

Does the Matthean Jesus Really Love His Enemies?

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Introduction

This is a new venture for me in that it is taking me right out of my comfort zone. My academic expertise lies in the post-Pauline corpus, especially the Pastoral Epistles, and, as many at Newman will know, in recent years my research focus has shifted from New Testament to Anabaptist Studies in my other academic capacity as honorary research fellow at the Centre for Anabaptist Studies based at Bristol Baptist College. So, it is with much trepidation that I venture to offer this paper on Matthew—my first ever academic paper on a Gospel! On the other hand, the particular text I am engaging today is of course a favourite of Anabaptists—the Sermon on the Mount, and in particular, Matt 5:44.

The Structure of Matthew 5

Following the Beatitudes and comments about salt and light (Matt 5:1-16), Jesus proceeds to announce that he has not come to abolish (καταλῦσαι) the law and the prophets but to fulfil (πληρῶσαι) them and concludes this section with “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20). This reference to the scribes and Pharisees will be examined later. There follows a series of six so-called antitheses in the form: “You have heard that it was said ...” (Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη), “but I say to you ...” (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν) with the emphatic ἐγὼ (Matt 5:21-48). These serve to highlight the ways in which Jesus fulfils the Hebrew scriptures. The sixth and final antithesis forms the basis for this paper: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your

neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5:43-44). The previous antitheses build up to this final, climactic statement. “You shall love your neighbour” is a direct quote from Lev 19:18 LXX but the command to “hate your enemy” is not to be found in the Hebrew Bible (although there are plenty of examples of putting enemy hatred into practice to be found there—e.g. Deut 7:2; 20:16; Josh 11:16-20). But very similar exhortations can be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls; 1QS 1:10-11, for example, urges the sons of light to hate the sons of darkness. Josephus, speaking of the Essenes, states that they are exhorted “always to hate the wicked” (Jos, *J.W.* 2:139). But, instead of enemy hatred the community of Jesus is to practise enemy love and this forms the pinnacle of the ways in which the Matthean Jesus fulfils the Hebrew Bible. But does he put this enemy love into practice in the rest of Matthew’s Gospel? This is the question this paper seeks to address.

The saying in early Christian literature

Jesus’ command to love enemies is almost universally regarded as an authentic saying of the historical Jesus. The Jesus Seminar, for example, colours it red (Jesus undoubtedly said this or something very like it) whereas the rest of this pericope (with the exception of 5:45b-46 which is coloured pink—Jesus probably said something like this) is coloured either grey (Jesus did not say this, but the ideas are close to his own), or black (Jesus did not say this). It is also one of the most cited and influential sayings of Jesus in early Christian literature:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them (Rom 12:14).

Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved,

never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom 12:17-21).

When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we speak kindly. (1 Cor 4:12-13).

See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. (1 Thess 5:15).

Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. (1 Pet 3:9).

Now, the teaching of these words is this: bless those who curse you and pray for your enemies and fast for those who persecute you. For what *is* the benefit if we love those who love us? Do not even the Gentiles do this? But you, you love those who hate you and you will have not an enemy. (*Didache* 1.3)

Pray also for the kings, and for magistrates, and princes, and for those who persecute you and hate you, and for the enemies of the cross that your fruit may be evident among all people, that you may be perfected in him. (Polycarp, *Philippians* 12:3-6).

For the Word of God, who said to us, “Love your enemies, and pray for those that hate you,” Himself did this very thing upon the cross; loving the human race to such a degree, that He even prayed for those putting Him to death. (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.18.5:8-9).

And yet He loved even those who hated Him, and wept over the unbelieving, and blessed those who slandered Him, and prayed for those who were enmity against Him. And not only did He do this as a father, but also taught His disciples to do the like, bearing themselves as towards brethren. (Ps.-Clem. *Hom* 3:19).

For when they hear from us that God says, “*It is* no credit to you if you love those who love you, but *it is* a credit to you if you love your enemies and those who hate you.” (2 Clem 13:4).

The soul loves the flesh that hates *it*, and its members, and Christians love those who hate *them*. (*Diognetus* 6.6)

we who hated and killed one another and would not share our hearth with those of another tribe because of their [different] customs, now, after the coming of Christ, live together with them, and pray for our enemies, and try to convince those who hate us unjustly, so that they who live according to the good commands

of Christ may have a firm hope of receiving the same reward as ourselves from God who governs all. (Justin, 1 *Apol.* 14:3).

who, moreover, carry our benevolence to such an extent, that we not only love our friends (“for if ye love them,” He says, “that love you, and lend to them that lend to you, what reward will ye have?”) (Athenagoras, *Supplicatio* 12:3).¹

Davies and Allison, in their important ICC commentary on Matthew, state this as an excursus:

Gregory Vlastos, in an article on ‘Socrates’ Contribution to the Greek Sense of Justice’, *ARCHAIOGNOSIA* 1 (1980), pp. 301–23, has asserted that classical Greece was deficient in its sense of justice in two large areas. (1) The application of moral norms was grossly discriminatory in conduct towards personal enemies. (2) The same was true with regard to the treatment of social inferiors, especially slaves. Socrates, according to Vlastos, is to be given credit for managing to overcome the first defect: he repudiated the *talio* in dealing with personal enemies (see *Crito* 49B 8–C 8). The great philosopher did not, however, remedy the second deficiency. The extant records nowhere hint that Socrates protested against discriminatory forms of conduct directed at social inferiors. If Vlastos is correct, it would seem that Jesus took a step Socrates did not. For not only did Jesus reject the application of the *talio* to personal relations, he also universalized the love command. This follows above all from the fact that when Jesus spoke of the ‘enemy’, he was referring to non-Jews, to Roman soldiers (see above). In other words, the imperative to love was not to be confined to one’s own kind, that is, one’s Jewish neighbours (cf. Mt 5:46–7). Love was to extend beyond the boundaries erected by class and ethnic differences.²

We shall see below that I disagree with their restriction of “enemy” to non-Jews.

What does it mean to “love your enemies”?

The verb “love” used here is the present imperative of ἀγαπάω. However, too much should not be made of Matthew’s choice of ἀγαπάω rather than φιλέω.

As Davies and Allison state: “The verb, ἀγαπάω, unlike the corresponding noun, ἀγάπη, is well attested in pre-Christian secular Greek (*LSJ*, s.v.).

¹ Most of these texts are noted in W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 1* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 551.

Beginning in the fourth century B.C. it became more and more popular while φιλέω—because it developed sexual connotations?—suffered decline.”³ Love is not an emotional state: it is further defined by what follows in the passage: in context it means to pray for, do good to, and pronounce blessings upon (ἀσπάζομαι here means more than “greet” as the texts which allude to this saying noted above indicate).⁴

But what does Jesus mean by “enemies”? As we saw above, Davies and Allison think this refers to non-Jews, especially the Roman soldiers. But there is nothing in the text to indicate this; the phrase immediately following, “pray for those who persecute you,” indicates that all who persecute Jesus’ followers are to be construed as enemies, whether Jew or non-Jew. Furthermore, this is clearly the way subsequent writers took it as again can be demonstrated by how many times persecution is referred to in writings that allude to our texts. So, “love your enemies” can be construed as “pray for, do good to, and bless all those who persecute you.” But can “enemy” be construed as wider than “persecutor”? I think so and so does Dick France:

Jesus’ radical new precept, “Love your enemies,” does not specify whether he is talking about personal hostility or about political enemies—which at that time would mean primarily the Roman occupying forces. The following verses focus on the former (“those who persecute you;” “those who love you;” “your own circle”), but even to raise the question is probably to engage in the sort of casuistry Jesus’ simple demand was intended to sweep aside. The change from the singular “enemy” of v. 43 to the plural here may be intended to underline its comprehensiveness: there is no class of enemy which is excluded.⁵

² Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1*, 552.

³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1*, 551.

⁴ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1*, 558.

⁵ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 225.

Quite so—Jesus’ command to love enemies is to be taken in its broadest sense. And so, with this conclusion, we return to our main question: does the Matthean Jesus practise what he preaches? Does he love his enemies?

The language of punishment

For the purpose of this analysis I am not interested in whether the historical Jesus did or did not utter this or that saying. My question concerns the Matthean Jesus as a character in the narrative and he certainly does utter these sayings. I want to focus on two areas. The first concerns the language of punishment where Jesus states that various categories of people who, in the light of the discussion above can be classified as his enemies, are seemingly destined for destruction. He might love them but he is going to destroy them! The second concerns Jesus’ strong denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees in Matt 23. Here is a sample of texts from the first area:

“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. (5:21-22)

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits. (7:15-20)

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’ (7:21-23)

I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (8:11-12)

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. (10:34-39)

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (13:41-42)

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes'?

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. (21:42-45)

"Who then is the faithful and wise slave, whom his master has put in charge of his household, to give the other slaves their allowance of food at the proper time?

Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives. Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions. But if that wicked slave says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and he begins to beat his fellow slaves, and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know. He will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

(24:45-51)

So, those who call another a "fool" will be liable to hell fire. Interestingly, as we shall see, Jesus himself calls the scribes and Pharisees "fools" (same Greek word) in Matt 23:17! False prophets likewise will be thrown into the fire.

Those who do not do God's will will be disowned and banned from the

kingdom of heaven. Unbelieving Jews will be thrown into utter darkness and suffer weeping and gnashing of teeth as will all evildoers and those who act like the wicked slave. Jesus sets members of the same family against one another and those found unworthy will lose their lives. Finally, the chief priests and the Pharisees will be crushed. Is this the language of enemy love? Time does not permit me to do a detailed exegesis of all these texts but suffice it to say that many of them refer to some future judgment when punishment is inflicted on Jesus' enemies. This, of course, does not solve the problem and, whenever the timing of the punishment, Jesus is clearly addressing these remarks to opponents in the present so is the Matthean Jesus inconsistent? Does he fail to do what he expects of his followers? I want to begin to address this question by looking at the phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth" which occurs in several of the passages above. The phrase is almost exclusively Matthean, occurring six times in Matthew (Matt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30) and only once elsewhere in Luke 13:28. The tendency amongst commentators is to treat them all as referring to eschatological judgment but each has to be taken on its own merits and in its particular context. For example, three of the six Matthean occurrences refer to "outer darkness" (Matt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30), two to "the furnace of fire" (Matt 13:42, 50) and one to being cut into pieces and put with the hypocrites (Matt 24:51). Furthermore, five of these occurrences are in the context of parables. The one non-parabolic reference concerns the healing of a Gentile centurion's servant where Jesus remarks on the Gentile's faith and states that many Gentiles will enter the kingdom of God whilst unbelieving Jews will be cast out into outer darkness. Tom Wright, in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, makes the case for all of these instances as referring to imminent judgment on Israel in the form of the destruction of the Temple and the fall of

Jerusalem in 70 CE.⁶ There is not time to engage with his arguments, which are controversial in historical Jesus scholarship, but suffice it to say that I am substantially in agreement. I disagree, however, that the two parables concerning servants in which the term occurs (24:51; 25:30) are to do with the fall of Jerusalem as we shall see. So, the language generally does not refer to eternal punishment in hell but to a concrete event. This is not enemy hate but clear prophetic warning that if Israel continues on its present course then it is destined for imminent destruction. This language echoes the many warnings of the prophets in the Hebrew scriptures about judgment on the nation of Israel if it continued to refuse to repent. The language does then speak of judgment but it serves as a warning encouraging those addressed to respond and turn from their present course of action. This I suggest is one mode in which the Matthean Jesus practices enemy love—the use of judgment language to encourage behavioural change.

Let me turn now to the two parables concerning servants where “weeping and gnashing of teeth” occurs.

Parables of Servants (Matt 24:45-51; 25:14-30)

In Matt 24:1-2 Jesus speaks of the future destruction of the temple. His disciples then ask him two questions: when will this be? And what will be the sign of Jesus’ return and the end of the age? Jesus answers the first question in verses 4-35 and then moves onto the second question from verse 36 onwards.⁷ Here he states categorically that no one knows the time of his

⁶ See N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 320–68.

⁷ So rightly, France, *Matthew*, 890. Wright rejects this reading and argues that the whole of Matthew 24 refers to judgement on Jerusalem with its fall in 70 CE. See Wright, *Jesus*, 346. Whilst persuaded by much of Wright’s argument I do not think he deals adequately with the clear difference between Jesus’ statement that this will all take place within a generation in verse 34

return apart from God (24:36) and illustrates this with a series of scenarios: the necessity for watchfulness (24:37-44); the parable of the servants (24:45-51); the parable of the ten bridesmaids (25:1-13); and the parable of the talents (25:14-30). He concludes this discourse with a discussion of judgment at his return with the well-known reference to sheep and goats (25:31-46). The various scenarios all demonstrate the uncertainty of the timing and the need for watchfulness but two of them speak of master and servant relations. The string of scenarios does not have to be treated uniformly and they do not necessarily have the same referents. That is the point: Jesus uses different illustrations to emphasise uncertainty and watchfulness. In particular, the master in the two parables in this section does not necessarily represent God. Jesus is using illustrations drawn from everyday experience to highlight the need for appropriate behaviour in the present. I have dealt elsewhere with the Lukan version of the parable of the talents (Luke 19:11-27) and argued that the master there does not represent God or Jesus but rather the type of despotic rulership exemplified by the ethnarch Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, and that the hero of the parable is the servant who buries his talent and refuses to buy into the world's economic system.⁸ The Matthean setting is somewhat different, however, and he places his version of the parable in the context of the delay of the Parousia. The judgment on the disobedient slave in Matthew's version is that he is thrown into "the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (25:30). Weeping and gnashing of teeth is also mentioned in connection with the final punishment of the wicked slave in 24:51. In my view the slave is still the hero and the

(the fall of Jerusalem) and his following statement in verse 36 that no one knows the timing of "that" day (the Parousia).

⁸ L. K. Pietersen, *Reading the Bible After Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011), 34–37.

master a despotic landlord in Matthew’s version of the parable. So, what do we do with the language? The punishment is inflicted by the despotic master on the servant in both scenarios. The difference is that in one parable the servant is wicked and the other the hero but both suffer the same fate with despotic masters: that of “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Both are thrown out and have to suffer the fate of the destitute.

Gnashing of teeth can refer to the sound of chattering teeth caused by being in the cold without adequate clothing or shelter, or it can refer to the sound of teeth grinding because one is in pain or deep anguish. When used with the definite article as it is in [25] v. 30, “weeping” (*ho klauthmos*) describes extreme behavior (BAGD 433). Thus, taken together, weeping and gnashing of teeth accompany those moments that tear life apart and change it forever. No doubt, peasants gnashed their teeth when they lost their family plots or saw their subsistence threatened by new tributes and extractions, and after they became day laborers, inadequately clothed and poorly fed, their teeth chattered in the cold.⁹

The parable of the two servants then, in Matt 24:45-51, warns against inappropriate behaviour from Jesus’ followers in the period before his return by using an illustration drawn from the experience of peasant life—that of the absentee landlord. Those servants who operate astute control of the master’s household will be rewarded; those who mistreat those in their charge and live a profligate lifestyle can expect the ruthless punishment meted out by despotic masters. Although the parable ends with the wicked servant cut in pieces—and this kind of violence could be employed by despotic masters—the language is clearly hyperbolic as the servant lives to be assigned a place with the hypocrites and, with them, suffers weeping and gnashing of teeth as a destitute outcast.

⁹William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 166.

This parable is told by Jesus as a warning to his followers. They are to emulate the good servant in caring for the needs of their fellow servants. The fact that the wicked servant is parabolically allotted a place with the hypocrites brings me to my second area: the denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23.

Matthew 23

However we deal with Jesus' language concerning eschatological judgment, there is no doubt that his impassioned denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees in Matt 23:1-36 is directed at his opponents in the present. The language is so extreme that Luz has explicitly stated:

For me there is a fundamental contradiction between Jesus' command to love one's enemies and what happens in the woes with the scribes and Pharisees. It is a contradiction that cannot be explained away. "We must say, therefore"—and we must do it openly and publicly—"with the words of Martin Luther: this text does not 'promote Christ.'"¹⁰

For Luz, therefore, the Matthean Jesus here definitely does not display enemy love. But is this the case? I have argued above that the language of punishment of "enemies" undoubtedly used by the Matthean Jesus serves as a warning to encourage followers to pursue right behaviour in the present and as a summons to those pursuing an alternative vision to turn from their ways or face imminent judgment within a generation. Is something similar happening here or is this purely vindictive rhetoric on Jesus' part in the way Luz suggests?

¹⁰ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2005), 138 He cites Werner Georg Kümmel, "Die Weherufe über die Schriftgelehrten und Pharisäer (Mt 23:13–36)," in idem, *Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte* (MThSt 16; Marburg: Elwert, 1978) 2. 29–38.

The first section (23:1-12) consists of two parts. In verses 2-7 Jesus speaks about the scribes and Pharisees and warns his followers to obey what they teach because they “sit on Moses’ seat” (23:2) but not to do as they do. In an honour and shame culture they love to receive honour but in reality they impose impossible burdens on those they lead. In the second part, verses 8-12, the disciples are addressed and they are exhorted not to receive honorific titles. Then, 23:13-36 addresses the scribes and Pharisees directly beginning with a series of seven woes. This woe formula is virtually unknown in secular Greek but is found regularly in the LXX in the prophetic tradition. Prophetic woes function as judgment pronouncements but here the woes pile up and judgment is not pronounced until verses 33-36. The scribes and Pharisees are accused of:

- Completely barring entrance into the kingdom of God;
- Going to extremes to gain converts who are then made to conform to their hellish image;
- Making binding oaths based on gold in the temple and gifts on the altar whilst negating oaths made on the temple or the altar themselves;
- Tithing to the last detail whilst neglecting the key issues of the law: justice, mercy and faith;
- Focusing on external cleanliness whilst neglecting matters of internal character;
- Focusing on external appearances whilst inwardly rotten;
- Venerating the prophets whereas in reality they too would have killed them.

So, Jesus concludes, in the light of the seventh woe, that he will send prophets, sages and scribes but they will be killed or persecuted by them. He calls them hypocrites six times, children of hell, blind guides, blind fools, snakes and brood of vipers. This name-calling brings to mind Jesus' exhortation in the Sermon on the Mount that anger leads to judgment, insults to appearing before the council, and saying, "you fool" (the exact word Jesus uses when he accuses them of being blind fools) leads to the hell of fire. With this in mind there is a certain irony when Jesus ends this denunciation with the accusation that the scribes and Pharisees cannot escape being sentenced to hell.

Not only Luz but many other commentators insist that the vehemence with which Jesus denounces the scribes and Pharisees is incompatible with his love pronouncement in the Sermon on the Mount. The usual move is to say that, given the historical Jesus undoubtedly, pronounced enemy love in Matt 5, Matt 23 must be a later reflection of the church's struggle with Jews. Davies and Allison are typical : "the woes were forged by a heart-felt bitterness, by the hostile feelings of a Jewish-Christian group estranged from its mother community."¹¹ Furthermore, of course, this passage is extremely difficult for contemporary readers in the light of the subsequent history of Christian persecution of Jews. Whatever the historical circumstances, I am interested in this paper in the Matthean Jesus who utters both the command to love enemies in Matt 5 and the woes of Matt 23. How can these be reconciled if at all? The solution I have suggested above is to recognise that love for enemies does not simply mean accepting them at face value. Enemy love is, in fact, modelled by the Matthean Jesus as love which is prepared to confront and

challenge in order to encourage behavioural change and it is precisely because of enemy love that confrontation must happen. Speaking truth to power is a way of loving the enemy that Jesus exemplifies. Furthermore, it is significant that the conclusion of this chapter has Jesus lamenting over Jerusalem due to its imminent destruction and the next chapter goes on to speak of the destruction of the Temple. The reason for Jesus' vehement denunciation is because he sees the scribes and Pharisees as leading the people to imminent destruction. The woes against them end with Jesus' warning that all this will come upon this generation. The extremity of the situation calls for extreme language.

Conclusion

I have sought to demonstrate, in substantial agreement with Wright, that Jesus uses judgment language to warn about imminent judgment. In this he is very much in line with the Hebrew prophets who warn of coming judgment if the leaders and/or people do not repent. Because the coming judgment is so severe (but has nothing to do with eternal punishment in hell in either my or Wright's view) the rhetoric is so extreme. To love an enemy is not merely to let them continue in their current course of action without confrontation. Enemy love is tough love. Enemy love is speaking truth to power.

Some commentators are so taken aback by the vehemence of his attack on the scribes and Pharisees that they wonder if Jesus could have actually pronounced these judgments against the scribes and Pharisees. It is often assumed that Jesus's judgmental tone and his unforgiving judgments are incompatible with the great commandment, but even more at odds with his admonition that we should love our enemies (Matt. 5:38–48). Yet as I already suggested, the love that Jesus preaches is

¹¹ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 308.

not incompatible with judgment and, in particular, judgment on hypocrisy. Faithful love, if it is faithful, is judgment.¹²

I conclude with a quote from Menno Simons, the one from whom the Mennonites derive their name. Jesus' injunction to love enemies is at the heart of the Mennonite practice of reconciliation. Here is Menno dealing with the Münsterites:

I think it is time you should see and learn to know your lying faithless, and deceiving prophets. They are the foxes which destroy the vineyard of the Lord. These are the thieves and murderers of your souls; false prophets who deny the Lord that bought them; who have directed you, poor erring sheep, by their own lying visions, dreams, and thoughts of their hearts, and have led you against all the Scriptures upon a false and loose foundation.

How like unto those you have become, of whom Eusebius writes, that they walked according to the lusts of their hearts, as the prophets foretold; who denied Paul and the New Testament, and carried with them a book, which they boasted, fell from heaven as a present to them.

So it is with you, madmen that you are (bear with me, for it is the truth which I write). The prophets you read according to the Jewish understanding. You say the doctrine of Christ and the apostles is at the present time fulfilled; and pretend that there is now another dispensation, etc., and observe not that you thereby deny the Son of God, and gainsay the whole Scriptures; you comfort yourselves with mere lies, as also did disobedient Israel in their time.

Oh dear Lord! How long shall these sore plagues endure? how long shall the name of the Lord through you be blasphemed, and his holy word through you be disgraced? Is it not a grievous error and raving madness that Christ, the Son of the living God, who, brought forth in eternal righteousness, has reconciled heaven and earth by the blood of his cross, with his word of truth, and with the counsels of eternal life, is rejected from your hearts, which he so dearly bought, and which should, so properly be the dwelling place of Christ; and poor, sinful flesh, and mortal man descended from Adam, full of all unrighteousness, haughty speeches, lies and open deception is received by you and adopted in stead.

Oh, beloved children, what are you doing? Are you so thoroughly enchanted that you have lost all reason, intelligence, the Scriptures, and everything, so that you cannot see at all?¹³

¹² Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 195.

¹³ Menno Simons, *The Complete Works of Menno Simons* (Scottsdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1984), 218-19.