This is one of the few statements Jesus made that is readily accepted by believers and skeptics alike. Its authenticity is not seriously questioned and yet it is a revolutionary command.

Giving attention to various critical theories, John Piper presents evidence that the early church earnestly advocated for non-retaliatory love, extending it to those who practiced evil in the world. Such love was key to the church’s own ethical tradition or paraenesis.

Piper illuminates the Synoptics and passages in Romans, as well as 1 Thessalonians and 1 Peter, with non-canonical evidence, investigating the theological significance of Jesus’s love command.

Originally published as #38 in the Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, this is John Piper’s doctoral dissertation from the University of Munich. It is a serious work of Christian scholarship by a long-time respected author and pastor. This repackaged edition features a new, extensive introduction and will be of interest to scholars, students, and lay people who have training in New Testament studies.

“This is a book for those who are professional scholars and for those who are not…. It will have to be on scholarly shelves, and it ought to be on the preacher’s shelves as well, and most frequently off them too.”

DAVID CATCHPOLE, The Churchman

“A rewarding book, not only for its wholesome critical orientation with regard to the unity and authenticity of the New Testament’s witness to Jesus, but especially in its satisfying portrayal of the inner dynamics of Jesus’s radical message.”

R. T. FRANCE, The Evangelical Quarterly

JOHN PIPER (ThD, University of Munich) is pastor for preaching and vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. He has authored dozens of books, including What Jesus Demands from the World, The Future of Justification, and Think.
Contents

Preface to the 2012 Republication v
Note on the Title and Previous Editions xi
Preface to the 1979 Edition xii
Abbreviations xiii
Introduction 1

1 In Search of the Paraenetic Tradition of a Command of Enemy Love 4
   I. The Pertinent Texts 4
   II. Literary Dependence or Common Traditional Source? 5
   III. Determining the Form of the Command in the Paraenetic Tradition 8
      A. I Thess 5:15 8
      B. Rom 12:17 and I Pt 3:9 14
   IV. Conclusion 17

2 The Origin of the Command of Enemy Love in the New Testament 19
   Paraenetic Tradition 19
      I. The Question and the Approach 19
      II. Hellenistic Philosophy 20
         A. Seneca 21
         B. Epictetus 25
      III. The Old Testament 27
      IV. Hellenistic Judaism 35
         A. Works from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha 35
         B. Philo 39
      V. Qumran and Works in the Region of its Influence 39
         A. Manual of Discipline 40
         B. The Book of Jubilees 42
         C. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs 43
      VI. Palestinian Judaism outside Qumran 45
         A. The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach 45
         B. Josephus 46
         C. The Rabbis 46
      VII. The Teaching of Jesus 49
         A. The Question of Q 49
         B. The Question of the Antitheses 51
         C. Analysis of the Individual Sayings 56
      VIII. Conclusion 63

3 Jesus’ Command of Enemy Love in the Larger Context of His Message 66
   I. Preliminary Remarks 66
      A. The Hermeneutical Problems 66
      B. The Validity of Systematizing 67
      C. The Content of the Chapter 68
II. Jesus’ Command of Enemy Love and the Kingdom of God 69
   A. Four Recent Studies and One Older Work 69
   B. Jesus’ Command of Enemy Love and the Coming Kingdom: Condition? 76
   C. Jesus’ Command of Enemy Love and the Present Aspect of the Kingdom: Enablement 80
   D. Jesus’ Command of Enemy Love as a Sign of the Kingdom 86
   III. Jesus’ Command of Enemy Love and the Law 89
       A. Non-Resistance (Mt 5:39–42) vs the Lex Talionis (Ex 21:24) 89
       B. Enemy Love (Mt 5:44 par Lk) vs Neighbor Love (Lev 19:18) 91
       C. Abolition vs Continuation of the Law 95

4 The Use and Meaning of Jesus’ Command of Enemy Love in the Early Christian Paraenesis 100
   I. Preliminary Remarks 100
   II. The Motivation of the Command of Enemy Love 101
       A. A Brief Survey of the Previous Research 101
       B. Paul 102
       C. I Peter 119
   III. The Content of the Command of Enemy Love 128
       A. The General Features of Enemy Love 128
       B. Love and the Command of Enemy Love and the Institutions of Society 130

   I. The Gospel Tradition of Jesus’ Command of Enemy Love before the Gospels 134
       A. Determining the Vorlage 134
       B. Determining the Sitz im Leben of the Vorlage 136
   II. The Gospel Tradition of Jesus’ Command of Enemy Love in the Gospels 139
       A. The Approach and Methodology 139
       B. Matthew’s Use of the Gospel Tradition of Jesus’ Command of Enemy Love 141

Conclusion 171
Notes 176
Bibliography 235
Index of Passages Cited 249
Index of Modern Authors 267
Index of Subjects 271
Preface to the 2012 Republication

A Monument to Mercy and Faithfulness

Publishing again my doctoral dissertation, written for the theological faculty of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München, is like building a monument to God’s mercy and faithfulness. Monuments are usually built much later than the event celebrated, in this case, the years 1971–1974 in Munich, Germany. Monuments are not about themselves. They remind. They point. In this case, to the mercy and faithfulness of God. Monuments are often made of plain, lifeless stone while representing something utterly vital and beautiful. In this case, a mere book representing the shining face of God and his mighty hand on my life in those days—and before.

Mercy and faithfulness are the right words. It was a huge risk to study theology at a German university in the 1970s. In fact, from my parents’ standpoint, I had been taking increasing risks since I left home in 1964. From their solid, joyful, biblically faithful fundamentalism, my going to Wheaton College was a risk. Then to go to Fuller Seminary was a greater risk. Then to go to the University of Munich was the greatest risk of all. But none of these moves was motivated in me by a departure from the fundamentals my parents embraced. I loved them then. I love them now.

That was not the case with all my classmates. I know Wheaton classmates who walked away from the faith of their parents. I know Fuller classmates who now think it is intellectually impossible to be a Bible-believing evangelical. And in my part of the University of Munich, I was totally alone in my view of the inerrancy of Scripture, not to mention my Edwardsian commitment to doxology as the aim of all theology, and my inveterate skepticism, not of Scripture, but of all so-called ‘assured results of higher criticism.’

A Hard Thicket to Get Out Of

This was the context for God’s mercy and faithfulness. For three years, most of my time was spent reading cutting-edge German, British, and American New Testament scholarship, with a tiny bit of French thrown in. I sat in classes (all in German) and watched as world-class scholars led young ministerial candidates into the thicket of Religionsgeschichte (history of religions) and Traditionsgeschichte (history of traditions) and Formgeschichte (form criticism) and Redaktionsgeschichte (redaction criticism) and Sachgeschichte (almost untranslatable: substance/essence criticism). I say ‘led them in,’ not led them out.
It is a hard thicket to get out of. And why would you want to, since it seemed as though the esteem of the academic guild and pride of scholarship flourished there? But this is where the mercy and faithfulness of God comes in. I was not smarter than others. Smartness is not a fruit of the Holy Spirit. But I had different intellectual taste buds.

**Inoculated with Joy**

Under the guidance of Daniel Fuller, from 1968 to 1971, I had tasted the sweetest spiritual fruit from the painstaking exegetical effort to understand the intention of the inspired biblical authors. His method was not to suspiciously peel away layers of tradition from the biblical books in search of some other *Sitze im Leben* (setting in life). It was the backbreaking effort to see what is really there. An effort that, I dare say after sixty-six years of life, has for me barely begun.

So the mercy and faithfulness of God had begun long before I studied in Germany. It began in eternity, of course. But also in every sweet influence of God’s Word in my life from the time I could hear my father speak; through Sunday school at White Oak Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina; through Bible classes at Wheaton College; through daily disciplines of meditation and memorization; through class after class with Dr. Fuller; being trained in the severe discipline of observation. The fruit of these labors was so powerfully self-attesting and soul-satisfying that the critical methodology I found at the University of Munich held no allure. And the more I cut my way through that thicket, the less fruitful it seemed.

I had been inoculated against the fascination of speculative scholarship by the joy of seeing and savoring the glory and the power that is really there in God’s Word. This dissertation is, therefore, strewn with my skepticism about the certainties of critical scholarship. You will know them by their fruit. And in my experience, the methodologies reigning in the mid-seventies, and in many places today, did not produce spiritual orchards but wastelands.

**German Giants I Love**

There were exceptions. My own *Doktorvater*, Leonhard Goppelt, was I believe a brilliant, humble, godly man, though we had significant differences about how to view the Scriptures. And historically I found a hero in the New Testament scholar Adolf Schlatter, who forty years after his death was still a magnificent model of intense textual observation. His motto was ‘*Die Wissenschaft ist erstens Beobachtung, zweitens Beobachtung, drittens Beobachtung*’ (‘Scholarship is first observation, second observation, third observation’). Schlatter’s name still had enough esteem in the university that I could lay claim to it to warrant my method, should anyone not feel the same esteem for its real source, Daniel Fuller.
God’s Precious Church
Not only did God show his mercy through my disenchantment with fruitless academic methods, but also through the preciousness of his church. My wife, Noël, and I were in a small fellowship of believers that met almost every Friday night for the three years we were there. We were always in the Scriptures together, and the group prayed for us. And we worshiped with the German Baptist Church on Sunday mornings under the powerful preaching of Pastor Rudzio and under the robust singing of ‘O dass ich tausend zungen hätte!’

I remained ‘under the care’ of the deacons of Lake Avenue Church in Pasadena where we belonged while in seminary and where I would be ordained in 1975. Noël and I read and prayed together every evening during these fourth through sixth years of marriage. And I met Jesus alone each morning in a small pantry-turned-study just off the kitchen in our third floor flat. By these precious means of grace, the grace and mercy of God was manifest in those years.

Light Will Break Forth from God’s Word
So the context for this dissertation was not merely a German university that I found spiritually sterile, but a Christian community that I found joyfully life-sustaining. And after all, I was studying the Word of God. By his Spirit, God makes his Word the source of all our life. And even in an academic wasteland, the Puritan adage is true: ‘I am verily persuaded the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth from His holy word.’ Yes, he does. Those years were not wasted. Even though the pillars of my theological house had been built in preceding years, rooms of insight were added in Germany. Some significant ones are in this book.

Finding Fruit in the Thicket
One way to see this dissertation is as the record of my work in the ‘thicket.’ The book is shaped by the ‘history-of-traditions’ methodology. What that means is that I tried to discover the source or sources (roots) of the New Testament command to love your enemies, and then discern how it made its way into the New Testament, and what it meant in all the contexts where it was used (always, of course, stubbornly open to the possibility that the New Testament writers may not have been dependent on any sources at any given point).

The most explicit commands to love our enemies are found in Mt 5:38–48; Lk 6:27–36; Rom 12:17–21; I Thess 5:15; and I Pt 3:9. In the Gospels, this command takes the form, ‘Love your enemies, bless. . . .’ (Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27, 35), and in the Epistles it takes the form, ‘Repay no one evil for evil, but bless. . . .’ (Rom 12:17; I Thess 5:15; I Pt 3:9). One of the most interesting
questions this raises is: Why was Jesus never quoted in the Epistles to reinforce this very difficult teaching? It would cost Christians their lives.

In fact, why are the words of Jesus that we find in the Gospels almost never quoted \textit{as such} in the Epistles (with the exception of 1 Corinthians 11: 24–25)?

There are other allusions to Jesus’ words in the Gospels (for example, I Cor 7:10; I Tim 5:18; I Pet 2:12), but it is remarkable that he is virtually never quoted by explicitly saying these are the words of Jesus. One of the hopes of posing the question the way I did was to find a possible answer to this question (see pp. 136–139).

Another hope in posing the question the way I did (German has a nice word for this: \textit{Fragestellung}) was to discern the meaning of the New Testament contexts more clearly. If, in fact, Paul and Peter and Matthew and Luke were using similar sources, especially the words of Jesus himself, then the unique use each made of these sources might shed more light on how we should understand and apply the command of enemy love today.

\textbf{Pastors, Don’t Do It This Way}

But, to be honest, and I hope encouraging to pastors, the payoff for this history-of-traditions approach to biblical studies is disproportionately small. Very small. Or to put it positively, since you only have one life to live, the payoff historically, theologically, spiritually, and practically will be far greater if you focus your prayerful mental energies like a laser on the text and the biblical context itself. Most of what I saw of value in my research I saw by looking at the texts themselves, not by being aware of sources.

\textbf{Why Do New Creatures Need Commands?}

And see things I did—things that to this day form a crucial part of my understanding. Just to mention two examples: In grappling with the way Jesus and Matthew and Luke and Paul and Peter motivated the command to love our enemies, I ran into the simple question: Why do new creatures in Christ need commandments at all? If our minds are being renewed to discern the will of God (Rom 12:2), if we are indwelt by the Spirit of God whose first fruit is love (Gal 5:22), if we are God-taught to love each other (I Thess 4:9), why do we need to be commanded by words from human mouths—words like, ‘Love your enemies’? Does the born-again believer act this way from the inside out? Why does he need words from the outside in? It is not an easy question. And the answer I hit upon in those days remains as a foundational understanding of how God works in our day (pp. 106–110).

\textbf{Does Enemy Love Govern All of Life?}

Another example of the discoveries that remain with me is the relationship between the radical command to return good for evil, and the equally clear
command to live in the structures of this fallen world that do not operate simply by the principle of returning good for evil. Jesus commanded that we ‘not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also’ (Mt 5:39). But he also said, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesars’ (Mt 22:21). And one of Caesar’s rights is: ‘He does not bear the sword in vain’ (Rom 13:4).

In fact, government is not the only sphere of life in which the Bible demands that we not turn the other cheek. In the family: ‘Fathers, . . . bring them up in the discipline . . . of the Lord’ (Eph 6:4; cf. Heb 12:5). Disciplining children is not turning the other cheek. Commerce: ‘If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat’ (II Thess 3:10). An employee who refuses to come to work should not keep getting paid. Church discipline: ‘Do not even eat with such a one’ (I Cor 5:11).

What I saw was that the kind of enemy love that we find in Mt 5:38–48, Lk 6:27–36, Rom 12:17–21, I Thess 5:15, and I Pt 3:9 is one way that we reflect the character of God and the freedom from hate and bitterness that we have in him. But, while this fallen world lasts, God also means for his justice to be displayed, even by his own people within the spheres where that justice is essential to the fruitful working of the world God has made. Or another way to say it is that love is more complex than enemy love. It is more complex than turning the other cheek.

**Make the Tree Good!**

How do we know when to act one way and when the other? Jesus and his apostles do not answer that question by pointing us to information, but by pointing us to transformation. ‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God’ (Rom 12:2). In the end, as Jesus says, the command to love our enemies and all the other commands of the Bible are commands to ‘make the tree good’ (Mt 12:33). For ‘every good tree bears good fruit’ (Mt 7:17).

It has been almost forty years since I wrote this book. I wrote it between my twenty-sixth and twenty-eighth years. In what follows, we have let it stand as it was for historical purposes. I would not write it this way today, for reasons I have given already. If you want to see how I would write a book today on Jesus’ command to love our enemies, read What Jesus Demands from the World (Crossway, 2006, especially chapters 28–31). That book reflects my seasoned judgment about how to do Gospel studies for the greatest payoff.

**No Enemy Love without God’s Enemy Love**

One of the most important changes I would make in my doctoral dissertation, if I wrote it today, would be to make the cross of Christ far more prominent. It
is there. And it is crucial. But it is not prominent. And that is not as it should be. I hope that what I have said and written since then has set the record straight.

Our only hope for loving our enemy is to be a new creation in Christ. And our only hope for being a new creation in Christ is to be reconciled to God through the death of his Son. ‘If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself’ (II Cor 5:17–18).

The only hope that we might love our enemy is that God loved us when we were his enemy. ‘If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life’ (Rom 5:10). This is the great root of the good tree we are becoming: ‘Forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you’ (Eph 4:32). Turn the other cheek—seventy times seven (Mt 18:22). Love does not keep an account of wrongs (I Cor 13:6). ‘Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them’ (Rom 12:14).

Jesus is the great example here, and the inimitable substitute: ‘When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly’—that’s the example (I Pt 2:23). And ‘he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness’—that’s the substitution (I Pt 2:24). What he has done for us is the ground for what he does in us. We can become a good tree only because he was cursed for us on a horrible tree (Gal 3:13).

Display This Glory Now—Or Never

The aim of being a good tree—loving our enemies from the heart—is to display the glory of our Redeemer. This is a calling that has an end. In heaven there will be no enemies to love. We get a few years to display the glory of Christ in our own bodies like this. In the age to come, we will sing of Christ’s enemy love forever—the song of the Lamb (Rev 15:3). But neither he nor we will have any enemies to love. They will have all become friends (Lk 16:9), or they will have been cast into outer darkness (Mt 8:12). And the enemy love that will be remembered will be to the praise of the glory of his grace.

If the republication of this dissertation can awaken some to make those friends and that memory, I will be glad.

John Piper
Minneapolis, Minnesota
March 12, 2012
INTRODUCTION

The Question and the Approach

'Love your enemies!' is one of the few sayings of Jesus, the authenticity of which is not seriously questioned by anyone. Nor is it disputed that this command is crucial in understanding what the earthly Jesus wanted to accomplish. It is further evident in the paraenetic\(^1\) portions of the New Testament epistles that commands are found which, while not rendering Jesus' command of enemy love\(^2\) word for word, nevertheless aim in the same direction and at times echo the phraseology of Jesus. In view of these facts it is surprising that (to my knowledge) no monograph exists which treats in a thorough way the history of this command in the various levels of the New Testament tradition. Therefore, as the title indicates, the present work aims to analyse the history of the tradition of Jesus' command of enemy love and to interpret the way it was understood in the various stages of early Christian tradition within the New Testament.

The peculiarity and limitation of my approach can perhaps be clarified by contrast with the approach taken in a related study: The Love Command in the New Testament (1972) by Victor Furnish. Dr Furnish distinguishes his own approach from those of James Moffatt’s Love in the New Testament (1929), Ceslaus Spicq’s Agape dans le Nouveau Testament: Analyse des Textes (1958), and Viktor Warnach’s Die Liebe als Grundmotiv in der neutestamentlichen Theologie\(^3\) (1951) in that ‘each of these ... seeks to cut a broad swathe through all aspects of “love” in the New Testament,’\(^4\) not focusing as such on the love command, while his work, being more limited, ‘focuses on the love ethic, the love command.’\(^5\) But even Furnish’s focus is very broad and the content of the book shows that the emphasis in the above quote falls on ‘ethic’ rather than ‘command’. The subtitles of the Pauline section reveal that Furnish’s focus is broader than the love command: ‘Love and the New Creation,’ ‘Love and the Law,’ ‘Love and Freedom,’ ‘Love in the Deutero-Pauline Letters.’ A fitting subtitle for Furnish’s book may have been, to use Furnish’s own description of its
content, 'what the New Testament teaches and otherwise reflects about earliest Christianity's view of loving one's brother, one's neighbor, and one's enemy.'

In contrast, the focus of the present work is narrowed in two ways: the love command which is the object of my attention is specifically Jesus' love command and further it is Jesus' command of enemy love. This narrowing of focus onto a particular command of Jesus is necessitated by the history-of-traditions viewpoint which has governed the work from the beginning. It is the history of the tradition and the various understandings and applications of this one command of Jesus that I intend to investigate. While Furnish does say his intention is 'to trace and define the various ways the love command has been received, interpreted and applied,' he does not define which precise command he means nor, therefore, in what sense that particular command is 'received'. In other words his work is not governed by the history-of-traditions viewpoint and that is its fundamental difference from mine.

It is my hope therefore that, although its general subject matter has been the object of countless studies, my work will not merely retrace the steps of its worthy predecessors, but add its own fresh contribution to the understanding of Jesus' command of enemy love.

The Content

The title of this work anticipates in part the results of the investigation, namely, that the tradition of Jesus' command of enemy love may be traced not only in the 'gospel tradition' which in the New Testament formed the core of the synoptic gospels, but also in the 'paraenetic tradition' which left its deposit in the paraenetic portions of the New Testament epistles. That Jesus' love command was transmitted along lines which led to the synoptic gospels is not disputed. That it was taken up into the paraenetic tradition is disputed. Therefore, the first task before me is to isolate the elements of the paraenetic tradition which possibly represent the reception and application of Jesus' command of enemy love (Chapter 1). Whether or not these elements of the paraenetic tradition do in fact rest on Jesus' command is the question I try to answer in Chapter 2. The approach in that chapter is to pursue a history-of-religions investigation of the teaching on enemy love in the environment of the early church which may have influenced the formation of the New Testament paraenesis. This investigation culminates with the interrelated attempts to determine on the one hand the genuineness and scope of Jesus' command of enemy love and on the other hand its relation to the corresponding elements in the New Testament paraenesis.
The remaining three chapters form a triad in which I try to interpret the function of Jesus' command of enemy love first in his own earthly ministry (Chapter 3), then in the New Testament paraenesis (Chapter 4) and finally in the gospel tradition and synoptic redaction (Chapter 5). The concern in these three chapters is to go beyond merely formal and purely historical observations to the fundamental intention of Jesus and of those in the New Testament who used his command of enemy love. The questions which govern my investigation at each stage of the tradition are, therefore, very basic: Wherein consists obedience to this love command? and, How shall this obedience be realized?

The Concern of the Author

Every scholarly work on the New Testament is preponderantly an intellectual exercise. The work of thinking which the production of a book like this demands from the author is demanded also from its reader. But because of the nature of the reality with which this work has to do, the necessary preponderance of intellectual work can nevertheless frustrate the goal for which the work is done. For that reality is and demands far more than thinking. Adolf Schlatte r has warned: 'Thought can become scholasticism, a mere jangle of words, if the concept replaces the essence, or dogma replaces reality.' The reality from which Jesus' command of enemy love springs and the reality at which it aims is not exhausted by correct thinking about the command. If a book about this command does not ultimately lead beyond mere thinking to an active realization of what the command intends, then that thinking itself, in all of its possible technical accuracy, becomes worthless. 'Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge . . . and have not love, I am nothing.'
Our first task is to isolate the elements of the paraenetic tradition which possibly represent the reception and application of Jesus' command of enemy love. To do this we must, first, focus on those commands in the paraenetic portions of the New Testament which have a similarity to Jesus' command of enemy love; second, we must determine whether these commands were a part of the early Christian paraenetic tradition which existed prior to and alongside the New Testament epistles; and third, we must try to determine what form the command(s) had in that tradition. The existence of such a tradition is not one of my assumptions, but is to be demonstrated by the investigation.

I. The Pertinent Texts
Since we are concerned not with commands to love in general, but only with commands of enemy love, our attention may be confined primarily to three texts:

Rom 12:14,17-20

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

... Pay back no one evil for evil.
Take thought for what is good before all men.
If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but give place to wrath
for it is written: Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.
But if your enemy hunger, feed him;
If he thirst, give him drink;
for, doing this, you will heap coals of fire on his head.

The structure of the paraenetic material in Rom 12 and 13 will be discussed in Chapter 4, p 103. Anticipating that discussion, we may simply note here that Rom 12:14,17-20 is part of a fairly long chain of admonitions
which are grouped roughly with regard to the problems Paul is addressing. Rom 12:3-8 deals with the functioning of the body of Christ; Rom 12:9-21 begins with the phrase ‘Let love be genuine,’ and deals more generally with the Christian’s relations to his brothers and to outsiders; and Rom 13:1-7 deals with the Christian’s relation to the state. That gives the general context in which the command with which we are concerned is found.

*I Thess 5:15*

See that none of you pays back evil for evil, but always pursue good to each other and to all.

This text too comes in the midst of a series of short, crisp imperatives. It is preceded by admonitions concerning the relations between Christians and their church leaders, and it is followed by admonitions concerning the individual Christian in his relation to God: ‘Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all things’ (5:16ff).

*I Pt 3:9*

Do not pay back evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless; for to this you were called in order that you might inherit a blessing.

This text comes at the end of I Pt’s ‘Haustafel’. I Pt 2:13-17 deals with the Christian and the ‘human institution’ or governmental authority. I Pt 2:18-25 deals with Christian servants and their masters. I Pt 3:1-7 deals with wives and husbands. I Pt 3:8 is usually taken to refer to relationships among Christians, while 3:9 goes farther and refers to the Christian’s relations to his non-Christian neighbors. The text is then followed by an Old Testament quote from Ps 34 which grounds the command of 3:9.

Other texts relating to love (such as I Cor 4:12) will come into view only insofar as they stand in textual or essential proximity to these.

**II. Literary Dependence or Common Traditional Source?**

A detailed comparison of these three texts reveals some very close parallels in Rom 12:14,17; I Thess 5:15; and I Pt 3:9. These parallels can be recognized most readily from the following diagram. Following the diagram is a detailed list of the similarities and differences among Rom 12:14,17; I Thess 5:15; and I Pt 3:9.
Love your enemies

Rom 12:14

εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντας
eυλογείτε και μὴ καταράσθε

I Thess 5:15  Rom 12:17  I Pt 3:9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Greek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ὀρᾶτε μὴ τις</td>
<td>μηδενὶ</td>
<td>μὴ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ</td>
<td>κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ</td>
<td>ἀποδίδοντες</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τω ἀποδῶ</td>
<td>ἀποδίδοντες</td>
<td>κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἄλλα</td>
<td>ἄλλα</td>
<td>ἤ λοιδορίαν ἀντὶ λοιδορίας</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν)</td>
<td>(προνοοῦμενοι καλὰ)</td>
<td>(εὐλογοῦντες)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>διώκετε εἰς</td>
<td>ἐνώπιον πάντων</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἄλληλους καὶ εἰς</td>
<td>ἄνθρωπων</td>
<td>[Prov 3:4 LXX]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πάντας</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. Similarities
1. Common to all three commands:
   a. Each contains the identical phrase κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ.
   b. The verb governing this phrase in each is a form of the verb ἀποδίδωμι.
   c. Each contains a form of the negative μὴ.
2. Common to Rom and I Pt:
   a. Each has the imperative participle ἀποδίδοντες.
   b. Each has the command to bless, though not in the same order or form.
3. Common to Rom and I Thess:
   In each the verb ἀποδίδωμι has a dative object.
4. Common to I Thess and I Pt:
   a. In each the verb ἀποδίδωμι is negated by μὴ.
   b. In each the negative command is followed by an adversative particle (ἄλλα, τοιναντίον δὲ) and a positive command (which are different in content and length).

B. Differences
1. Unique to I Pt:
   a. I Pt is unique in adding to κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ the phrase λοιδορίαν ἀντὶ λοιδορίας.
   b. It attaches an Old Testament quotation (3:10–12) in order to ground the command.
   c. It reverses the order of κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ/ἀποδίδοντες.
2. Unique to Rom:
   a. Rom is unique in separating the elements of the command by other admonitions (cf Rom 12:14,17,19).
b. It precedes κακῶν ἀντί κακοῦ ἀποδίδοντες with its positive counterpart (εὐλογεῖτε, 12:14).

c. It uses the negative μηθενί.

3. Unique to I Thess:
   a. I Thess is unique in using a subjunctive form of the verb ἀποδίδωμι.
   b. Its ἀποδίω clause is dependent on the introductory ὅρατε.
   c. It attaches to the negative command the positive command to pursue good toward all.

(Other minor differences may be inferred from the list of similarities.)

The similarities in these three texts demand an explanation. The three possible explanations from which we can choose are: (1) these commands are the writers' own formulations and are only coincidentally similar; (2) there was a literary dependence of one writer upon the other; (3) the writers drew from a common paraenetic tradition.

The first of these three possibilities may be dismissed right away. The coming together in the same command of the identical phrase κακῶν ἀντί κακοῦ with the same verb ἀποδίδωμι is not to be explained by coincidence. Thus the question remains whether there was literary dependence of one writer on another or dependence on a common tradition. Since I Pt is later than Rom and I Thess, the question may be formulated: Was I Pt dependent on either Rom or I Thess? In view of the identical imperative participle ἀποδίδοντες in Rom 12:17a and I Pt 3:9a, Rom and not I Thess is the more likely candidate if we are to choose a literary source for I Pt. Thus our question is finally: Was I Pt 3:9 dependent on Rom 12:17 or were they both dependent on a common paraenetic tradition? In spite of Beare's assertion to the contrary, the scale has been tipped in favor of a common paraenetic tradition rather than literary dependence. In the first place, while the core of the command in Rom 12:17a and I Pt 3:9a is strikingly similar, the differences listed above eliminate the possibility of simple transcription. In the second place, if we compare the immediate contexts in both epistles, the imprecise similarities amidst wide divergences make direct dependence improbable:

Rom

12:10 τῇ φιλὰδελφίᾳ...φιλόστοργοι
12:14 εὐλογεῖτε
12:16a τὸ αὐτὸ...φρονοῦντες
12:16b τοῖς ταπεινοῖς ανασπασμένοι
12:17 μηθενὶ κακῶν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδίδοντες
12:18 εἰρηνεύοντες

I Pt

3:8 φιλὰδελφοί
3:9 εὐλογοῦντες
3:8 ὁμοφρονεῖς
3:8 ταπεινόφρονες
3:9 μὴ ἀποδίδοντες κακῶν ἀντὶ κακοῦ
3:11 ζητησάτω εἰρήνην
III. Determining the Form of the Command in the Paraenetic Tradition

What was the form(s) of this command as it appeared in the tradition behind I Thess 5:15, Rom 12:17, and I Pt 3:9? In trying to answer this question my procedure will be first to treat I Thess 5:15 in an attempt to account for its divergences from both Rom 12:17 and I Pt 3:9; then to investigate Rom 12:17 and I Pt 3:9 in order to ferret out more precisely the wording of the traditional command.

A. I Thess 5:15

I Thess 5:12–22 appears least likely to offer the original traditional context of the command, and 5:15 appears least likely to be its traditional form. I do not mean that in I Thess 5:12–22 Paul did not draw upon the paraenetic tradition, but rather that, while drawing upon it, his own hand is evident, especially at 5:15. The following paragraphs are an attempt to support this contention.

Above I argued that the presence of the imperative participle in Rom 12:17 and I Pt 3:9 is a clue to their traditional origin. It is noteworthy, therefore, that none of the admonitions in I Thess 5 employs an imperative participle (such as we find, for example, in Rom 12:9–13, 16,17,19 and I Pt 3:1,9). This is not to be explained by supposing that the admonitions in I Thess 5 have a different content from those admonitions which elsewhere use the imperative participle. The opposite is the case: as the following table shows, the traditional commands in Rom 12 which use the imperative participle have their essential counterparts in the commands of I Thess 5 which do not use the imperative participle.
In search of the paraenetic tradition

This fact suggests that, even though Paul was in I Thess 5 depending on the tradition, he was nevertheless more thoroughly reworking the traditional material in I Thess 5 than he was in Rom 12. As Charles Talbert observes, 'It is far easier to see these non-participial imperatives [in I Thess] as Paul's selection and rendering into proper Greek of certain individual rules from a unit of Semitic tradition than to see Rom 12:9 ff as a Pauline collection and rendering in a Semitic style of individual injunctions, many of which he uses elsewhere in a non-participial form. It is easier to see Paul moving away from the participle used as an imperative than in [sic] moving to it.'

A second clue for seeing the hand of Paul in shaping the context of I Thess 5:15 is found when we consider whether the admonitions of 5:14 may have been especially formulated for the specific Thessalonian situation. Dibelius asserts to the contrary: 'There is not the slightest trace of evidence that precisely these admonitions would have been especially appropriate for this church.' It seems to me, however, that Dibelius has here carried a correct insight too far: in general vv 14–18 reflect traditional admonitions which are binding on every church but this does not exclude the possibility that Paul could have adapted the tradition to meet the specific Thessalonian need.

Verses 14f read: 'We exhort you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all. Watch lest someone pay back evil for evil, but always pursue good for each other and for all.' The word ἀτάκτως ('the idle') and its cognates (ἡτακτίσσαμεν, II Thess 3:7; ἀτάκτως, II Thess 3:6,11) are unique to the Thessalonian epistles in the New Testament. From one standpoint the rarity of the word could suggest that it is not typically Pauline and was thus taken over by him from the tradition. That would support Dibelius' contention. But from
another standpoint, the rarity of the word *in the paraenetic tradition* with which we are acquainted could suggest that it was not taken over from the tradition but was occasioned by a specific problem in Thessalonica. These two ways of arguing from the rarity of ἀπεκτώνως reveal the ambiguity which usually accompanies literary judgments of this nature. How shall we proceed?

The uniqueness of a word is not by itself enough to determine whether the word is merely a quote from the tradition or not. But when there is other evidence that precisely this word is called for by a specific situation, then the uniqueness of the word together with this evidence is a good indication that the word represents not a mere rehearsal of tradition but a concern of the author to meet a particular need. The 'other evidence' that the command 'admonish the idle' was specifically called for in Thessalonica comes from 4:11* where Paul exhorts the Christians 'to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs and *to work with your hands* as we charged you in order that you might walk respectfully before outsiders and not have need.' With the words 'as we charged you' Paul lays emphasis on the admonition 'to work,' that is, not to be 'idle.' That this admonition was especially needed at Thessalonica may also be the reason Paul in 2:9 stresses his own manual labor: 'For you remember our labor and toil, brethren; we worked night and day that we might not burden any of you while we preached to you the gospel of God.' The singularity of the command 'admonish the idle' together with this other evidence is sufficient support, I think, for the contention that Paul is not merely being carried along by the tradition here but is at this point writing specifically for the Thessalonian situation.13

Somewhat less persuasive but perhaps worthy of note is the uniqueness of the command 'encourage the fainthearted' (5:14). While ἀλγοψύχους is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, the verb παραμυθέωθε occurs in one other place in the New Testament, namely in 2:12 of this epistle: 'You know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and *encouraged* and charged that you might walk worthily of the God who called you into his Kingdom and glory.' In a sense 2:12 is an admonition to the Thessalonians to 'encourage' each other since Paul is here describing his own behavior as exemplary. Therefore παραμυθέομαι is used twice in I Thess in a similar sense but nowhere else in the New Testament paraenesis. This could suggest again that Paul's composition is being controlled not merely by the tradition but also by his concern for the Thessalonian situation.14

A third clue that I Thess 5:14-22 may not offer the original traditional context of the command in 5:15 is found when we consider vv 16ff. The
vv 16–22 are distinguished from the preceding in content and in form. They deal not with relationships between men but with the personal religion of the believer: 'Rejoice always, pray constantly' etc. Dibelius' judgment (see above, p 9) applies well to these verses: they are taken from the tradition and seem to have no special application to the Thessalonian situation.

But if we observe the context of the commands as they occur in other paraenetic contexts we are given no reason to think that they were attached to the command of I Thess 5:15 in the tradition. In Rom 12 the parallels to the command to rejoice (I Thess 5:16 = Rom 12:12a), to pray (I Thess 5:17 = Rom 12:12c) and to hold fast to the good (I Thess 5:21 = Rom 12:9) are not directly connected to the command in Rom 12:17a (= I Thess 5:15). The parallels between I Thess 5:14–21 and Phil 4:5–8 may be tabularized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I Thess</th>
<th>Phil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:14d be patient (μακροθυμεῖτε) with all</td>
<td>4:5 let all men know your forbearance (ἐπιμετέχεις)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:16 always rejoice</td>
<td>4:4 rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:17 pray without ceasing</td>
<td>4:6 in everything with prayer and supplication . . . let your requests be known to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:18 in everything give thanks</td>
<td>4:6 with thanksgiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:21 test everything and hold fast to the good</td>
<td>4:8 whatsoever is true . . . think on these things</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the first parallel in this table shows, the admonitions of I Thess 5:16–21 may have been connected with an admonition on patience or forbearance in the tradition. Were this the case, I Thess 5:15 would thus be a redactional insertion into the traditional unit. But this is very speculative. Let it suffice to note that we have no evidence outside I Thess 5 that I Thess 5:15 was transmitted in its present context.

The best evidence that the form of I Thess 5:15 is due to the hand of Paul and not to the tradition is found in the verse itself. To this we now turn our attention.

Given the agreement of Rom 12:17a and I Pt 3:9a on the participial form of ἀποδίδοντες plus the traditional character of the imperative participle, we have a good case against the originality of ἀποδώσω in I Thess 5:15a. Paul's form of the verb is accounted for by its subordination to the verb ἵπτε. The inference then that ἵπτε is to be attributed to Paul and
Love your enemies

not to the tradition finds support in the observation that this kind of construction is less characteristic of the New Testament paraenetic material than it is a frequent stylistic device of Paul. Besides injecting this initial verb ὀρᾶτε Paul (we may suppose) employs the subject τις and dative object των. Is it possible to explain these redactional variations from the context in I Thess 5?

We must decide first whether ὀρᾶτε is addressed to the leaders of the church referred to in v 12 (τους κοσμώντας ἐν ἴμω καὶ προϊσταμένους ἴμων) or whether it is addressed to the congregation as a whole. For Paul's construction would be explained if the presence of ὀρᾶτε here was intended to remind the leaders to watch over the congregation lest the members avenge themselves. However, the relationship between the two halves of v 15 seems to be decisive here against this view. The ἀλλά following ἀποδιώκω introduces the positive counterpart either of ὀρᾶτε or of ἀποδιώκω; since διώκετε is indicative like ὀρᾶτε and not subjunctive like ἀποδιώκω, the ἀλλά sentence is grammatically the counterpart of ὀρᾶτε. But from the meaning it is obvious that Paul intends to give the positive counterpart not of overseeing the church (ὡρᾶτε) but of rendering evil for evil (ἀποδιώκω). The conclusion, therefore, is that ὀρᾶτε is to be taken not as a separate command to the leaders but as united with ἀποδιώκω and thus addressing the whole church. The command would thus read, 'All of you take heed lest someone avenge another.'

But if Paul is addressing the whole church why did he not merely say μὴ ἀποδιώκωτε κακὸν ἀντί κακοῦ? Why the extra verb, and why particularly ὀρᾶω which he uses nowhere else in this way? The three closest analogies to this construction, where Paul uses βλέπω instead of ὀρᾶω (I Cor 8:9; 10:12; Gal 5:15), constitute warnings to the church of unexpected pitfalls. Paul attempts to alert them to an incipient error to which they may be oblivious. We may only surmise from this that in addressing the Thessalonians whose particular problem was idleness or disorderliness (ἄτακτος, 5:14; 4:11f) and faintheartedness (δισμοῦχος, 5:14) Paul considered it especially needful to make a special call for alertness as he brought this section of his exhortations to a climax with this command against revenge in 5:15. The preference of ὀρᾶω over βλέπω may have merely stemmed from the stylistic desire for assonance (note the 'o' and 'a' sounds in the preceding and following phrases). As for the use of τις and των, we can only guess that if Paul's intention really was to create a special alertness to this command, the insertion of the unusual τις and των in the familiar traditional phrase (μη ἀποδιώκτες κακὸν ἀντι κακοῦ) would probably elicit even more attention as well as sharpening the individual thrust of the demand. Since I Thess 5:15a has proved to be so
heavily redactional we must wait until we examine Rom 12:17a and I Pt 3:9a before we determine the precise form of the tradition.

We must now ask whether I Thess 5:15b (ἀλλὰ πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας) or some core of it was attached to the command against revenge (5:15a) which Paul found in the tradition. Portions of this positive command are probably Paul's own additions for this particular letter. In the first place, the phrase εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας occurs only once again in the New Testament and that is in 3:12 of this same epistle: 'May the Lord make you increase and abound in love εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας.' The absence of this phrase from the other New Testament paraenetic material and its double occurrence in I Thess point to its occasional rather than to its traditional character. This is not to say that ἀλλήλους or πάντας could not have been found in this connection in the tradition (ἀλλήλους: Rom 12:10,16; 13:8; I Pt 4:9; 5:5; πάντας: Rom 12:17b,18; Phil 4:5), it is merely to say that the present combined construction is probably Paul's own formulation for this occasion. In the second place, the occurrence of πάντοτε may possibly be viewed as Paul's attempt to bring this command into line with the abundant use of πάς or πάντοτε in 5:14d,16 (ἀδικεῖται, ν 17), 18,21,22. However, since one of the features of traditional paraenesis is superficial catchword connections, this chain of words could itself point to the original traditional coherence of these exhortations. Whether πάντοτε in 5:15b was an original element of the tradition or was Paul's own contribution remains open. Most important is whether the positive command τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε was found by Paul in the tradition already attached to the negative command against revenge (v 15a).

To answer this question we may notice first that the command τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε is not attached to the command against revenge in either Rom 12:17a or in I Pt 3:9a. If it had originally been attached to this command, it has been dropped in these two texts. Yet it is precisely these two texts which follow most closely the tradition of the command against revenge. In both Rom 12:17 and I Pt 3:9 the negative command is followed by a positive one, but in each case it is different (Rom 12:17b, προνοοῦμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀθροίσασθαι; I Pt 3:9b, τοιούτων δὲ εὐλογοῦντες). Secondly, we may notice that the two words ἀγαθὸς and διώκεω are common in the paraenetic material, and that their use probably stems from Ps 33:15 (LXX) which is quoted from the LXX with only minor grammatical changes in I Pt 3:11.

Let him turn away from evil and do good,
Love your enemies

let him seek peace and pursue it.

\[\zeta\nu\tau\sigma\sigma\alpha\tau\omega\ e\iota\rho\iota\nu\mu\nu\ kai\ \delta\omega\xi\zeta\alpha\tau\omega\ \alpha\omicron\tau\iota\nu\.]\]

Both the command to do good\textsuperscript{25} (ποιησάω \varepsilon\gammaαθόν) and the command to pursue peace\textsuperscript{26} (δωξία\tauω \alpha\omicron\tau\iota\nu) became integral constituents of the paraenetic tradition. The poetic parallelism between pursuing peace and doing good in Ps 33:15 (LXX) is certainly enough to suggest Paul’s combined construction ‘pursue good’. Whether it had been suggested to someone before him, we have no way to be sure. Therefore, while the vocabulary and, as we shall see later, the attachment of a positive command to the command against revenge are traditional, the precise wording of this verse cannot be assigned to the tradition with much certainty.

B. Rom 12:17 and 1 Pt 3:9

Turning now to a treatment of Rom 12:17 and 1 Pt 3:9 we may orient ourselves in the discussion with a short critique of a recent attempt to determine the tradition behind Rom 12:14-21.

In an article entitled ‘Tradition and Redaction in Romans 12:9-21’ (1969) Charles Talbert attempts to show that, in accord with David Daube’s general thesis, there is a primitive Semitic code (composed of vv 19a, 16a, 17a, 18, 19a, and 21) behind Rom 12:14-21 into which a Hellenistic redactor, probably Paul, has inserted Hellenistic material (namely 14, 15, 16c, 17b, 19b) (p 91). If his conclusions are correct he will have provided us with a fixed traditional context for the command in Rom 12:17a.

Talbert describes four problems which he says make it virtually impossible for 12:14-21 in its present form to go back to a Semitic source (p 87). (1) He sees echoes of the sayings of Jesus in vv 14, 17a, 18, 19a, but such sayings are unlikely to occur in such a code formulated in Palestine because ‘the use of a form of language for Jesus’ sayings which was associated in a Semitic milieu with rules of derived and secondary authority [namely, the imperative participle] would be an acute problem for the Semitic church’ (p 88). (2) Vv 14ff ‘contain a large number of perfectly acceptable Greek forms for the imperative’ (p 88). (3) The quotations from the Old Testament are primarily from the LXX (p 88). (4) ‘The presence of Greek link words . . . presents yet another problem for any theory of a Semitic source’ (p 89). Talbert’s methodology of determining what is traditional and what is redactional is to say that any part of 12:14-21 against which two or more of these objections can be raised must be peeled away and regarded as redaction (p 90). The result is that he discovers a two-strophe pattern of three lines each which he considers to be more likely a fragment of a traditional code than a coincidence.

In spite of the splendid clarity which characterizes Talbert’s work, I find his reconstruction unconvincing for the following reasons. In trying
to explain the redaction one must claim either that Paul took a fixed well-structured two-strophe code and at random stuck in other exhortations or that he consciously chose and inserted his material with a new structure in mind. The first alternative is highly unlikely. Talbert opts for the second. He maintains, 'The result of this redaction of the Semitic code was a well-ordered paragraph' (p 93). This, I submit, is simply not true. To illustrate: he says that verses 14 and 21, which are concerned with returning good for evil, form an inclusion. But there is no mention of good and evil in v 14 whereas v 9 forms a closer parallel to v 21. He says vv 16–21 form an a (v 16) b (v 17) a' (v 18) b' (vv 19–20) pattern, the 'a' being commands relating to living in harmony, the 'b' being commands against revenge. But v 15 is left completely unexplained and v 17b is slipped in with 17a when it really means something quite different. 

A serious problem lies in Talbert's criterion for eliminating redactional material. He conceded that each one of the four objections (listed above) to a Semitic origin of vv 14–21 as they stand is not in itself prohibitive. Therefore his criterion is that redactional material must be opposed by two objections. While it is not altogether illegitimate, yet it is at least questionable to claim that two indecisive arguments make a decisive one. The peculiar result of this criterion reveals, I think, its inadequacy: he eliminates as redactional v 14 because (1) it echoes the words of Jesus, and (2) has Greek imperatives (p 91), while he retains as traditional v 17a, just as much a saying of Jesus, and v 21 which contains two Greek imperatives. The problem can be seen from another angle when we look at v 17b. It is excluded 'because of the use of the LXX text and the Greek link words made possible by the insertion of παντωπ...' (p 90). This verse he says 'comes from Hellenistic or Greek-speaking Christianity' (p 91). But nowhere does he explain why we have here a Semitic imperative participle which does not stem from the LXX. In fact he says (p 87) it is very unlikely that Paul himself would convert Greek imperatives into imperative participles. For these reasons I think Talbert's attempt to determine a fixed Semitic code behind Rom 12:14–21 has failed. He has made more obvious than ever the complexity of the background of the passage and the curious intermingling of Hellenistic and Semitic influence.

If we have become skeptical about the existence of such a fixed ethical code behind Rom 9:14–21 as Talbert suggests, we must now press on either to confirm or to contradict this skepticism by our own limited cross-sectional method of investigation. We will do this indirectly by continuing our quest for the traditional form of the command behind I Thess 5:15; Rom 12:17; and I Pt 3:9.

We observed earlier that the similarities between Rom 12:17a and I Pt 3:9a point not to literary dependence but to a common tradition behind both verses (cf pp 7–8). In treating I Thess 5:15 we tried to establish that the form which this common tradition received in I Thess 5:15 is not its
traditional form, but rather the traditional form must be sought in the wording of Rom 12:17a and I Pt 3:9a. On the basis, therefore, of the elements common to both Rom 12:17a and I Pt 3:9a we may conclude that the original form of the tradition contained the phrase κακῶν ἀντὶ κακῶι along with the imperative participle ἀποδίδοντες and a negating particle (see the table p 6).

Which of these two texts preserves the tradition more precisely: Rom 12:17a (μη δενί χακόν ἁντὶ κακῶι ἀποδίδοντες) or I Pt 3:9a (μη ἀποδίδοντες κακῶν ἁντὶ κακῶι)? Decisive in answering this question is the occurrence in Joseph and Asenath 28:4 of the form which we have in I Pt 3:9. (See Chapter 2, pp 37-9 for a discussion of the Jewish-Hellenistic background of this command.) We must, of course, reckon with the possibility that this traditional exhortation had itself undergone some variation and specification so that it may have existed in a number of similar forms. It is possible then that the minor alterations found in Rom 12:17a are due not to Paul, but to a variant of the tradition.

We focus now on the remaining commands of I Pt 3:9 (ἰ λοιδορίων ἁντὶ λοιδορίως, τοῦτο τινῶν δὲ εὐλογούντες), referred to now as v 9b. The key parallel here is I Cor 4:12: 'When reviled we bless, when persecuted we endure, when slandered we try to conciliate.' Paul describes his response to opposition with the words λοιδορώμενοι εὐλογοῦμεν, 'when reviled we bless.' He adds that he is writing this to 'admonish' them (v 14) and he urges them to 'imitate' him (v 16), and then he refers to his 'ways in Christ' (v 17) which he 'teaches everywhere in all the churches' (v 17). Probably, therefore, λοιδορώμενοι εὐλογοῦμεν reflects the catechetical teaching common among all the churches. The combination of λοιδορίων and εὐλογοῦντες in I Pt 3:9b is almost certainly, then, traditional. Moreover, on the basis of I Pt 3:9 we may suppose that the connection of the command not to return evil for evil with the command to bless is also traditional. An analysis of Rom 12:14-17 supports this supposition.

Rom 12:14-17 reads:

Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. (15)
Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.
(16) Be of one mind among yourselves; do not set your mind on high things, but be carried away with the lowly. Don't think yourselves wise. (17) Render to no one evil for evil but take thought for what is good before all men.

Michel observes, 'Between v 16 and v 17 there is no bridge, but rather v 14 and vv 17-21 are closely connected to each other. While v 16 has relations
within the church in view, vv 14 and vv 17–21 are admonitions of a more general kind with a stronger traditional connection; they put relations with non-Christians in the foreground.\textsuperscript{28} It is not unlikely, therefore, that vv 14 and 17 were originally connected in the paraenetic tradition and that vv 14 was drawn away from vv 17 because of the catchword connection between vv 13 (τίνι φιλοξενίαν διώκετε) and vv 14 (εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντας). Thus there is no evidence either from Rom 12:17 or from I Pt 3:9 or from I Thess 5:15 that the command μὴ ἀποδίδοντες κακόν ἀντί κακοῦ ever circulated among the churches without a positive counterpart (such as ‘bless’ or ‘pursue good toward all’).

From all of this I would propose that the situation was something like the following. The saying μὴ ἀποδίδοντες κακόν ἀντί κακοῦ became a fixed rule early in the Christian paraenetic tradition. As the community reflected upon this rule and endeavored to apply it to life-situations a process of specification occurred. Κακόν ἀντί κακοῦ is defined more closely, for example in I Pt 3:9b, as λοιῳράν ἀντί λοιῃράς. Another example is Polycarp (2:2) who, after quoting I Pt 3:9, adds ἢ γρόνθου ἀντί γρόνθου ἢ κατάφραν ἀντί κατάφρας (‘blow for blow, curse for curse’). Along with this specification of the negative side, that is, what must not be repaid, there was probably a corresponding specification of the appropriate Christian response to these specific forms of opposition. We have already seen the εὐλογοῦντες of I Pt 3:9b (cf Rom 12:14) and the τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε of I Thess 5:15b, to which may now be added the closely connected command to ‘seek peace’ (I Pt 3:11; Rom 12:18; I Thess 5:13; see note 26) and the extended list in I Cor 4:12ff: ‘when reviled we bless, when persecuted we endure, when slandered we try to conciliate.’

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, this portion of our study has turned up the following information. The command μὴ ἀποδίδοντες κακόν ἀντί κακοῦ belongs to the early Christian paraenetic tradition. This command was probably taught in close connection with certain specifications such as λοιῳράν ἀντί λοιῃράς as we have, for example, in I Pt 3:9. These negative commands were always accompanied by a positive counterpart and here is where the emphasis fell. This must be stressed for, as we shall see, in this consists the distinction between the New Testament command of enemy love and many similar commands in the environment of the early church. The negative command to renounce retaliation is never found in the New Testament paraenesis without a positive command of some sort. The command to bless was a certain constituent of the tradition, as seen from I Pt 3:9; I Cor 4:12; Rom 12:14; Lk 6:27; and was versatile enough to counter a wide variety
Love your enemies

of antagonisms. Other such positive traditional commands in the immediate context of the prohibition of revenge were very likely 'pursue/do good toward all' (see note 25) and 'pursue peace' or 'live at peace' (see note 26).

Our study has not encouraged us to postulate fixed codes (such as Talbert sees) behind the New Testament paraenesis. Rather there appears to have been a fund of oral traditional material systematized only loosely under different themes (e.g., church order, behavior toward Christians, behavior toward non-Christians, personal piety). In these thematic groupings there was apparently much variation. From this fund of paraenetic material the New Testament writers with whom we are concerned drew out what was useful and within certain essential limitations adapted it freely.
This is one of the few statements Jesus made that is readily accepted by believers and skeptics alike. Its authenticity is not seriously questioned and yet it is a revolutionary command.

Giving attention to various critical theories, John Piper presents evidence that the early church earnestly advocated for non-retaliatory love, extending it to those who practiced evil in the world. Such love was key to the church’s own ethical tradition or paraenesis.

Piper illuminates the Synoptics and passages in Romans, as well as 1 Thessalonians and 1 Peter, with non-canonical evidence, investigating the theological significance of Jesus’s love command.

Originally published as #38 in the Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, this is John Piper’s doctoral dissertation from the University of Munich. It is a serious work of Christian scholarship by a long-time respected author and pastor. This repackaged edition features a new, extensive introduction and will be of interest to scholars, students, and lay people who have training in New Testament studies.

“This is a book for those who are professional scholars and for those who are not…. It will have to be on scholarly shelves, and it ought to be on the preacher’s shelves as well, and most frequently off them too.”

DAVID CATCHPOLE, The Churchman

“A rewarding book, not only for its wholesome critical orientation with regard to the unity and authenticity of the New Testament’s witness to Jesus, but especially in its satisfying portrayal of the inner dynamics of Jesus’s radical message.”

R. T. FRANCE, The Evangelical Quarterly

JOHN PIPER (ThD, University of Munich) is pastor for preaching and vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. He has authored dozens of books, including What Jesus Demands from the World, The Future of Justification, and Think.

www.crossway.org