sides of the same dispossession. In Graeco-Roman ethics, in the early to mid-first century BCE, Lucretius, an Epicurean (the opposite of Stoicism), saw wealth, power and honour as "devices for warding off death". According to Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura* 111.59-69), "the neediness of poverty and low status is thought to be a state bordering death, and the rich and powerful person feels, by contrast, an almost godlike security" (quoted in Nussbaum 1994:261-262).

The Jesus saying, "For you have the poor always with you; but me you have not always" (Matt. 26:11), in terms of Stoic philosophical logic (cf. Van Aarde 2014b:5), represents a λεκτόν (sayable) which obtains two

"statabilities":[27] (1) *Jesus is going to die* and (2) *Poverty does not avert his death.*

By taking offence at the unnamed woman's act of balsam, Jesus' disciples, however, separate death and poverty in a non-Stoic manner.

According to conventional wisdom, Israel's Messiah would be expected to cure poverty, but it would not be expected of him to die in the process. The woman with her *kerygmatic* act (Matt. 26:13) of accepting the death of God's Messiah (Matt. 26:12), on the other hand, is "coming like no other" (Nolland 2005:1051). She – an unnamed social outcast who is present in the house of "Simon the leper" (Matt. 26:6) – demonstrates an intimate relationship with Jesus by pouring ointment on his body. Her decision exemplifies a detachment (*Entscheidung*) when she "wastes" very expensive ointment (Matt. 26:7).

In this episode, Jesus deconstructs Epicurean wisdom. Matthew reinterprets the event by pointing out the imperfection of the disciples and those who agree with them. As long as brigands rule over Galilee, in the words of Yohanan ben Zakkai who refers to the Deuteronomic saying 15:11 (*y. Shabbat* 15d, in Elliott-Binns 1956:74), God's righteousness has not been established by God's Messiah and the poor will remain in the land. This is often reiterated in the Jesus tradition (Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-38; John 12:7-8).

For Matthew, Jesus is the saviour of all Israel (Van Aarde 2007:429-436). An uncompromising commitment to Jesus requires following in his footsteps and participating in his death. Poverty will not disappear from the land as long as such a relationship with Jesus is lacking. Such a relationship brings about a reordering of cosmic realities and all other relationships. Jesus' command to love the neighbour redefines all of

27 In the history of Stoic grammar and logic, the term λεκτόν refers to a kind of "proposition" (cf. Blank & Atherton 2003:323) and forms a "part of speech" (Blank & Atherton 2003:114). The term λόγος constitutes a "word-complex" and is distinguishable from λεκτόν which refers to a sayable that can include, among others, an assertible, an inquiry, an imperatival, a question, and so on (cf. Bobzien 2003:85-86). Assertibles "can be stated, but they are not themselves statements" (Bobzien 2003:86). "Statability" presumes a "truth-value" (Bobzien 2003:87). Truth and falsehood are temporal properties of assertibles:

> This "temporality" of the [truth-values of] assertibles has a number of consequences for Stoic logic. In particular, assertibles can in principle change their truth-value: the assertible "It is day" is true now, false later, and true again tomorrow. The Stoics called assertibles that (can) change their truth-value "changing assertibles" (*metapiptonta*). Most Stoic examples belong to this kind (Bobzien 2003:87-88).

one's abilities, boundaries and relationships – in other words, a complete reordering of all aspects of life.

The earliest Christ followers – Matthew included – interpreted Jesus' death in Stoic epistemological, ontological, and ethical terms. Matthew (19:27-29) refers to it as the time of regeneration (ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ – Matt. 19:27-29) (cf. Van Aarde 2011). The willingness to die with Jesus requires the commitment to take care of the poor. Turning one's back on Jesus amounts to a choice for the continuing presence of poverty. Relational ethics presupposes a commitment to both Jesus and the poor. Such a relationship implies a reordering of life.

According to Stoic ethics, to be liberated from one's abilities (δυνάμεις) should not result in "passivity" and the fatalistic attitude of "whatever happens is God's will" (Epictetus, *Fragmenta* 3).[28] Stoic relational ethics "is subjected to determinism, in that human beings are determined to act in accordance with their relational roles as mother, brother, daughter, or citizen" (Oaks [1993] 2009:50). Christian ethics, however, is not predetermined by traditional cultural roles, but is motivated by the *kerygma* about the divine kingdom rather than by enslavement by the law of nature. To understand this freedom, based on the gospel of Jesus, the "Torah Incarnate", is to understand Jesus' command to love one's neighbour, especially the poor. Matthew's commemoration of the unnamed woman's act of love is congruent with Jesus' love for the poor.

Bultmann helps us understand this *kerygma* of a commitment to boundless love – a commitment "in memory of her"[29] (Matt. 26:13), and ultimately in memory of the legacy of Rudolf Bultmann.[30]

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28 Epictetus (in: Schenkl, ed., 1916:455-460, 452-475).

29 With recognition to the title of Fiorenza's book (1984).

30 Cf. Van Aarde (2014d).

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