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The Parable of the Good Samaritan: The Love Commandment and the Convergence of Religions

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Abstract: Jesus' teaching that the praxis of love of neighbour is the means to inherit eternal life therefore is of interest to all, irrespective of their religious or ideological backgrounds, since it deals with a value that is shared universally. So the author takes up the parable of the Good Samaritan and develops a perspective that affirms this illustration of love of neighbour as a point of convergence of religions, given the presence of and emphasis on love of neighbour in all religions. Then the author traces the love commandment in other religions. The author concludes that the followers of different religions do not have to give up or ignore the differences which exist among them. It is possible that agreeing and working together on this common point of convergence of the love commandments might bring down unwarranted prejudices, promote mutual respect and a sense of camaraderie among them. It can also open up new avenues of understanding and promote closeness on an ongoing basis, thus contributing positively to the climate of dialogue and co-operation. Thus the love commandments have a great potential to promote convergence in the encounter of religions.

Keywords: Love commandment, dialogue of religions, neighbour, parable of the Good Samaritan, universal love commandment.

Introduction

The example story of the Good Samaritan is one of the most fascinating parables of Jesus and is found only in the gospel of Luke. In the gospel context it illustrates love of neighbour, one of the two love commandments, love of God and love of neighbour, which Jesus confirms as the means for inheriting eternal life. After confirming these as means to inherit eternal life Jesus proceeds to give this illustration of love of neighbour in tackling the questioner's query

as to who his neighbour is. In the process the illustration shows rather how to be a neighbour, with a challenge to the questioner to act like the Samaritan, the hero of the parable, and thus inherit eternal life.

As the question about the means for eternal life is a burning one engaging all religions in some way, the parable is of interest to all. It concerns all also because love of neighbour as a maxim or commandment is present in some form in all religions as one of the core demands/principles of religious and/or ethical life. Jesus' teaching that the praxis of love of neighbour is the means to inherit eternal life therefore is of interest to all, irrespective of their religious or ideological backgrounds, since it deals with a value that is shared universally. We shall in the following treatment focus on this parable and develop a perspective that affirms this illustration of love of neighbour as a point of convergence of religions, given the presence of and emphasis on love of neighbour in all religions.

1. The Lukan Love Commandments

The parable of the Good Samaritan is part of the discussion in Luke's gospel on the love commandments and the means to inherit eternal life.¹ In Luke the quotations of Deut 6,5 and Lev 19,18 which go to make up the Synoptic love commandments (Mk 12,28-34 + par) and initiate the discussion on them are found in 10,27. The discussion on them not only forms part of the Travel Narrative (9,51-18,14), thus figuring much before the account of the Jerusalem ministry where it is found in Mark and Matthew, but also flows into the example story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10,29-37), the illustration of love of neighbour, the second love commandment, and then into its illustrative counterpart, that of the first love commandment, the episode of Martha and Mary (10,38-42)².

a. The Lukan Development of the Love Commandments and its Literary Structure

Thus the Lukan discussion of the love commandments itself, compared to that of Mark and Matthew, is extensive and as just hinted at actually occupies the whole of Ch 10,25-42. Its first unit, Lk 10, 25-28, deals with the definition of the means to attain eternal

life. But in the two units that follow the two love commandments receive illustrative treatments in reverse order, that is, chiastically. Thus Luke 10,29-37, which is the example story of the Good Samaritan, exemplifies the second love commandment, wherein the scope of love of neighbour, is radically extended to embrace all, including a national enemy, and in 10,38-42, the episode of Martha and Mary, the content of love of God, the first love commandment, is concretized as engagement with Jesus and his teaching³. Both illustrations are balanced in characteristically Lukan style between the story of a man and that of a woman. Both contain a contrast between a “hero” or “villain” or “villains”. The stories qualify each other and complement each other. Luke also parallels 10,25-28 and 10,29-35 by using the same formal structure for both. In each case we are given (1) a reason for the lawyer’s question; (2) the lawyer’s question; (3) a counter question by Jesus; (4) the lawyer’s answer; and (5) Jesus’ concluding challenge.⁴

Thus the discussion clarifies that the praxis of these commandments taken together in their interdependence and gradation are the means to inherit eternal life- that too as interpreted by Jesus and is intended by the context. Hence it can be said that to inherit eternal life one must fulfil these commandments as taught by Jesus (in the discipleship of Jesus) in the New Testament⁵.

Thus in this discussion Luke takes the commandments of love of God and love of neighbour as an adequate summary of the Jewish Law and a valid statement of what God requires as conditions for inheriting eternal life (vv 25-28). But the evangelist also wants us to see that Jesus extends the scope of love of neighbour to include all, even national enemies, that is, beyond every traditionally accepted limit (vv 29-37), and he would have us link the love of God with attachment to Jesus’ own person and teaching (vv 38-42).⁶

b. Practical Thrust

The Lukan version of the love commandment operates on the practical plane. This is clear from the fact that the citations of the love commandments are made in connection with the question regarding the means to inherit eternal life (10,25). From the literary point of view this practical orientation is stressed by the inclusion

created around the episode with the terms “*poiein*”, “to do”, and the “*zo*” root (“life/live”) occurring in v25, the opening verse, and repeated at the end of v28. This will be repeated in v37 at the end of the linked parable, where its imperative form “*poiei*”, “do” recurs as in v28.⁷ By this inclusion Luke stresses that to attain eternal life it is important to love besides God one’s neighbour (v28), which is nothing other than to practise compassion (v37a) as the Samaritan has done (cf. v37b: “*poiei omoios*”)

c. Functional Togetherness and Mutuality of the Love Commandments

In Luke’s formulation the two commandments are introduced with the same legal imperative “*agapeseis*”, “you shall love” and are joined together with a coordinating “*kai*”, “and” without the repetition of the verb “*agapeseis*”. By choosing this formulation the evangelist emphasizes their closeness to each other and their inseparability. This is an important thematic in the Lukan development which is also reflected in the rest of the gospel and Acts. As Kiilunen points out, the functional togetherness and mutuality of the love commandments is something which Luke has asserted repeatedly in his gospel. Thus in 10,29-37, for instance, persons who “*ex officio*” represent God’s love or should represent it, fail in their love of God in reality because they overlook love of neighbour (cf. 10,31-32). In the Zachaeus episode, which forms part of the special material of Luke, Zachaeus exhibits love of God in his attitude to Jesus (19,3-6) as well as love of neighbour (v8) where the financially testified “love of neighbour” (v8) in all probability comes from Luke’s redaction. Kiilunen in fact thinks that the whole episode (Lk 19,1-10) must be seen as a demonstration of genuine conversion in the sense of the praxis of the double commandment, as the simultaneous turning to God and neighbour. The interconnection of these is also stressed in the Acts, Luke’s second volume. Thus the way these two aspects combine for Luke is seen in the example of Cornelius who is not only a “God fearer” but also gives alms (Act 10,1-2). We have here a Gentile Roman characterized in the perspective of Luke 10,27.⁸ Similarly, in Lk 7,36-50 love of God and love of neighbour combine in a deed of love done to Jesus (v38). This act of the sinful woman is interpreted as an expression

of love of God, of her conversion, and the woman has her sins forgiven because of it (7,47). It is also significant that in all four cases love of neighbour is expressed, in one way or another, as financial sacrifice.⁹

d. The Neighbour Defined from the Perspective of the One in Need

A most important preoccupation of the Lukan development of the love commandments is the clarification of the idea of “neighbour” and its extension. This happens in the example story (10,29-37) of the Good Samaritan.

In this illustration of love of neighbour the neighbour, is clearly defined from the perspective of the victim, who is in dire need. From a victim’s perspective, if the situation is desperate enough, even a despised Samaritan is a welcome neighbour.¹⁰ In clarifying this, Luke at one and the same time both extends and universalizes the idea of the neighbour. For Luke although the action of the Samaritan is commendable in itself, it has broader implications. It makes it self-evident that from the perspective of the desperate victim “the Law’s demand for love of neighbour should bridge to any needy human being; that its practice should not be restricted to a closed community, even if that closed community is the community of the divine covenant.”¹¹ It thus both extends and universalizes the idea of the neighbour. In this context the wording of 10,37 underlines the main point of the parable namely, that looking at it from the point of view of the desperately needy, the practice of mercy makes the passer-by into a neighbour”.¹²

Concurring with this, Schürmann shows how looking at the question from the point of view of the one in need involves a radical transformation of the Old Testament idea of neighbour. He says:

The question should not be raised from “my” standpoint (v29: “my neighbour”) but must be raised from the standpoint of the one in need before me. The one in need makes me into his “neighbour”, transforms me. As a result the concept of “neighbour” is at one and the same time de-limited, transformed and de-theorized out of the Old Testament and Jewish con-
ceptions.¹³

e. Stress on “Doing” and the Detailing of the Giving of Help

Within this perspective the doing of the love commandments is repeatedly underlined in the narrative,¹⁴ which must be seen as one of its major characteristics. This consistent stress on “doing” makes the doing of compassion indispensable for the attainment of eternal life (v36). One can even speak of the indirect presence of a warning in the context because of the importance and urgency of this motif, which is emphasized with a double demand for action and practice (cf. 10,28.37).

The theme of doing is emphasized also by the detailed description of the giving of help. Thus the Samaritan on seeing the helpless victim is moved with compassion. He goes to him and binds up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He then sets him on his own beast and brings him to an inn and takes care of him. The next day he takes out two denarii and gives them to the innkeeper saying, “Take care of him and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back” (Lk 10,34-35). In this connection the Samaritan’s generous financial spending for the man’s care is especially striking and is in keeping with Jesus’ teaching in Lk 12,33. Luke here teaches the right use of possessions, an important Lukan motif, (cf. Lk 8,2-3; 16,9-13; 19,8; Acts 20,40-47), and in particular demonstrates how the concrete doing of the commandment, the active love of neighbour, looks like and how it expresses itself as *“splaḡchnisthenai”*, “showing of compassion” (v33) and as *“to eleos poiein”*, “doing of mercy”.¹⁵ All these emphases associated with the doing of the love commandment depict its newness in Jesus’ kingdom proclamation and are essentially and indispensably linked to the crucial question of the means of attaining eternal life.

f. The Dynamics of the Parable for its universal Application

The dynamics of the parable that the neighbour is defined from the point of view of the victim is crucial. So too is the insight that one who acts as a member of the people of God should is a neighbour. The victim transforms one into a neighbour. If one acts as a member of the people of God should in relation to the victim that person is

such a neighbour. He is a member of God's people who fulfils the commandment to love the neighbour (Lev 19,18) and he inherits eternal life. These insights universalize the praxis of this commandment and transform the praxis of the commandment into the means to inherit eternal life according to the teaching of Jesus. Since such a course of action is possible for all, irrespective of their religious and/or ideological backgrounds, this teaching identifies a means for everyone to be part of God's people by acting as a member of the people of God should and thus inherit eternal life. ("Do this and you will live". Lk 10,28b). Its role as the means for everyone to inherit eternal life is thus crystal clear.

II. The Universal Presence of the Love Commandments

The praxis of the love commandments as means to inherit eternal life as Jesus defines it is a universal means at the disposal of everyone not only because it is possible for all to act in this way but also because the commandment itself is present in all religions in some form. The pervasive presence of the love commandments thus makes it a point of convergence for all religions as a means for inheriting eternal life.

a. The Presence of the Love Commandments in all Religions

The Love commandments (love of God and love of neighbour) are present in all religions in one form or another. It is probable that the Biblical teaching on them in the Old Testament (Deut 6,4-5 and Lev 19,18) and their development into well defined, hierarchically graded and interrelated commandments in the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic love commandments of the New Testament (Mk 12,28-34 + par) have had a universal impact in establishing these commandments as core demands that should animate authentic religiosity. But what is meant here by the universal presence of the love commandments is not this probable development. What is asserted by it is the love commandments' presence in the sacred lore of religions in some form even before such a development and even unrelated to it.

b. The Love Commandment is known to all Peoples in different Ways

In this connection the widespread presence of the “Golden Rule”¹⁶ is perhaps the most significant evidence. The “Golden Rule” is found in both positive and negative form. In both forms they are a rendition of the love commandment. The “golden rule” in its negative formulation runs like this: “Do not do to anyone what you do not want any one to do to you,” while its positive formulation runs: “Do to others what you would want to be done to you”. Till recently, it used to be asserted that while the “Golden Rule” in its negative formulation occurs also outside the New Testament, the “Golden Rule” in its positive formulation is found only in the New Testament. However, it is now conclusively established that the “Golden Rule,” both in its negative and positive formulations, is found outside the New Testament. Thus the negative form of the Golden Rule occurs in pre-Christian Judaism. Hillel, for instance, summarizes the law to a proselyte in the following words: “What is hateful to yourself, do to no other: that is the whole law and the rest is commentary” (*b. Sabb.* 31a). It is also found in Tob 4,15, in Ep. Arist. 207-8 (with the positive also indicated), and in the Jerusalem Targum of Lev 19,18.¹⁷ It is also widely known in different cultures and religions.¹⁸ Since the “Golden Rule” is an equivalent rendering of the love commandment as found in Lev 19,18, it follows that its widespread occurrence argues to the pervasive presence of the love commandment in a certain approximate form.

This also points to the fact that the love commandments are written into the socio-religious and socio-cultural structures of all peoples. Cross-cultural studies can easily establish this statement as every cultural Anthropologist can testify. Without going into specifics we can thus assert that the logic of the “Golden Rule” is present in the mores and behavioural practices of all peoples in one way or the other.

We can even go beyond this and state that it is also present in every individual in the form of innate humanity, even if the quantum of it might vary from person to person. Yet there is nobody who does not practise the “Golden Rule” at some time or the other in his or her life however morally indifferent or even perverse that person might be.

In this connection one may mention the contention of Klaus Berger in his investigation of the love commandments in their *religionsgeschichtliche* background or in their background of the history of religions. Berger holds that the Hellenistic and more closely Philonic idea of “*eusebeia*” (devotion to God) and “*dikaiosyne*” (righteousness, one’s deeds of right relation to the neighbour) as the basic principles of religion actually made possible the combination of Deut 6,4-5 and Lev 19,18 in Hellenistic Judaism understood as the sum and substance of the Law and came into Christianity through its influence.¹⁹ Even if one does not agree with Berger’s contention about the influence of this double principle on the formulation of the biblical love commandments, his work does demonstrate the existence of this double principle as the quintessence of Hellenistic religion and Philonic philosophy. “*Eusebeia*” and “*dikaiosyne*” thus constitute the basic principles of religion. In general terms this can be said about all religions, in so far as both these principles underlie all of them in some form as vertical and horizontal elements constitutive of them. It is therefore undeniable that “*eusebeia*” and “*dikaiosyne*”, or love of God and love of neighbour in some form underlie all religions and that therefore all of them participate in the love commandments to a certain degree.

c. The Wide Diversity of Religions and the Love Commandments’ Presence in them

The above assertion is true despite the wide diversity of religions and their tenets. We do have religions which have various divergent standpoints and orientations such as monotheistic, polytheistic, atheistic (Buddhism, Jainism)²⁰ and varieties of tribal religions which are mostly animistic. But across this wide spectrum of fundamental diversities there still exist the love commandments in some form, at least in the form of the “Golden Rule” in either its negative or positive formulation, as basic tenets which the religious person must accept and practise.

d. Illustration from Personal Experience

I have personally experienced the spontaneous response of people based on love and compassion, which has strengthened my belief in

the presence of the love commandments in people's religio-moral world constituting a strong source of motivation for them. Thus one day I saw accidentally the fixtures of persons/families who have signed up for all 365 days of the year for providing breakfast and/or a meal for the inmates of Mother Teresa's home for the destitute as I went there to celebrate the Eucharist. Among the vast majority of these people who took the trouble to come and sign up for this act, almost 97 % were non-Christians, mostly Hindus. Nobody has put any pressure on these people to take such a step. It is a spontaneous act of bounty on their part. Surely, these people have responded to God's call in the example of Mother Teresa to respond in compassion and love to the miserable and the suffering. That such a response happens year after year, with many standing in the waiting list, shows that the love commandment in some form is embedded in their religious consciousness and they respond to it in their lives when occasion offers.

e. Illustrations from Contemporary Experience

Examples like the above can be multiplied from contemporary experience as well, particularly when tragedy strikes. Thus when unexpected natural calamities like Tsunamis, earthquakes or human-made disasters like wars produce in their wake an immense amount of human sufferings in the form of deaths, displacements and refugees one comes across an outpouring of goodness from people across the globe. On such occasions we have seen many people responding in love and compassion sharing their resources generously and also volunteering to do relief work besides contributing in myriad ways to the alleviation of situations of misery. These are impressive and telling demonstrations of how people respond to the love commandment spontaneously, the love commandment which forms part of their religio-moral world and written into their humanity. In these one can see how God activates the fulfilment of the love commandment to let people inherit eternal life.

f. The Dialogue of Religions and the Love Commandments as Point of Convergence

Given its pervasive presence both in the legacy of religions and/or in the spontaneous response of people in love and mercy, it is

surely possible to agree in the dialogue of religions on the praxis of the love commandment as the point of convergence of religions. This seems to be something on which all can agree and co-operate for the good of all. This is the contribution that the parable of the Good Samaritan in the discussion on the love commandments makes to the communion of Religions.

For this the followers of different religions do not have to give up or ignore the differences which exist among them. It is possible that agreeing and working together on this common point of convergence of the love commandments might bring down unwarranted prejudices, promote mutual respect and a sense of camaraderie among them. It can also open up new avenues of understanding and promote closeness on an ongoing basis thus contributing positively to the climate of dialogue and co-operation. Thus the love commandments have a great potential to promote convergence in the encounter of religions.

From the point of view of Jesus' teaching regarding the means to inherit eternal life, all can attain eternal life if they respond to the needy. The vertical dimension of religions (the love of God) is taken care of in the context of each religion's understanding of the Divine or, in the case of non-religious secular movements, by the absoluteness of the ideology that inspires them, like the conception of a classless society in Marxism.²¹ Besides, it is already addressed in the act of loving the neighbour in deeds of love and the self-transcendence they involve.²² In the act of such self-transcendence in a deed of love of neighbour, the Divine is in fact simultaneously acknowledged and obeyed implicitly.

Needless to say, this does not do away with the call of Jesus to inherit eternal life by radical and total following of him as was demanded of the rich ruler (Lk 18,18-30). But this will be for the disciples of Jesus and for those who are called by Jesus to belong to them. These two forms of inheriting eternal life can therefore co-exist. This understanding can thus also co-exist with the dialogal thrust of seeking the convergence of religions on the basis of the praxis of the love commandment.

Notes

1. The first part of this article, the analysis and interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan as part of the discussion on the love commandment in Luke, draws substantially on my recently published article (Cf. G. Keerankeri, S.J., "Inheriting Eternal Life. The love Commandment in Luke (Lk 10:25-28 [-37]38-42)" *VJTR* 70(2006) 183-197) since the subject matter of these is the same.
2. Cf. For the rationale for this division see G. Keerankeri, S.J., "Inheriting Eternal Life. The love Commandment in Luke..", 184, n. 2. As pointed out there the inclusion of the last portion of this division, Lk 10,38-42, the vignette of Martha and Mary is not accepted by all but the discussion at this point and the development in that article in general show its legitimacy based on significant scholarly support. Sometimes the change of scene indicated in 10,38: "As they went on their way he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house" is adduced in support of its non-inclusion in this discussion. Generally speaking a change of scene indicates a change in subject also. But there are several reasons to see a continuity of the thematic of the love commandment discussion in this episode which impel one not to apply the criterion of change of scene rigidly lest one discount the significance of this thematic unity. Besides, the minor change of scene actually seems to play a salutary role in maintaining the proper-balance in the development of the two love commandments in their interrelationships which is an important goal of the Lukan discussion, in so far as it serves to obviate diminishing the power of the illustration of the love of neighbor in the example story of the Good Samaritan by an immediate emphasis on the primacy of the first love commandment. The change of scene serves to forestall such an effect while at the same time providing an opportunity to affirm this primacy more delicately.
3. As C. H. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 125, clarifies: "Luke 10.38-42 asserts that to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind means to sit at the Lord's (Jesus') feet. To sit at a person's feet was the equivalent of "to study under someone: or "to be a disciple of someone" (cf. Acts 22.3- Paul was raised "at the feet of Gamaliel"). To love God with your whole being, Luke says, is to be a disciple of Jesus".
4. Cf. J. Nolland, Luke 9,21-18,34, 2/3, (*World Biblical Commentary* 31b) Dallas 1993, 579-580. Similarly, C. H. Talbert, *Reading Luke, A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*, Crossroad, New York, 1984, 120.
5. It must be pointed out that Luke discusses this question in two different contexts in the gospel: first in 10,25-37+38-42; and then in the episode of the rich ruler (18,18-30). The questions are in fact identical: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life", though in the first case Jesus is addressed "Teacher" and in the second he is addressed "Good Teacher". The relationship between these two discussions is of importance. Both deal with the place of the Law in the attainment of salvation. In the first case Jesus defines that the

praxis of the love commandments, the quintessence of the Law, is the means to inherit eternal life. In the second, however, more radical steps are also demanded for the same. Although Jesus proposes the observance of the Decalogue commandments (18,20-21) as the means to it, when the ruler states that he has observed all these from his youth Jesus replies: "One thing you still lack" (18,22b) and goes on to demand: "Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (18,22c). A number of further radical steps are thus involved in the second instance. Renunciation of all that one has, as well as giving it to the poor are preliminary steps which must be followed up with the following of Jesus which is the core demand. As pointed out in the above article, (Cf. G. Keerankeri, S.J., "Inheriting Eternal Life. The love Commandment in Luke..", 187, n5) regarding the interrelationships among these two answers one may state the following: the first is addressed to all irrespective of their religious backgrounds. It is a universal demand and constitutes the usual means of inheriting eternal life open to all. The second seems to be a specifically Christian answer that is not demanded of all but only of the disciples of Jesus and those who are specifically called to belong to them by a special call. In this connection see, Robert J. Karris, "The Gospel According to Luke", in R. E. Brown; J. A. Fitzmyer, R. E. Murphy (ed) *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (Theological Publications in India) Bangalore, 2002, 702.

6. For a clarification of the nuanced way Luke underlines the interrelationships among the two love commandments and their hierarchical gradation see, G. Keerankeri, S.J., "Inheriting Eternal Life. The love Commandment in Luke", 192-194.
7. Cf. J. Nolland, Luke 9,21-18,34, 2/3, 582.
8. Cf. J. Kiilunen, *Das Doppelgebot der Liebe in Synonptischer Sicht, Ein redaktionskritischer Versuch über Mk 12,28-34 und die Parallelen*, (Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia) Helsinki 1989, 62-63.
9. Ibid, n. 46.
10. Cf. J. Nolland, Luke 9,21-18,34, 2/3, 595.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 596. It also could be seen as making him in reality a member of God's people since he acts as a member of God's people should act.
13. Cf. H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, (2a/3), (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament) Freiburg. Basel. Wien 1994, 147 (translation ours).
14. Cf. "poiein", "to do" v25; "tuto poiei", "do this" in v28; "ho poiesas", "the one who did" in v37a; "poiei", "do.." in v37b.
15. Cf. J. Kiilunen, *Das Doppelgebot*, 74-75.
16. This designation is the qualifier given to Mtt 7,12/Lk 6,31, the parallel sayings in th Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plane respectively,

since the Middle Ages. It is “golden” in the sense of “most precious and important”, Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1995, 509. The term “rule” refers not to a legal regulation but to an ideal moral principle, D. M. Beck, “Golden Rule The”, *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol 2, (ed) George Arthur Buttrick, Abingdon Press Nashville, 1962, 438

17. Cf. Donald A. Hagner, Matthew 1-13 (*World Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 33A) World Books, Dallas, 1993, 176. Also, Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Sacra Pagina Series Vol I) The Liturgical Press Collegeville, 1991, 105-6. Although the negative and positive forms are two ways of saying the same thing Hagner believes that the former is more original and perhaps also more fundamental. According to him the latter is the superior form and is considered to be the fuller expression of practical morality. Thus while the positive form includes the negative form, the negative form cannot be said to include the positive.
18. In this connection H. D. Betz observes: “Indeed, the Golden Rule was regarded as one of the ground rules of human civilization ...”. He continues, “...as scholars have discovered since the Enlightenment and demonstrated by large collections of parallels, the Golden Rule was known to nearly every culture, even prior to its literary transmission. In the West, the Golden Rule is first attested by Herodotus, who may have learned it from the Sophists. In the East, Confucius knew it, and it is found as well in the Mahabharatha and in Far Eastern gnomological collections”. Cf. Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 509. Similarly, D. M. Beck, “Golden Rule The”, *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol 2, 438, states: “Though Jesus gave his own wording to the Golden Rule, the thought in it is widespread in ethical and religious teachings of many peoples. Confucius taught the negative form. Ideals of conduct somewhat similar to the rule are known in the literature of the early Greeks and Romans and in the tenets of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.”
19. Klaus Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu. Ihr historischer Hintergrund im Judentum und im Alten Testament*. Teil I: Markus und Parallelen WMANT 40, Neukirchen 1972.
20. Buddhism and Jainism claim to be atheistic religions aiming only at the ultimate goal of nirvana. While this is true at the level of doctrinal or philosophical formulations, it is a moot point whether they do in actual practice, especially at the popular level, adhere to this profession of atheism or instead become in some form theistic.
21. The absoluteness of an ideology and its goals which one sees in secular ideologies in fact transforms them into quasi-religions with the absoluteness of the ideology and its goals taking the place of the Divine in religions.

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