

## LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR MORE?

Jesus commanded that we must love our neighbour as ourselves. Most people see God as representing that attitude so to debunk it is to debunk God.

You cannot love your neighbour as yourself and there is nothing to be ashamed of for that is the way we are. We get by and have a good enough life without people loving us as they love themselves.

Love your neighbour as yourself is nasty but its being a law makes it more vicious. Laws are not laws unless they imply threats if you don't comply. A law that does not wish evil on you if you refuse to comply is not a command or law. The command however seeks to make you feel awful about being a normal person and makes you feel never good enough. (Its being a command makes it more vicious. Commands are not commands unless they imply threats if you don't comply.) That is why those who try to practice it, end up feeling that they should love others and not themselves. It was a clever ruse by the Church to put people down and to keep them coming to the Church for elusive comfort from the sacraments and the prayers. You cannot love yourself if you try to love others as yourself for it burdens yourself. In fact Jesus' commandment may have been a poetic way of saying love others and not yourself. It could be like one of his parables and ironies.

It is easy to love yourself but loving others is harder. You would have to do more for others than for yourself because it is so easy to wrongly think you love them as yourself. So you have to be sure and act as if you put them before yourself. Is this loving your neighbour more than yourself? Some say it is not. They it is only making sure that you do love your neighbour as yourself. Rather than loving them more than yourself, you are acting as if you love them that way in the hope that you will manage to love them as yourself. Even if loving others more than yourself is wrong, you are doing the only thing you can to help yourself love your neighbour as yourself. Thus your behaviour is justified.

Believers teach that if you act as if you adore your neighbour more than yourself you will find eventually that you value the neighbour more than yourself.

Jesus told the apostles that he gave them a new commandment to love one another as he loved them in the John Gospel 13:34-36. This is different then from the Old Testament commandment, "Love your neighbour as yourself" for it was an old commandment. Jesus accepted the Old Testament command so it seems that he meant we have to love one another enough to die for one another like he supposedly did. The preceding sentence has Jesus saying he will only be around a little while so that was probably what he had in mind. The line after also says that Jesus will sacrifice himself to death and Peter says he will sacrifice himself too. The Law also commanded people to die for others say in war. So why does Jesus say it's a new commandment? Could it be that the gospel is obliquely saying that Jesus wants people to die UNNECESSARILY for others? That is the only explanation. If the apostles committed suicide by getting themselves martyred then we cannot rely on them at all. Jesus said that the whole world would know they are his disciples by their love and obedience to the new commandment. But the apostles lived obscure lives and died deaths that are masked in legend. This prophecy proved false. It was only in the second century that stories of this remarkable suicidal fanatical love of the apostles appeared which tell us plenty about when this ludicrous gospel was written. It was written too late to be depended on.

In Ephesians 5:28,29 we learn that early Christian doctrine declared that whoever loves his wife loves himself and that it is unnatural for a man not to love his own wife for that is not loving his own self. So loving another person at your own loss is loving yourself. That logic enabled the Church to mean, "Let others use you as they please, serve them and forget about yourself or what you need for yourself" while claiming that this loving was loving yourself. Strictly speaking, other people come first. If squatters steal your house then you must go and sleep under the bush and not complain. This is fully in line with Jesus' teaching that if people take our things and do not return them we must let them keep them.

The apostle Paul decreed in 1 Corinthians 10 that people must copy his example and be anxious for the advantage of everybody else and not themselves so that the people they help may be saved. He bluntly states that other people must be put first. Here in Paul, the idea that some people will not achieve salvation is used to argue that you must put the salvation of other people first when you are already saved. Even if you are not saved you can still work to save them. This is actually a very tough ethic and demands you love your neighbour more than yourself.

You will agree with popular morality that all people are as valuable as you are. Now since you are most sure you exist, you will have to treat yourself as more valuable not out of snobbery but out of there being no alternative. Jesus wanted us to have an other-centred outlook which means that his commandment really means this: "Love your neighbour but instead of yourself and don't mean it when you say you love yourself." We all sense this which is why we have a difficulty in getting interested in keeping the commandment.

When X hurts Y, X has proven he should not be trusted. But if Y forgives we celebrate that. In that case, we imply that she is bad if she does not forgive. We are also implying that she should put herself at risk. If I forgive that is my business. But when I encourage somebody else to do it and praise them for it it is doubtful that I really care about the person.

The Didache, subtitled The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, is a work that is definitely from the first century for its Eucharist and rites are so primitive and because it emphasises morality and not Jesus. It's teachings then are closer to what Jesus was originally believed to have stood for than the gospels which are more advanced and embellished. Some indications of second century practice occur in the text but there is no reason for dating it to the second century for these practices could have been carried on before then and plus the evidence for the first century date is more substantial.

The Didache claims that Jesus' teaching was that I have to love my neighbour more than myself. Hardly surprising after what the John gospel says.

Jesus said to a Jew that he must love his neighbour. He asked who should count as his neighbour? Jesus singles out the enemy in need of your help. The good Samaritan found a Jew in a terrible condition after being robbed and beaten up. Jews and Samaritans hated each other. The Jew will be in danger of being hated and hurt himself by assisting. There are bandits around who will attack you if you hang around. That is what happened to the victim after all. But Jesus tells you to go ahead and help for it is not about what will happen to you but what will happen to him if you walk away. It is out of your control if bandits will attack you and your own people as well. That is their call but your call is this man who will maybe die without your help. Jesus is developing his doctrine that you deserve no praise for loving those who love you. Your neighbour is really your enemy and the person who needs your help most. Loving good neighbours does not count when you are not worrying about the sick person down the road. Jesus shows that love is not about paths of roses but paths of thorns. If that is what you have with neighbour imagine what you must do to love God! The command to love God totally is the main command!

When you read the apostle Paul's letters, and the Church regards them as the word of God, we learn that Christians are obligated to bear with one another in total selflessness (Ephesians 4:1-6). Paul said that one meaning of Jesus' death was that he died to spare us the death we deserved and he saved us from this death so that we might live not for ourselves but for him (2 Corinthians 5:14-17). If we help others because we want to feel good and people to like us then we are living for ourselves. Loving your neighbour as yourself really should be clarified as love your neighbour more than yourself. Love your neighbour as yourself means you help others with total disregard for self. If you look after yourself so that you can help others you are doing it for them not you. That is not loving yourself but using yourself as a means to serve others.

Paul the apostle says that the best love is dying for those who hate you. That is love your neighbour more than yourself. One will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us... For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Romans 5:7-8, 10 (NASB)

The verse denies that God was helping his enemies and sacrificing for them because he thought he could make them good. That would contradict the point Paul is making that its love to die for enemies. If you can die for a good man, you can die for a person to make them good. There is nothing remarkable about that. Paul also indicates that those Jesus died for may be saved but they are not necessarily good yet.

Christianity can only give love a bad name! It is conniving how the requirement of love of neighbour more than self is kept from the people. But people sense that it is expected of them and the anger simmers away. Consider how Catholics take it out on Protestants in Northern Ireland and vice versa.

St Francis knew that what Jesus meant by love your neighbour as yourself was not that you are to love yourself but to love rather than be loved. Such love cannot be given to yourself but only to another.

## BOOKS CONSULTED

A CATECHISM OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, CTS, London, 1985

A HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY, VOL 6, PART II, KANT, Frederick Copleston SJ, Doubleday/Image, New York 1964

AQUINAS, FC Copleston, Penguin Books, London, 1991

BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL, Friedrich Nietzsche, Penguin, London, 1990

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, Association for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, Dublin, 1960

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, Veritas, London, 1995

CHARITY, MEDITATIONS FOR A MONTH, Richard F Clarke SJ, Catholic Truth Society, London, 1973

CHRISTIANITY FOR THE TOUGH-MINDED, Edited by John Warwick Montgomery, Bethany Fellowship, Minnesota, 1973

CRISIS OF MORAL AUTHORITY, Don Cupitt, SCM Press, London, 1995  
 EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT, VOL 1, Josh McDowell, Alpha, Scripture Press Foundation, Bucks, 1995  
 ECUMENICAL JIHAD, Peter Kreeft, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1996  
 GOD IS NOT GREAT, THE CASE AGAINST RELIGION, Christopher Hitchens, Atlantic Books, London, 2007  
 THE GREAT MEANS OF SALVATION AND OF PERFECTION, St Alphonsus De Ligouri, Redemptorist Fathers, Brooklyn, 1988  
 HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS, Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, Monarch, East Sussex, 1995  
 HONEST TO GOD, John AT Robinson, SCM, London, 1963  
 HOW DOES GOD LOVE ME? Radio Bible Class, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986  
 IN DEFENCE OF THE FAITH, Dave Hunt, Harvest House, Eugene, Oregon, 1996  
 MADAME GUYON, MARTYR OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, Phyllis Thompson, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1986  
 MORAL PHILOSOPHY, Joseph Rickaby SJ, Stonyhurst Philosophy Series, Longmans Green and Co, London, 1912  
 OXFORD DICTIONARY OF PHILOSOPHY, Simon Blackburn, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996  
 PRACTICAL ETHICS, Peter Singer, Cambridge University Press, England, 1994  
 PSYCHOLOGY, George A Miller, Penguin, London, 1991  
 RADIO REPLIES, 1, Frs Rumble & Carty, Radio Replies Press, St Paul, Minnesota, 1938  
 RADIO REPLIES, 2, Frs Rumble & Carty, Radio Replies Press, St Paul, Minnesota, 1940  
 RADIO REPLIES, 3, Frs Rumble & Carty, Radio Replies Press, St Paul, Minnesota, 1942  
 REASON AND BELIEF, Brand Blanshard, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1974  
 REASONS FOR HOPE, Ed Jeffrey A Mirus, Christendom College Press, Virginia, 1982  
 THE ATONEMENT: MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION, Kevin McNamara, Archbishop of Dublin, Veritas, Dublin, 1987  
 SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD, Jonathan Edwards, Sword of the Lord, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, undated  
 THE BIBLE TELLS US SO, R B Kuiper, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1978  
 THE BRIEF OF ST ANTHONY OF PADUA (Vol 44, No 4)  
 THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE MORAL DILEMMA, G R Evans, Lion Books, Oxford, 2007  
 THE GREAT MEANS OF SALVATION AND OF PERFECTION, St Alphonsus De Ligouri, Redemptorist Fathers, Brooklyn, 1988  
 THE IMITATION OF CHRIST, Thomas A Kempis, Translated by Ronald Knox and Michael Oakley, Universe, Burns & Oates, London, 1963  
 THE LIFE OF ALL LIVING, Fulton J Sheen, Image Books, New York, 1979  
 THE NEW WALK, Captain Reginald Wallis, The Christian Press, Pembridge Villas, England, undated  
 THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD, Brother Lawrence, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1981  
 THE PROBLEM OF PAIN, CS Lewis, Fontana, London, 1972  
 THE PUZZLE OF GOD, Peter Vardy, Collins, London, 1990  
 THE SATANIC BIBLE, Anton Szandor LaVey, Avon Books, New York, 1969  
 THE SPIRITUAL GUIDE, Michael Molinos, Christian Books, Gardiner Maine, 1982  
 THE STUDENT'S CATHOLIC DOCTRINE, Rev Charles Hart BA, Burns & Oates, London, 1961  
 UNBLIND FAITH, Michael J Langford, SCM, London, 1982  
 WHAT DO EXISTENTIALISTS BELIEVE? Richard Appignanesi, Granta Books, London, 2006  
 WITCHCRAFT, SORCERY AND MAGIC, J B Midgley, Catholic Truth Society, London, 2006