Chapter: 6

Christian Social Ethics

New Testament is considered as the authentic source to depict the life and teachings of Jesus. Though the exact date of birth of Jesus is not known, it is presumed to be shortly before the death of ‘Herod the Great’ in 4th century BCE.¹ Jesus lived in Palestine, Galilee and Jerusalem, which were under Roman Empire. New Testament ascribes supernatural birth to Jesus, without a human father, leading to virgin birth. Jesus selected twelve disciples to train them to spread his message all over the world.

As per New Testament records, Jesus ministry was marked by healing of various people with infirmities like, leprosy, blindness and even giving life to the dead. This chapter delves on social ethics of New Testament, focusing on the teachings of Jesus. In addition, an attempt is made to observe, how the social ethics and values of Old Testament reverberate in the teachings of Jesus. In order to analyze the teachings of Jesus, the Gospel of Mathew, the first book of New Testament is selected, and other of books of the New Testament are also consulted as and when

necessary. In addition, this chapter also attempts to study how Apostle Paul supplements Jesus teaching on love for fellow human beings.

The New Testament is a collection of twenty-seven books written by different authors. New Testament bears witness to life and ministry of Jesus and presents the history of ‘early church’ of first century CE. The term, church comes from the Greek word, *ekklesia*, which refers to local congregation of Christians. New Testament is instrumental in shaping Christian belief and ethics. The authors of the New Testament books wrote to early churches addressing the issues and problems of the churches. Therefore, each book of New Testament supposed to stand on its own and interpreted in its own context.

The New Testament consists of four gospels, which depict the life and ministry of Jesus. The ‘Book of Acts’ presents the historical sketch of early churches, tracing the origin and growth of church. The ‘Book of Revelation’ is categorized under apocalyptic literature as it is filled with symbolic language, visions, mainly dealing with future events. There are twenty-one letters written to churches and individuals, each letter constitute one book of the New Testament. Out of twenty-one letters, the authorship of thirteen letters is ascribed to Paul, who spread the message of Jesus, along with twelve disciples of Jesus Christ and found early churches. The Epistles written by Paul are: Romans, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First
Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians, First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon. All these thirteen Epistles bear the name of Paul, indicating his authorship. However, there are recent scholarly debates challenging the authorship of Paul.

The different books of New Testament are written in different contexts and to different churches, but their ethical foundations revolve around the crux of Jesus ethical thought. New Testament books were written in the first century CE. New Testament writers passionately believed in Jesus and wrote the books to persuade the readers to believe in Jesus and grow in faith. The authors of New Testament often used Old Testament in their writings, quoting the verses of prophetical books or historical narratives, to validate the life and teachings of Jesus.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were chief opponents of Jesus; they opposed teachings of Jesus and his interpretation of the Pentateuch. Pharisees belonged a religious group within Judaism, which endorsed and practiced meticulous observance of laws narrated in Pentateuch, and imposed their understanding of the ‘Law’ on others, they emphasized on ritual purity and tithing. Often Jesus confronted Pharisees on their understanding and practice of law. Similarly, Sadducees, a religious group within Judaism, were influential religious leaders during first century CE. Almost all priests of Jewish temple come from this group. During Roman period Sadducees had political influence. For Sadducees,
only law in Pentateuch is permanent, hence they rejected belief in life after death, soul, demon and angels. Sadducees were one of the major opponents of Jesus in the narratives of Gospel. They conspired to kill Jesus. Jesus was finally condemned to death for alleged political sedition; that he claimed to be king of Jews, this was considered as an act of revolt against Roman Empire. Because, Jesus often used the phrase ‘Kingdom of God’ in his teaching, denoting the reign of God on earth and in heaven, and not necessarily targeting Roman empire.

The Death and Resurrection of Jesus are significant events for Christian faith. New Testament states that, Jesus had a physical resurrection on third day of his death. Theologically, death of Jesus is atonement for the sins of the world, and his resurrection stands for the vindication of his message and work. Teachings of Jesus are based on the Old Testament, but Jesus confronted the pseudo religious traditions prescribed by religious leaders like Pharisees and Sadducees. New Testament, on many occasions declared him as God who incarnated as human being to die for the sins of the world. Jesus in his teaching emphasized for ethical behavior, which come out of one’s love for God and for fellow human beings.

Traditionally it is believed that, Matthew, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, authored the ‘Gospel of Matthew’. Nevertheless, the authorship of ‘Gospel of Matthew’ is debated in recent times. However,
this chapter is concerned with the content of the Gospel rather than the authorship debates. The author of Gospel of Matthew presents the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus to address the problems and issues of the Jewish community who followed the teaching of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{2} Therefore, life and message of Jesus in ‘Gospel of Mathew’ is influenced by the context of the community. In this regard, J. Andrew Overman, states that:

“… the author Matthew has described Jesus and his meaning for his church consciously and carefully so that Jesus will address the Matthean community and their predicament at the close of the first century CE, in Palestine.”\textsuperscript{3}

The Jewish temple was destroyed by Rome in 70 CE, which was a powerful jolt and humiliation to Jewish people. It is believed that this event, weakened different groups of Judaism and many Jewish groups disappeared. Therefore, it becomes all the more important to understand the context of community to which the ‘Gospel of Matthew’ is addressed. This community lived under Roman emperor, Augustus, and was predominantly distant in culture to Rome but under the colonial rule of Rome.

The destruction of temple in 70 CE, created a vacuum of leadership among the Jewish people as many groups of Judaism disappeared and this

\textsuperscript{2} J. Andrew Overman, \textit{Church and Community in Crisis: the Gospel according to Matthew}, p.9.
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Ibid.}, p.2.
vacuum was filled by Pharisees.\(^4\) Consequently, Pharisees emerged as judges and interpreters of law in post seventy CE after destruction of temple, their religious influence and power made Matthew’s community more vulnerable. Often Pharisees criticized Mathew’s community, for following Jesus and neglecting the Pentateuch. Therefore, Matthew presents Jesus as most effective teacher and authoritative interpreter of the law, probably for two reasons; first to encourage his community, who were Jews but believed in Jesus. Secondly, to counter the Pharisees, that his community did not sideline ‘The Law’, but followed the correct interpretation of ‘the Law’ as taught by Jesus.

Pentateuch, also called as *Torah* by Jews, played a significant role in defining human life and human behavior for Jews. By *Torah*, Jews derived their ontological and political identity. In this regard, J. Andrew Overman, states that:

“The law contained instruction about living, ordering life, and helped to guide relations within Israel and between Israel and the nations. Further, in the recitation and study of the law Jews heard and read their own story. The history, adversity, judgments, and promises written in the law was a story about them. The proper rendering and interpretation of the law was really, then, an argument about them, who they were, where they had come from and where they were headed.”\(^5\)


In the above-mentioned significance of the Law in the Jewish life and Identity, the author of the Gospel of Matthew, intends to confront Pharisees, by stating that, Jesus and his community stand for *Torah*, ‘The Law.’ On different occasions in Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is portrayed as authoritative interpreter of ‘Law’:

"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven".6

The above-mentioned significance of the Law stated by Jesus, establishes that, Jesus teachings are in continuation with the spirit of the Old Testament, but Jesus’ interpretation of law moves beyond the legalism of the law to the motives behind framing of the Law.

**Social Ethics of Jesus**

The following section, focuses on Jesus teaching concerned with sanctify of human life, property, family, and human relationships. Sanctity of Human life and human dignity are the principles that form the

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ethical outlook of Jesus, consequently guiding Jesus’ teaching on human relationships and transactions. The following statement of Jesus addresses; anger, hatred, and violence in human relationships:

"You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire."\(^7\)

Generally, it is misunderstood that, in the above-mentioned scripture Jesus commands not to be angry. However, when the same verse read in original language Greek, it gives different meaning. In this regard, Glen H Stassen, and David P Gushee, state that:

“In the Greek of the New Testament, “Being angry” in Matthew 5:22 is not a command, but a participle, an ongoing action. It is a diagnosis of a vicious cycle that we often get stuck in: being angry, insulting one another.”\(^8\)

This view further can be reinforced by recalling the instances where Jesus himself was angry in different occasions, as we read in New Testament. In addition, the above-mentioned verse is wrongly interpreted to portray Jesus contrasting the law. The word, ‘but’ in English translation gives a sense that, Jesus is contrasting or superseding the Law of Old Testament. Nevertheless, word for ‘but’ in Greek language from

\(^7\) The Bible, Mathew, 5:21-22(Translation: Revised Standard Version).
\(^8\) Glen H Stassen, David P Gushee, Kingdom Ethics, p.134.
which the ‘Gospel of Mathew’ is translated is *de*. The particle, *de* in Greek grammar refers to continuity. Thus *de* refers to further explanation of the law. Therefore, it can be inferred that, Jesus never dismisses the Law of Moses, but explains the real meaning of law, in fact the motive behind the Law. In this regard Anna Wierzbicka, states that:

> “Jesus question was not so much whether Moses and the Prophets had communicated God’s message “correctly” but whether the people to whom they spoke had come to know fully what God wanted to say (through the Scriptures); and to this question his answer appeared to be “no not necessarily, not always.””

Prohibition of anger in the above-mentioned verse is in universal dimension, which includes any human being. In this regard, Anna Wierzbicka, states that:

> “The “higher righteousness” proclaimed here by Jesus consists in the transition from “You shall not murder (ANYONE)” to “You shall not be angry (WITH ANYONE)”; and the intended scope of “brother” in verse 22 is made clear by the symmetry between the two statements (verses 21 and 22): “brother” in 22 is coextensive with “anyone” in 21.”

Therefore, anger against a person in universal sense, includes all human being. Anger may not always culminate in murder or physical

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9 Anna Wierzbicka, *What did Jesus Mean*, p.60.
10 Anna Wierzbicka, *What did Jesus Mean*, p.64.
assault. Therefore, Jesus aims at obedience from the heart leading to external behavior. In this regard, J. Andrew Overman, states that:

“The internal motives and attitudes of the followers and disciples emerge again as a central focus in Matthew’s hermeneutic. There is a direct correlation between what is inside and what is outside. This is a key to correctly understanding and interpreting the law.”

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Anger harbored in the heart and mind reflects in behavior and attitude, which may lead to violence and assault. Harboring anger is not just a matter of fleeting emotions and feelings but a product of conscious decision of individual persons and community.

Many a times, a harbored grudge and anger leads to marginalization and discrimination of individuals and communities, resulting in oppression, social injustice and violence. As observed in earlier chapter, that all human beings are made in the image of God, therefore any kind of assault or insult hurled on human beings is an indirect assault on God. An assault can be either physical or mental. Therefore, Jesus not only condemns murder but also an insult or mental abuse hurled on any human beings, and states that mental abuse is as serious as murder and attracts the same punishment as murder. The mental assault can be expressed in discriminative attitudes, unfair treatment of human beings, either by individuals or by communities.

11 J. Andrew Overman, Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew, p.82.
Jesus mandates his followers to come out of vicious cycle of anger, and reconcile with fellow human beings, which is a prerequisite for right relationship with God, as stated in the ensuing verse:

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”¹²

In the above mentioned versus, the words, ‘leave’, ‘be reconciled’, and ‘offer’ are in imperative form. Consequently, the above-mentioned verse commands a person to be a peacemaker by coming out of the vicious cycle of anger and grudge against fellow human being. Vicious cycle of anger and grudge can lead to physical or mental assault. Conflict resolution, peace and reconciliation, are significant norms in the ethical framework of Jesus. In the preceding verse, Jesus clearly states that person’s relationship with God is dependent upon his/her relationship with the neighbor. In other words, a person who harbors anger and grudge should not hope for relationship with God. Therefore, it can be inferred that, all the spiritual activities done with anger and grudge will go in vain.

Reconciliation and peace with other human beings is a prerequisite for one to worship God. In other words, one cannot be in right relationship with God, if not in peace with other human beings. It has to

be noted that, peace and right relationship with other human beings demand justice, equality, and human transactions devoid of discriminations, and unfair treatment. Therefore, it can be deduced that, in the ethical framework of Jesus, there is no room for anger and revenge leading to unbridled violence. This truth is reinforced by the following statement of Jesus:

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also...""13

Jesus discourages revenge, but proposes resistance to an assault in a just manner. In this regard, Glen H Stassen, and David P Gushee, state that:

“...the Greek for “evil” can mean either “by evil means” or “the evil person.” Either translation is equally good according to Greek grammar; the decision must come from the context.”14

Therefore, it can be implied that, Jesus discourages resistance by evil means, and encourages resistance by appropriate and just manner, by not giving up to an unbridled revenge. As seen in the previous chapter, Old Testament, does not permit unbridled revenge by the nearest of the kin of the victim, but, rather directs the judges to fix appropriate

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14 Glen H Stassen, David P Gushee, Kingdom Ethics, p.138.
compensation to be paid to the victim by the culprit of physical harm. Similarly, the above-mentioned verse mandates not to repay evil with evil or wrong with wrong means. In similar lines, Frederick Bruner, states that:

“Jesus does not command, for example, “if someone slaps you on the right cheek, run!” or sink to the ground,” both of which would be completely non-confrontational. No! Confront the evil one-with a surprisingly nonviolent response: turn the other cheek…”\(^{15}\)

However, if ‘turning the other cheek’ is thought in universal terms, it does not refer to passively being assaulted or exploited but to resist in a just manner. In this regard, Anna Wierzbicka, states that:

“The answer to the question of whether the follower of Jesus can or should ever render an eye for an eye or a tooth for tooth can be a simple and clear no, without any implication that they should never defend themselves, their children, or others against a physical attack.”\(^{16}\)

Consequently, it can be inferred that, Jesus never gives room for vengeful violence in responding to the attack, but Jesus never advises for passive suffering of assault. However, Jesus recommends an active and just response to the assault, without resorting to revenge so that peace is restored. Jesus, expands gamut of his ethics, and mandates his followers to love their enemies as mentioned in the following verse:


\(^{16}\) Anna Wierzbicka, \textit{What did Jesus Mean}, p.106.
"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." 17

Jesus mandates his followers against all kinds of hatred and vengeance even to the enemies who persecute and assault. The rationale for above-mentioned mandate is that; God loves all human beings without any bias, consequently blessing all human beings with sunlight and rain, implying that all human beings belong to one family of God. Therefore, from the perspective of God, all human beings are equally valuable without any discrimination or marginalization.

When person starts loving enemies, there will be room for progress towards peace and reconciliation. When this concept is applied in universal terms, there will be a great move towards peace and justice. The socio-economic and political criteria, which divide humanity, often become tools to hate others and categorize others as enemies leading to violent conflicts, discrimination, marginalization and inequality in different dimensions of life. In this context, the above-mentioned principle of Jesus to love enemies because all human beings belong to God and to one family submerges all the socio-economic and political

17 The Bible, Matthew, 5:43-45(Translation: Revised Standard Version).
boundaries into common family of humankind. It aims at welfare of all human beings, leading to over all development, with adequate resources for livelihood and progress. For Jesus, ‘Love for fellow human beings’ is the pivot around which all human transactions should revolve. In the following verses, Jesus makes this fact clear:

“And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." 18

In the foregoing verse, Jesus clarifies that, commandment to love God is greatest, but to love one’s neighbor is also equally greatest commandment. Accordingly, it can be implied that, one cannot love and please God without loving one’s fellow human being. In this regard, Gnana Robinson, rightly points out that:

“The Bible …holds love to God and love to mankind together; one without the other is not possible.” 19

In other words, one has to relate to fellow human beings according to worth and dignity bestowed on them by virtue of being created in the ‘Image of God.’ Commandments to love God and to love human beings

are intertwined; one cannot obey one commandment neglecting the other. In addition, Jesus makes it clear that obeying the two intertwined commandments fulfil all the ethical requirements of Old Testament. Therefore, love for fellow human beings becomes indispensable component of one’s relationship to God.

Jesus often used parables to drive religious truth or principles. Parable is a brief story within the prose to illustrate a religious truth or principle. Generally, in a parable characters are human beings. Jesus illustrates the sanctity of human life and love for one’s neighbor in the following parable from the ‘Gospel of Luke.’ This parable was told in the context of mandate to love neighbor, which is intrinsically connected to loving God.

“And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.
But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?' He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."  

In the above-mentioned parable, Jesus focuses on human responsibility of restoring and safeguarding life of fellow human by the action, which comes out of love for the neighbor. Jesus highlights the behavior of priests and Levites, who held an important position in religious institution and society, but did not fulfill the basic human responsibility of saving and safeguarding human life. These leaders, under the garb of false religiosity and ideologies ignored the basic human responsibility of loving one’s neighbor, thus breaking the fundamental commandment of love for neighbors.

In contrast to the behavior of priest and Levite, Jesus highlights the action of Samaritan man. Samaritan community was considered by Jews as lower in status. There was no social interaction between Samaritans and Jews. In this backdrop, Jesus presents, Samaritan man

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acting out love for fellow human beings to restore life and sustain life of the bleeding victim lying half-dead on road. For Jesus, Samaritan man fulfilled the mandate to love the neighbor by restoring human dignity and life, by overcoming all the social barriers in saving and nurturing human life. Therefore, it can be implied that, all human beings are neighbors to each other irrespective of social-political and economic backgrounds. In this regard, Kanagaraj J Jeyaselan, states that:

“...Jesus shows that any needy person whom we meet on our life path is a neighbour and that person has a right to live with dignity.”

In addition, Jesus portrayed a social outcaste Samaritan man in sublime heights, ascribing him a dignity and honour for fulfilling God’s demands of love in contrast to the religious leaders like Pharisees and Levites. Jesus had high regard for human life and dignity, he breached all the traditional or religious customs to enhance and nurture human life and human dignity. In the following scriptural passage, Jesus confronts, Pharisees who strictly followed Sabbath. As observed in fourth chapter, Sabbath was considered as consecrated day for God and day of rest. Sabbath is fourth commandment in ‘Ten Commandments’ and held in high esteem by people of Israel. During the times of Jesus in first century CE, different legal experts had their own understanding of Sabbath and

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restricted different activities on Sabbath day. For an instance, fires were not allowed to be lit, burdens should not be carried, travel was restricted, sowing and reaping was forbidden. Jesus often questioned these restrictions, which became obstacles to fulfill demands of God, especially one’s responsibility towards fellow human beings. For instance, as observed in the following verses:

“And he went on from there, and entered their synagogue. And behold, there was a man with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. He said to them, "What man of you, if he has one sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, whole like the other."  

As observed in the foregoing scripture passage, Jesus broke all the religious traditions, and confronted Pharisees to heal a man with withered hand on Sabbath. Thus, Jesus restored the human dignity and value by restoring health to a man. Because physical wellbeing is source of livelihood, and enables a person to participate and enjoy the human life. Consequently, Jesus demonstrated that human life and dignity are more precious than any human traditions or norms. In this regard, Kanagaraj J Jeyaselan, mentions that:

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22 The Bible, Matthew, 12:10-13(Translation: Revised Standard Version).
“...He intentionally healed on Sabbath...to drive home the point that human beings are more valuable than animals, rituals and religious laws.”

Jesus challenged the dehumanizing rules and regulations imposed by Pharisees, and restored human dignity and life. As observed in the above-mentioned discussion, it is observed that Jesus emphasized human dignity and welfare of an individual; he denounced all pseudo social barriers, customs, and traditions in favor individual well being. Similarly, in succeeding section, Jesus addresses the issue of sexual exploitation and lust to safeguard the interests of vulnerable individuals.

Jesus condemns lust, which often reflected in one’s lustful look at the opposite sex. Lust and harbored anger are the two faces of the same coin, because lust and anger intend to damage others. In this regard, Frederick Dale Bruner, states that:

“Lust is like anger in that it seeks power over another person. Both anger and lust put other people down, though by seemingly opposite emotions-by hatred and desire.”

In the following verse Jesus, goes beyond act of adultery forbidding lustful look itself:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already

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committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.”  

The above-mentioned verse in the New Testament Greek refers to injuring a woman adulterously by lustful look. Therefore, the verse aims at protecting the rights of a woman who is considered as an object of sexual fantasy and pleasure. In the above-mentioned verse, Jesus prohibits a lustful look. Person who looks in order to lust, consider the opponent not has human beings but a ‘thing’ to be possessed, lustful look aims at violating the rights of other person. In this regard, Frederick Dale Bruner, states that:

“...the looking that Jesus condemns here, specifically, is lustful looking, staring with intent to possess or at least to burn. The other person is no longer really a unique human being; she or he is now simply kindling tinder, a thing; a way for one to enjoy oneself, to express oneself, to feel one’s powers.”

Lust aims at possessing something, which does not belong to it and can go to any length to achieve its purpose. For instance, as discussed in previous chapter, the lust of King David led him to commit adultery with Bathsheba and kill her husband. Garnering lust leads to adultery or adulterous attitudes and gestures violating the rights of other person.

26 Anna Wierzbicka, What did Jesus Mean, p.82.
Therefore, Jesus not only condemns act of adultery per se but the root of cause of adultery. Anger and lust may not culminate in murder and adultery respectively but attitudes and gestures that come out of them definitely disturb the community and its peace.\textsuperscript{28} In addition, emphasizing the seriousness of dealing with lust, in the above-mentioned verse, Jesus makes a metaphorical statement of mutilation of eyes and hands referring to painful struggle one has to undergo to fight with one’s sinful impulses and urges. This implies that one’s desires contrary to one’s morality are overwhelming for the person.\textsuperscript{29}

For Jesus, the lust which does not, culminate in adultery is also as serious as adultery. Lust is root cause of sexual exploitation and violence of vulnerable individuals. As lustful looks, attitudes and gestures not only disturb but also violate the just human relationships and transactions; especially it can mar the human family and institution of marriage by violating the rights of spouses. As institution of marriage was established in the creative narrative in the Book of Genesis, where God created Adam and Eve as male and female and blesses them to multiply, as mentioned in the following verse:

\begin{quote}
“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{28} J. Andrew Overman, \textit{Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew}, p.82.

\textsuperscript{29} Anna Wierzbicka, \textit{What did Jesus Mean}, p.90.
God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply..."\textsuperscript{30}

In the preceding verse, it can be observed that, institution of marriage and family are sacred since they are initiated by God. The sanctity of marriage preserves the rights of the spouses leading to stable family, which is supposed to provide protection and security to family members, especially children. Family is the first and foremost place where children are supposed to be groomed, where they are shaped to become responsible adults and members of the society. In this context, marriage and family become significant institutions. Pentateuch stipulated different legal codes to protect marriage and family. Adultery is one of the biggest threats to sanctity of marriage, where the conjugal rights of the married spouses are violated, leading to damage to the family as a whole. In this context, the mandate of Jesus against lust becomes all the more important to safeguard and nurture the family and institution of marriage.

**Truth and Justice**

In the preceding sections, it is observed that, Jesus emphasized sanctify of human life, peaceful and just response to assault, and love for

\textsuperscript{30} The Bible, Genesis, 1:27-28(Translation: Revised Standard Version).
fellow human beings. The following section delves on truth and integrity in human transactions, as stated in the succeeding statement of Jesus:

"Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil."  

In the history of early Christianity, the above-mentioned statement of Jesus was taken literally, thus a person was not allowed to take any oaths at any cost. Only in fourth century CE, Christians were allowed to take oaths under Christian emperors of Rome, where Christianity was considered as state religion. Does Jesus condemn oath or the lying structures around the process of oath taking? This question becomes significant in the political order of the state, even in the court of law, because oaths are part of functioning of governments.

An oath can be used to cover the lie hidden in the heart, and pervert the justice in human transactions. In this regard, Immanuel Kant mentions that:

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“Oaths are pure superstition because they naively believe that a person who cannot be trusted to tell the truth can “be persuaded to speak truthfully by the use of a formula”.\textsuperscript{33}

Therefore, it can be observed that, Jesus is addressing an act of oath taking process to cover falsehood, where oath becomes an instrument of hiding the truth under the cover oath. Oaths in themselves are not wrong or inhere anything evil, but can be abused for selfish intentions. Jesus, aims at speaking truth in oath and when not in Oath, in this regard, Frederick Dale Bruner states that:

\begin{quote}
“One clear goal of Jesus’ command is the dismantling of the whole lying structure of oaths and oath taking,…”\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

When the instrument of oath is abused it causes greater danger to individuals, community and society. A similar kind of mandates to speak truth always is found in the book of James in New Testament:

\begin{quote}
“But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no, that you may not fall under condemnation”.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

The above-mentioned verse clearly mandates for integrity of speech, in other words the entire speech of the person in all the times should be oath laden, the integrity of a person established in such a way

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\textsuperscript{33} Quoted in \textit{Ibid.}, p.240. \\
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibid.}, p.239. \\
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{The Bible, James}, 5:12 (Translation: Revised Standard Version).
\end{flushright}
that, there will no need of oaths at all. In Old Testament, oaths were
given to protect the truth, but when oaths are abused, they make joke of
the truth. In this regard, Bonhoeffer aptly writes that:

“The Old Testament had expressed its
condemnation of untruthfulness by the use of
the oath, Jesus condemns it by forbidding oaths
altogether.”36

Jesus aims at truth in all human transactions, whether under oath or
not being under oath. However, Jesus command aimed at communities to
make them free of falsehood and build individuals with integrity. This
mandate to speak in truth has significant implication to judicial
proceedings; justice is often perverted by false witnesses, and
consequently the innocents are condemned. As observed in the previous
chapter, Naboth was falsely condemned by false witness by King Ahab.
Often it is the powerful who abuse justice by false witnesses, even Jesus
was condemned to death by false witnesses.

The broader range of application of the above-mentioned command
can be transparency, honesty, and impartiality in all human transactions,
especially in the domain of administration of Justice. In this context,
Ninth commandment in ‘Ten Commandments’ prohibiting false witness
can be recalled. As observed in the fourth chapter, Ninth commandment

aims at justice in judicial proceedings. Similarly, Jesus mandates for speaking truth in all dimensions of life, and this mandate of Jesus carries forward the intention and concern of Ninth commandment, and concern of justice expressed in Pentateuch as a whole. From the above-mentioned discussions, it can be observed that, Jesus intends to build a community based on peace and just human transactions.

**Property and Jesus**

Property entails human beings with freedom, a freedom from not depending on other human beings for livelihood. In this regard, Douglas Meeks, mention that:

“Having property means not being left defenseless against the capriciousness of overlords, nature, and fate. It means that one does not have to depend on others for livelihood. It means that one is less likely to be subordinated and reduced to servitude or made a client.” 37

But at the same time, it has to be noted that, the propertied class attempt to subjugate the people who are without property, pushing them to survive on bare necessities, thus pushing into servitude. In this M Douglas Meeks, states that:

“The Property that is access to life is vastly different from property that gives one the power

to exclude and hence control others. Property that makes one independent is qualitatively different from property that makes others dependent.” 38

Jesus does not question the property on which one’s livelihood dependent, which gives person a freedom from servitude, but Jesus challenged the people who amassed property. In this regard, Walter Rauschenbusch, states that:

“Property is intended to secure freedom of action and self-development; in fact, it often chains men and clip their wings. This is what Jesus calls “the deceitfulness of riches” and “darkening of the inner eye.”39

Jesus, warned against covetousness to amass wealth and warned regarding vanity of wealth, and advises to set priorities where obedience to God is centre of human life rather than the wealth. Jesus illustrates this truth with a parable mentioned below:

“And one out of the multitude said unto him, Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me. But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said to them, "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my

38 Ibid.
goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." 40

The context of above-mentioned parable suggests that, Jesus was addressing thousands of multitudes who gathered to listen to him.41 From the multitude, one person asked Jesus to be judge for dividing the property with his brother. In the consequent parable, Jesus clearly set to challenge the person who wants to amass wealth for his personal comforts without taking into account the needs of other human beings or the welfare of the community. The abundance harvest was not shared with others who are in need, but kept only for self. Jesus clearly points out that; the person who amasses wealth for self cannot please God unless wealth is shared to meet the needs of the needy as stated in the following passage:

"And behold, one came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which?" And Jesus said, "You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor

as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have observed; what do I still lack?"
Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor and
you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." 42

In above-mentioned passage, Jesus categorically states that unless one is ready to forego one’s wealth and ready to share with the poor, one cannot obtain the ‘Eternal Life’, the gift of God, referring to future life, after the present age. Here Jesus clearly demonstrates that, one cannot be right with God unless one is ready to love fellow human beings in need by sharing property. Therefore, it can be implied that, covetousness for property and love of God cannot go hand in hand. This shows Jesus was concerned about the sections of the society deprived of property and livelihood, and on the other hand, he saw elites amassing wealth without any concern for the poor and the needy. Jesus challenges rich and powerful of the society who behaved like King Ahab who grabbed the property of Naboth, as observed in the preceding chapter. In the light of foregoing discussion on property, it can be deduced that, Jesus does not question ownership of property that is used for one’s survival, but Jesus categorically questions, covetousness that leads to amassing of wealth in the context of poor struggling to survive. Jesus confronts those who trust

42 The Bible, Matthew, 19:16-21 (Translation: Revised Standard Version).
and worship wealth rather than God. Jesus challenges to those who marginalize and dehumanize the poor to amass the wealth.

**Social Ethics of Paul**

The following section delves on Paul’s discourse on ‘Love’ in the light of Jesus mandate to love fellow humans. In the ensuing section, Paul defines love, explains its characteristics and highlights the significance of love in human relationships and transactions.

In Paul’s perspective, love for fellow human beings is the significant foundation for ethical behavior. For Paul, to love one another is a divine gift of Holy Spirit, which connotes to personal agency of God, denoting God. In Hebrew language, the term ‘spirit’ refers to wind or breath, without any physical body. Holy Spirit is considered to be active in the world. Jesus spoke about Holy Spirit as comforter, who comforts and guides the human beings, especially those who follow him. Love for God and for fellow human beings is instilled in the heart of a follower of Jesus as a gift of the Holy Spirit, which Paul mentions in the following verse:

> “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.” 43

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It is not only virtue of love, which the Holy Spirit instills, but also other allied virtues, which are mentioned in the preceding verse. Nonetheless, it has to be noted that, Paul does not mean that a follower of Jesus involuntarily becomes virtuous, but has to make efforts and conscious decision to respond to the working of the Holy Spirit to materialize the virtuous behavior. It demands obedience on part of the follower of Jesus to embody the above-mentioned virtues and put into practice, as seen in the ensuing verse:

“Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor.”

In the above-mentioned verse, Paul commands to love one another with a genuine love, because Paul was aware of the fact that, people tend to pretend to love in the life of a community. Therefore, Paul aims at eliminating all kinds of falsehood in human relationships and transactions.

Often Paul’s admonishment to love others is located mainly within followers of Jesus. In this regard, R Mohrlang, states that:

“…Paul’s major concern is the welfare of the churches; his primary focus is on the expression of love within the Christian community.

44 The Bible, Romans, 12: 9-10(Translation: Revised Standard Version).
Though he occasionally speaks of showing kindness to those outside the fellowship…”

One of the probable reasons for Paul’s emphasis on love between fellow Christians is to strengthen the churches, and build unity among the Christians so that the churches will grow and flourish. Nevertheless, it seems to be an erroneous, to reach a conclusion that, Paul was only concerned about love among fellow Christians instead of fellow human beings. On a different occasion, Paul quotes Old Testament commandment, to love the fellow neighbor, as stated in the following verses:

“Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

As observed in the above-mentioned verses, like Jesus, Paul never sidelines ‘The Law’ of the Old Testament, but uses it to endorse his teaching on love for fellow humans. Paul reverberates the statement of Jesus that love for fellow human beings fulfill the demands of the ‘Law.’ Paul emphasizes that, all good deeds, in obedience to commandments should be motivated by love, and not with any other selfish interests. Like

46 Romans, 13: 8-10(Translation: Revised Standard Version).
Jesus, Paul not only focuses on external behavior of a person but internal motives of a person. In this regard, S C Mott, states that:

“Love thus is not a replacement of the Law, but a new motivation, understanding and power for meeting and surpassing its moral demands. The combination is crucial. Obedient deeds of great justice and self-sacrifice which lack the motivation and attitude of love are empty.”

In the book of ‘First Corinthians’ Paul devotes an entire chapter, to discusses the significance and characteristics of love, this chapter is considered as a hymn of love, few verses are stated in the following line:

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

Paul talks about highly sought virtues; speaking in tongue of an angel, powers to understand mysteries, abundance faith to perform miracles, and enough courage to sacrifice one’s body and all possession for others. For Paul, even if a person personifies and performs above-mentioned heroic acts but without love for God and for fellow human beings, all such acts are considered as invalid before God. In this regard, Roy A Harrisville, states that:

47 Ibid., p.271.
“...if there were at least one human being about whom it could be said that he incorporated in himself all these powers, any one of which is denied the ordinary mortal, he would be nothing; none of it would be of any use to him-if I have not love.”

The above-mentioned heroic acts unless come out love, then they are performed for selfish reasons and for self-glory. Therefore, it can be inferred that, greatest virtue, which is valued by God, is love; love for God and love for fellow human beings. Any heroic act of spiritual prowess, or sacrifice, which does, not bounce out love, is vain. After stating the significance of Love, Paul moves on to depict the characteristics of Love, as stated in the following verses:

“Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.”

The above-mentioned virtues are reflected in self-sacrificing individual and not in selfish individual, in this context, Mohrlang R, states that:

“...real love is not self-centered, but is willing to sacrifice its own desires for the good of others. It is this sense of self-sacrifice for others—modeled by Christ’s sacrifice for us—

that lie at the heart of Paul’s understanding of what real love is…” 51

Moreover, from the preceding verse, it can be inferred that, love is patient in its dealings, never engages in uncontrolled emotions or revenge. Patience is the indispensable element for peace, and essential constituent to build human communities and nurturing human relationships. In addition, Paul defines love in negative terms; love is neither boastful nor arrogant with envy, love does not insist on its own way. These vices break human relationships and dehumanize fellow human beings. Therefore, it can be implied that, a person without love, dictate others to dominate and manipulate human transactions rather than being open for other views in reaching collective decisions for well being of all.

Similarly, from the foregoing verse, it can be deduced that, love never takes pleasure in wrong, but takes pleasure in justice and truth; love does not stand for falsehood but for truth and integrity. Emphasizing truth and integrity, Paul mandates for honest and transparent human transactions, as seen in subsequent verse from the book of Ephesians:

“Therefore, putting away falsehood, let everyone speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.” 52

52 The Bible, Ephesians, 4: 25(Translation: Revised Standard Version).
Justice and love go hand in hand, without justice there is no love, ultimately it is justice in human transactions, which builds and nurtures the society, where human life is valued and human dignity is nurtured.

From the preceding section, it is observed that, love stands for justice and peace, rather than violence and conflict, which break the human relationships and communities. Therefore, even in the midst of conflict, love seeks peace. In the ensuing statement, Paul reverberate Jesus teaching on love for enemies:

“Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

53

In the preceding verse, Paul discourages revenge, instead recommends a response to evil with noble deed acceptable to everyone. Paul recalls the verses from the book of proverb, which exhorts to feed the enemy who is hungry, and quench the thirst by giving water.54 By this, Paul endorses mandate of love for enemies from the traditional wisdom of proverbs. The imagery, “heaping burning coals on enemies

“head” refers to the idea of transformation of enemy. In this regard, Arland J Hultgren, states that:

“A good possibility, favoured by various interpreters, is that the imagery portrays an Egyptian penitential rite in which a person carries a dish of burning charcoal on his head as a sign of repentance and self-punishment … its symbolism fits the sense of what Paul is clearly getting at: By doing good to one’s enemy, a person may cause him or her to repent and have a sense of remorse for an offense committed.” 55

From the above mentioned discussion, it can be deduced that, Paul encourages non-violent method of conflict resolution based on criteria on justice, where equal human dignity and worth are nurtured and safeguarded.