

Ecodomy: Life in its fullness – if love rules the *oikoumenē*

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Note:

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In the article related terms are deconstructively compared with each other, such as *oikodomē* (encouragement), *dioikēsis theia* (divine administration) and *oikoumenē* (inhabited world). The article aims to identify the positive roots of the term *oikoumenē* beyond the pejorative referencing in the New Testament as 'imperial power'. It demonstrates that the notion *basileia tou theou* (kingdom of God) provides a key to discover the gift of love as the heart of *ecodomy*. The article concludes with a critical discussion of forms of inauthentic love in order to outline what kind of love is conveyed in Jesus' kingdom ethics. The article consists of four sections: (1) 'When children rule the *oikoumenē*', (2) 'When power rules the *oikoumenē*', (3) 'When love rules the *oikoumenē*', and finally (4) 'Différance' – when love is not love.

When children rule the *oikoumenē*

The article reflects on the concept 'ecodomy', a notion describing the strategic research objective of the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Theology. The style of the article is narrative-like,¹ very much similar to what I teach my students about postmodern scholarly writing (see Schutte 2005) 'When *they, we, and the passive become I: Introducing autobiographical biblical criticism*'. Reflection on what 'ecodomy' could yield to cannot be an objective, indifferent or impersonal treatise. It entails the fullness of one's own heart and *ratio*.² To value the Christian faith community as a mirror that reflects life in its fullness is, historically seen, an early perception. One can find it almost at the very beginning of formative Christianity. Time and again the portrait is expressed in utopian terms (cf. Grant [1970] 2004:43; Chilton 2005:98). Irenaeus, bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul, recalls that Papias from Hierapolis, who lived between 60 and 120 CE, portrayed such a 'life in fullness' as follows (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haeresis* 5.33.1–5; 35:1–12; 36):

The days are coming when vineyards will grow up, each with ten thousand vines, on one vine ten thousand branches, on one branch ten thousand shoots, on each shoot ten thousand clusters, on each cluster ten thousand grapes, each grape, when pressed will yield twenty-five measures of wine. (translation, in Grant [1970] 2004:43)

However, where surplus flaunts, over and over again competition ruins the joyfulness which fullness presumes to produce. Eusebius retells that Papias said when one of the believers would want to claim one of the branches, another cluster screams, 'I am superior, take me instead! Serve the Lord rather through me than through the other' (cf. Schoedel 1993:233–270). In this article I will demonstrate the almost permanence of the symbol 'branch' and its implicature of fruitfulness and abundance, often turned into a branch that looks like, and even intended to be, a war-like conquest rod forcing down on the world, the *oikoumenē*, at the bottom as if the 'branch' symbolises the emperor's foot on humbled subordinates.

From the beginning of formative Christianity utopia often manifests as a dystopia (cf. Gordin, Tilley & Prakash 2010), and, according to Jennifer Wenzel (2010:45–72), has become a 'millennial dreaming'. Because a utopia can 'give security for the future' it can 'accumulate power in the present' (Sander 2010:176). Power divides and excludes. For example, Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 CE) elaborated on Papias' dream of abundance constructed an ecclesial image of a 'new Jerusalem'. But, by doing so, he said in exclusive and coveting terms that he knows for certain that not all Christians share his dream (Justinus, *Dialogus cum Tryphona Judaeo* 80–81, 113, 139). Justin also diverged from Papias and replaced Christ's resurrection with Christ's second coming as the decisive moment when the fulfilment of God's fullness will realise.

1. Goldberg (1981–1982:62–95) explains narrative discursive argumentation in the following way: 'If narratives speak of anything, they speak of relations, and primarily of those between persons, their convictions, their actions, and their worlds. Narratives help school us in imagining what might follow from our taking up and acting on one set of convictions rather than another.'

2. Borgman ([1999] 2003:379), enthused by his 'theological biography' of Edward Schillebeeckx, puts it as follows: 'A theologian has to find God in her or his biography: only then is a credible theology possible ... One's own biography must take the form of a theological autobiography. Theology is credible whenever theologians do not just talk about God, but, while speaking about God also speak about themselves, and while writing, (re)write their own life as a place where God comes to light.'

To alter *anastasis* (resurrection) into *parousia* (second coming) is to create a change which implies an immense theological consequence. Dying and rising with Christ assume beneficial service to God in obedience to Jesus' gospel (cf. Rm 6:10). On the other hand, *parousia* refers to a ceremony of 'kyriarchal'³ triumphal procession after conquest (see Helmut Koester [1990:441–458, 1997:158–166] with regard to 1 Th 4:13–18). Soon, when Constantinus (272–337 CE) succeeded to obtain Roman imperial power in 306 CE and began to decriminalise Christianity with the Edict of Milan in 313 CE, Eusebius from Caesarea (c. 260–340 CE) ecstatically proclaimed that 'our captain and leader of God's army' has appeared (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.39.13; 7.24.1) – Constantinus Augustus 'the Great', early Christianity's *Führer*!

In an apocalyptic paradigm the achievement of fullness attained a grammar of power and judgement. And, although this utopia has eventually never realised in real life here and now, already now for centuries, from the time of Papias, Irenaeus, Justin, Eusebius, and Constantine, the church continues to feed millennium fever.

At the beginning of the newest millennium, in January 2000 I listened to Andrew Lloyd Weber (and Jim Steinman's) musical *Whistle down the wind*, directed by the same director of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. It was in the Aldwych Theatre in London. I comprehended again what kind of dystopia the church's message about a new millennium has created in the mind of children-like believers. According to the church's proclamation, this world would really realise as life in fullness, only if Jesus will come! Such a proclamation consists of exactly the same message than that of Justin Martyr in the context of early Christianity. In the musical, when a murderer disguises himself as Jesus, farm children believed him because children-like believers have been convinced by the church's message. They therefore foolishly shelter a criminal, disguised as the Jesus who was proclaimed to come again at his *parousia*. According to the musical, where children rule the world, the *oikoumenē*, they are singing:⁴

*No matter what they teach us, what we believe is true
I can't deny what I believe, I can't be what I'm not
If only tears were laughter, if only night was day
If only prayers were answered, then we would hear God say
No matter what they tell us, no matter what they do
No matter what they teach us, what we believe is true
Midnight is clear, our Saviour is here
He's gonna guard each boy and girl
No hunger or thirst, the last will be first
The night that children rule the world.*

Indeed, when children rule the world, night becomes day and power is replaced with love, and fullness displaces corruption. However, only at the second coming and not here and now. The utopia of 'life in its fullness' ought to be

the church's message so that children can rule the world by singing the truism about divine abundance. Yet, the church continues to teach a distorted idea of 'millennial dreaming' by altering the potentiality of the reality of the utopia of abundance in real life here and now into a dystopia of unreal hope expected at Christ's second coming.

The church has managed, on occasion, to surprise with authentic hope. In that case, in the musical this excerpt from the lyrics of 'Whistle down the wind'⁵ communicates hope:

*So try and stand the tide
Then you'll raise a banner
Send a flare up in the sky
Try to burn a torch
And try to build a bonfire.*

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) was also such a promising event in church history (see Vaticanum II 1965). The 'Church of Rome', with its papal marbled Sala Clementina covered with Renaissance frescoes and valuable works of art that originated from the ecclesiastical summit of excellence, is still one of the less engaged ecumenical denominational traditions in Christianity. This, in spite of Pope Francis's (Jorge Mario Bergoglio from Argentina) public gestures and speeches during the last 3 years, advocating an openness for humility, concern for the poor, respect for other beliefs, non-believers and sexual minorities. However, on Francis' papal coat of arms there is a golden star (symbolising the Virgin Mary) and a grape-like plant (symbolising his association with the Jesuits).

Ecclesiastical ambiguity continues to be a perplexing phenomenon. The Jesuits, The Society of Jesus, founded in 1540, gain their origins from the military but become campaigners for intellectual excellence, social justice, ecumenical dialogue and women rights – to me, all virtues idealised by the concept *ecodomy*. However, male dominance and being a warrior (cf. the metaphors 'golden star' and 'branch' encoded on the papal coat mentioned above) do not assonate with the ethos of the Jesus of history. Even the Jesuit symbol 'branch' constructs ambivalence (see later). In the Jesuits' foundational 'formula' a member is referred to as a 'soldier of God beneath the banner of the cross' (*militare Deo sub vexillo crucis*) and still today their 'overall' head is officially the *Praepositus Generalis*, in everyday language called 'Father General' (O'Malley [1993] 1995:45). Warrior-type metaphors are part and parcel of apocalyptic imagery, also in its earliest Christian usage. Yet, one should not forget historical contexts. It was in mediaeval times not unusual that the term 'soldier' designated membership of a religious order. Even the 'father of liberal Christian teaching' (Scheck 2010:321), Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1469–1536), titled his moral guidelines, written in 1501/1504 on request of an unknown woman in order to 'improve her husband's morals', *Enchiridion militis christiani* ('Handbook of a Christian soldier'). Erasmus motivated this work by what he regarded as the need for 'methods of

3. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1998:190 n. 52) uses this concept to refer to 'the social-political system of domination and subordination that is based on the power and rule of the lord/master/father.'

4. Excerpts from 'No matter what', in Andrew Lloyd Webber and Jim Steinmann, 1999, *Whistle down the wind*, The Really Useful Group Ltd, manufactured and marketed by Universal Classic Groups, a division of Universal Music Group.

5. Tina Arena lyrics, 2000–2014, provided for educational purposes and personal use, <http://www.AZlyrics.com>, Songs of Polygram Int. Inc.

morals' – with the intention to say that religion should not consist only of 'rituals and observances' (see Rummel [1990] 2003:138–154). Indeed, it seems that one will find Pope Francis to be committed to this teaching, despite his consistent sexist reference to God. As recent as in his Easter sermon, 'Love triumphs!' of 05 April 2015 he says:

Those who bear within them God's power, his love and his justice, do not employ violence; they speak and act with the power of truth, beauty and love ... May the marginalized, the imprisoned, the poor and the migrants who are so often rejected, maltreated and discarded, the sick and the suffering, children, especially those who are victims of violence; all who today are in mourning, and all men and women of goodwill, hear the consoling voice of the Lord Jesus: 'Peace to you!' (Lk 24:36). (Wooden 2015:n.p.)

Therefore, how can I forget the words of a friend, a respectful dean of an influential German Catholic University, when during 24–25 October 2013 both of us were among other invitees of Pope Francis in his Sala Clementina in the Vatican, and I asked him if this is the time of reliving the resolutions taken at the Second Vatican Council and truly making progress. And his answer: 'No, it is hard to believe that it is possible because for the church it is business as usual'. I only understood something of what he meant when I entered the Sala Clementina after we were addressed by the head of the Roman Curia in the Vatican's Senate Hall next to the Clementine Hall. Yes, we were privileged to experience the Sala Clementina from the inside. The ceremony was about Pope Francis who honoured New Testament scholar, Richard Burridge from London, author of the book in which he reflects on our struggle against apartheid in South Africa, with the striking title *Imitating Jesus: An inclusive approach to New Testament ethics* (Burridge 2007). At an occasion which concluded a conference of the Ratzinger Foundation, focusing on Benedict XVI's Jesus-studies (see the published proceedings, edited by Erstrada, Manicardi & Tärrech 2013), Pope Francis bestowed Professor Burridge with the Ratzinger Award for his academic contribution to the Jesus tradition in the Gospels. Supposedly endorsing the principle of *imitatio Christi*, this illustrious ceremony organised by the Catholic Church was not only in time distant with the first-century Jesus of Nazareth but also far-off from the kind of ethics which Burridge's book promotes.

The Sala Clementina, also called the hall of the Apostolic Palace, is a modern-day Domus Aurea (Nero's Golden House – see later) and was built in the 16th century in the time of the Reformation to honour the Apostolic Father, Clement of Rome, the third successor of Peter. The Sala Clementina houses the papal seat and the Senate Hall functions also as venue of cardinals and other powers to be. By being present inside the Apostolic Palace we could experience the presence of clergy beautified with their golden and bronzed necklaces, and bracelets and ornaments made from precious gemstones.

One should not forget the precise designation of the Second Vatican Council, namely *Concilium Oecumenicum*

Vaticanum Secundum. The occurrence of the word 'Oecumenicum' in this designation is noteworthy. One of the Concilium's influential participants was the critical French theologian Yves Marie-Joseph Congar (1904–1995). He voiced prophetically that love, real love, does not assert our self, 'even in the masked and apparently disinterested form of serving our Church' (Congar [1962] 1967:40). Congar – first heavily indicted by church hierarchy, then admitted to be one of the Vatican's leading thinkers, afterwards marginalised again because of his prophetic voice, and then 'crowned' as cardinal – represents one of the critical philosophers in company such as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), who exposed the ecclesial masquerade of serving self-righteous love. Even Franciscus of Assisi did not escape Nietzsche's criticism of the deceitfulness of abstract love (Singer 2009:71–78).

Colleen Mary Mallon (2010:211), who expands upon Congar's (1964:35) reflection on ecclesial power and self-serving love, coins the concept 'agapic love'. By means of this notion she illustrates authentic love as a detachment from power and self-interest. She puts it as follows (quotes from various publications of Congar):

The agapic love of God in Jesus Christ transforms the human experience of otherness (*exteriorité*) and orders human relationships such that for Christians the other is no longer stranger but neighbour. 'Christianity could not but inspire a new order in the world, since it involved a new way of looking at life and the regarding of others as one's neighbours.' In this manner, Christian service can approach, in however small a measure, the agapic quality of divine love, a 'love that seeks not itself but gives itself, and for this very reason is directed towards the weakest and the most wretched'. (p. 35)

The notion 'agapic love' represents what Werner Jeanrond (2010) refers to as a 'theology of love'. In this article I elaborate on this by reflecting on the concept 'ecodomy' (a notion coined by Dean Johan Buitendag). The goal is to deconstructively link related terms with each other, such as *oikodomē* (encouragement), *dioikēsis theia* (divine administration) and *oikoumenē* (inhabited world). My substantiation is built upon especially the insights of Barbara Rossing's (2003) understanding of the term *oikoumenē*. The aim is to identify the positive roots of the concept beyond the pejorative referencing to the notion in the New Testament as 'imperial power'. My counterbalance is to demonstrate that the notion *basileia tou theou* (kingdom of God) provides a key to discover the gift of love as the heart of *ecodomy* – therefore the title of my contribution: *Ecodomy: life in its fullness – if love rules the oikoumenē*. The article concludes with a critical discussion of forms of inauthentic love in order to outline what kind of love is conveyed in Jesus' kingdom ethics. By doing this I hope to contribute to the strategic research objective of the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Theology of creating an *ecodomy* that represents a reconciling diversity of interests and individual Christ-followers who are energised by divine love. My contribution subsequently consists of three

other sections: (1) 'When power rules the *oikoumenē*', (2) 'When love rules the *oikoumenē*', and finally (3) 'Différance' – when love is not love.

In the concluding section I will return to the theme of *children singing the words they have learned* and what the content of such a song could be when love, and not power, rules the world; in other words if *parousia* did not replace *anastasis*.⁶ Yet, the notion of *parousia* does not need to impose a connotation that expresses power, victory, suppression and judgement. Helmut Koester (2007:18), in concurrence with Robert Funk (1967:249–268), points out that originally Paul in his letters used the term *parousia* not as a reference to an eschatological judgement or a *kyriarchal* second coming that is associated with either retaliation or retribution, but rather as an exchangeable notion for *friendship (filofronēsis)*, expressing the apostle's expectation to *once again* see the receivers of his letter, with the intention of doing good (cf. Gl 6:10) (cf. Van Aarde 2014a:145). Therefore *self-assertive love* should be distinguished from *agapic love*. In the final section of the article this *différance* – in Derridean sense as 'sameness' that is not 'identical' (Derrida [1968] 1982:1–28) – will hopefully be lucent.

When power rules the *oikoumenē*

A biblical text which has often been interpreted, although mistakenly, to endorse ecclesial missional calling by pretending that it is divinely determined that the world (*oikoumenē*) would be brought to its end by the church's proclamation is Matthew 24:13–14:

He who endures to the end will be saved. And the gospel of the kingdom [to euangelion tēs bastileias] will be preached throughout the whole world [en holē tē oikoumenē], as a testimony to all nations [eis marturion pasin tois ethnesin], and then the end [to telos] will come. Revised Standard Version (Nestle et al. [1981] 1992:68–69)

Matthew's source, the Gospel of Mark (13:13–14), with regard to this passage, represents retrospection on the 'devastating desecration' (Funk 1990:206–207) of the Jerusalem temple that is narrated in Daniel 9:27. In Daniel it refers to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, king of Syria from 175 to 163 BCE (cf. Wilson 1990:91–99) who erected his statue in the temple in Jerusalem. Gerd Theissen (1991:125–166, [2002] 2003:37) sees the Markan retrospection as residual of the first written tradition in formative Christianity about the appearance of Jesus as the messianic and eschatological 'Son of Man'. This expectation was propelled because of the so-called Caligula crisis (Theissen [2002] 2003:37).

Emperor Gaius Caligula ruled from March 37 to January 41 CE. Similar to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Caligula attempted to transform the Jerusalem temple religion into the imperial

cult (inter alia, Bilde [1978] 2008:67–93). A statue of Caligula, made in Phoenicia, was 'to have been introduced into the temple forcibly by Roman troops' (Theissen [2002] 2003:33–44). Revolt, heightening eschatological expectations, erupted among Judean messianists – a reaction which is reminiscent of the Maccabean resistance against Antiochus IV Epiphanes. When Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus became emperor in 41 CE, he tried to calm down the apocalyptic vengeance and allowed on account of edicts in Alexandria and in Rome the Israelites in Palestine and in the Diaspora throughout the Roman provinces to adhere to their ancestral religious traditions. On the other hand, these edicts instigated the beginning of imperial persecutions of Christ-followers who did not want to be subservient to either Judaic or Graeco-Roman religious norms. Followers of 'Chrestus' were expelled from Rome (Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4, in Slingerland 1989:305–322). Claudius's death in 54 CE, regardless of multiple historical accounts, is clouded in obscurity (Suetonius, *Claudius* 43, 44; Tacitus, *Annale* XII 64, 66–67; Josephus, *Antiquities* XX 148, 151; Dio, *Roman history* LX.34; Pliny, *Natural history* II xxiii 92, XI lxxiii 189, XXII xlvi 92 [see texts in Josephus {n.d.} 1965; Pliny the Elder {n.d.} 1962; Dio Cassius {n.d.} 1925; Tacitus {n.d.} 1989; Suetonius {n.d.} 1969]; see, inter alia., Marmion & Wiedemann 2002:260–261). It seems that he was poisoned on instigation of his fourth wife Agrippina. She and her son Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, the future Emperor Nero, were among the very few remaining descendants of the first emperor Augustus. After Claudius' death the construction of the temple and veneration of Claudius in Rome was stopped and the site became the place where Nero's famous Domus Aurea (Golden House) was built (Suetonius, *Nero* 33). Nero also ceased to recognise Claudius by referring to his deification.

The Domus Aurea reminds me in different ways of the theme 'Ecodomy – life in its fullness'. Suetonius (*Nero* 31) describes the Golden House – with its human-made lake, groves of trees, pastures with flocks and vineyards, approximately 1.2 km² in size – as *rus in urbe*, in other words 'countryside in the city' (Boëthius [1951] 2013:1 of 7). However, history tends to repeat itself and therefore it comes as no surprise that Nero's 'Golden House' was also destroyed after his death.

Caesar Vespasianus Augustus (9–79 CE) – founder of the Flavian dynasty and father of Emperor Titus who completed his father's war against the Israelites by demolishing Jerusalem and its temple in 70 CE – modified Nero's statue, the Colossus Neronis. This gigantic statue of the Emperor was placed outside the main palace entrance, in order to represent Sol, the sun god. Publius Aelius Hadrianus Buccellanus (76–138 CE), Emperor of Rome from 117 CE, was the one who removed the Colossus Neronis. Hadrian was the suppressor of the Second Jewish Revolt, a lover of all that is Greek, the power behind the rebuilding of the Pantheon in Rome (according to Michelangelo [1475–1564], the work of angels, not of humans) and the one who renamed Judea as Syria Palestina. By doing so he renewed the memories

6. In his dogmatics Karl Barth (see Hitchcock 2013) tries not to separate 'resurrection' from 'second coming'. Hitchcock (2013:110), although critically, summarises Barth's view as follows: 'The raising of the dead makes public the truth of one's identity as a child of God. At Christ's appearing the saints will appear with Him, purified and overjoyed at the vision of His glory. Each believer will be "present" in His presence.'

about the Syrian Antiochus IV Epiphanes who desecrated the Jerusalem temple and thus refreshed the apocalyptic feelings created by the Caligula crisis. After removal of the statue by Hadrian – 24 elephants were required for the task – the area of the Domus Aurea became the site of the Flavian Amphitheatre (better known as the Colosseum). Yet, the image of Nero's statue and the inscriptions on it, remain relevant and help us today to understand the kind of 'richness' Jesus' message about God's *basileia* presupposes (Ball 2003:4; Warden 1981:271–278). The Colossus Neronis was executed in gilt bronze by Zenodorus on commission by Nero himself, and stood 30.5 metres tall. A silver denarius gives a picture of the statue:

The reverse depicts a togate and radiate standing figure of Nero. He faces forward, holding a branch [symbolising provision in abundance] in his right hand and a figure of Victory on a globe [oikoumenē] in his left.⁷ (n.p.)

In her essay '(Re)claiming *oikoumenē*', Barbara Rossing (2003:76–78) describes '*oikoumenē* as empire' and the imperial power of Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Caesar Augustus (Octavianus), who one after the other were depicted in artefacts as the powers who trampled the world (*oikoumenē*) underfoot. Rossing also interprets the phrase in the Jesus saying 'then the end [to telos] will come' (Mt 24:13–14) as 'asserting the end of the empire even more than the end of the geographical world or earth' (Rossing 2003:82).

When love rules the *oikoumenē*

The use of the expression 'divine economy', in Greek *dioikēsis theia* (see Brent Shaw 1985:29), that is a 'divine administration' (Liddell & Scott [1843] 1961:432), represents a *palingenesis*, the rebirth of a new cosmic order (Van Aarde 2014b). The implementation of the concept *dioikēsis theia* in Greek Stoic ethics at the turn of the pre- and 1st century Christian eras, concurred with and even prepared the contextualisation of Jesus' kingdom ethics.

In the past there were scholars who thought that Christianity earns the merit for this transformation brought about by the use of the concept *basileia* in the Jesus tradition (cf. Ernst Troeltsch [1912] 1992:66–67). However, this is not the case. The merit belongs to the Stoics, specifically advocated by the physically disabled Epictetus from Hierapolis in Phrygia (cf. Anthony Long 2002:8), 'a slave woman's son' and for many years himself the slave of Epaphroditus, the 'freed man and administrative secretary of Nero' (William Oldfather [1925] 1998:vii–viii) (also see Van Aarde 2014b).

The metaphor 'divine economy' symbolises a situational and contextual change with subsequent existential consequences that caused transformation in people's ethos and their ethical outlook on metaphysical and physical relations. It represents a metaphorical twist in the sense that the hegemony of the previous paradigm of the polis and the empire became

deconstructed. The brutality of an exclusive domination with particularistically inclined nepotism and exploitation of outsiders was displaced with the concept *basileia* against *polis* (also see Van Aarde 2014b).⁸

I am convinced that the notion 'kingdom of God' (*basileia tou theou*), intended to be an alternative to the concept 'empire' as the continuum of the Aristotelian *polis*-ideology, represents one of the greatest epistemological transformations in history (see Van Aarde 2014b). In the divine *basileia* those social roles which were previously considered to be effectively outside the *polis*, are part of the moral duty of humankind, called to live in accordance with nature (in Greek philosophy, often referring to God) (see Shaw 1985:35). These *les misérables* are the 'extremely poor, slaves, defeated political subjects, and women' (cf. Hands 1968:70–72). In God's *oikeiōsis* one does not rule in terms of a selfish hierarchical ideology (also see Van Aarde 2014b).

The word *oikeiōsis* has the potential referential meaning of 'affinity' and 'affection', and the word *oikeotēs* can refer to 'friendship' and 'intimacy' (Liddell & Scott [1843] 1961:1202). The concept 'economy' is comparable to the term 'administration' (*dioikēsis*). The concept *basileia* is frequently used as its equivalent in the so-called *Diogenes Laertius* (in Yonge & Seddon [1853] 2008:119–121) which consists of anecdotes with Stoic philosophers (also see Van Aarde 2014b).⁹ In the *basileia*, referring to the realm where God rules the *oikeiōsis* (= *dioikēsis theia*), people are no longer exclusively defined by citizenship or membership bound to a *polis* state. The law (*nomos*) and nature (*phusis*) of the 'divine economy' is that the *basileia* is 'co-extensive with all [hu]mankind' (Baldry 1965:151–166, 177–194; also see Van Aarde 2014b). According to Epictetus (*Discourses* 1.23.1), this 'norm' and this 'nature', metaphorically seen, represent a kind of covering (*hē kalupsis*), in the sense of protection and care – a husk which forms the outer pod covering seed or fruit. In the 'divine economy' nobody is dominated, exploited or marginalised. In the *basileia*, reigned in terms of the *dogmata* according to 'divine nature', humankind 'is once and for all set in a framework' (*hapax en tō kalupsei theis*) of mutual care (also see Van Aarde 2014b).

Taking Stoic ethics into account, love is not a Christian invention or a Christian possession (cf. Jeanrond 2010:9). Within the networks of relationships there is a distinction between the giving of love and the receiving of love, and therefore between loving and the experience of being loved. I am loved, therefore I can love. The first happens before the second (Jeanrond 2010:20). Love demands mutuality, not symmetry. If love is reduced to the level of emotion only, love is withdrawn from the horizon of commitment and responsibility (cf. Anderson 2006:243–245). In Christian

7. For description and photo of the silver coin, see Numismatic Fine Arts, Inc., Los Angeles and the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont, CA, in Funk (1990:103).

8. Epictetus still uses the term *polis*, for example as the translation of the Latin *res publica*, meaning 'societal affairs' (Shaw 1985:29). However, he (*Discourses* 1.23; 4.11) uses this concept in a radically different way than Aristotle (*Politica* 1253a), who regards a human being as 'by nature a political being' who exists in terms of the *polis* (also see Van Aarde 2014b):

9. For example, Persaios (*Diag. Laert.* 7.36), Kleantes (*Diag. Laert.* 7.175), and Sphairos (*Diag. Laert.* 7.178) (cf. Shaw 1985:28, n. 23) (also see Van Aarde 2014b).

and Jewish religion, love is especially understood as a commandment. Love of God and love of neighbour are intimately related.

In [1926] 1988, Rudolf Bultmann in his Jesus-book, and in 1930 in an article published in French, enunciated what Jesus might have meant with the commandment of love for the other (Bultmann [1926] 1988:77–84).¹⁰ For Bultmann, ethics refer to behaviour that must be motivated with either the imperative that you essentially have to do either this or that, or, that you are quite simply in a relationship with somebody else, that may be called the 'Ich and Du' relation (Bultmann [1930] [1933] 1958:229; Casper [1967] 2002).¹¹ As far as the former is concerned, the focus may be placed on either the *result* of your deed or on the action itself.¹² There is a distinct difference between the use of the expression 'ought' and the expression 'must'. The ethics of 'ought' is not based on 'must'. It is about obedience rather than instruction. The ethics under discussion is that of *obedience* as such and not the pursuit to realise an ideal or to bridge the distance between where I find myself (*Sein*) and where I would rather be (*Sollen*) (Bultmann [1930] [1933] 1958:230). Seen thus, it is not about the creation of better circumstances, or the creation of a better society. The only 'must' at stake here is whether I listened or not, to the external authority. The external authority determines the here and now (*jetzt*) of the person and not certain ideals (or the realisation of an ideology) (Bultmann [1930] [1933] 1958:230). Christ-followers should however keep in mind that their ethics are characterised by an 'Ich and Du' relation, that is, through my relation with someone else, and not through an external abstract or a claim to authority or ideology (knowingly or subconsciously).

The demonstration of love is thus not something that only arrived with formative Christianity. However, the *novum* for Christ-followers is expressed in the words 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself'. The difference between the New Testament and the Stoa is the grounding of ethics in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. Van Aarde 2014b). As the Christ, so the Christ-follower; just as Christ, so yourself, just as yourself, so your neighbour; as for your neighbour, so for God. The distinctive of Christian love for the neighbour is that love for your neighbour is love as you love your inner (*psuchē*) self. Paradoxically, you give your 'self' (*psuchē*) up and you save your 'self' (Mk 8:35). Matthew (16:24) recaps this Jesus tradition, saying that to follow Jesus is to carry a cross too: for what kind of profit could it be if you gain the whole world but forfeit your life (Mt 16:26)!

10. His view on Christian ethics was built upon his earlier work on Pauline ethics (Bultmann 1924:123–140). In 1930 he again discussed his understanding in an article entitled 'Das christliche Gebot der Nächstenliebe', published in *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses*. In 1933 a German version was published and in 1958 it was taken up in the first volume of *Glauben und Verstehen: Gesammelte Aufsätze*.

11. Bultmann (1958:229 n.1 and 2) refers and elaborated on the insights of Ferdinand Ebner (1882–1931) and Martin Buber (1878–1965). See Casper ([1967] 2002).

12. Cf. Bultmann's (1958:229 n.1 & 2) connection to Emil Brunner's work *Der Mittler: Zur Aufgabe der Christologie*. As far as the 'Ich-Du' relation is concerned, both Emil Brunner and Rudolf Bultmann follow Ferdinand Ebner (1882–1931) and Martin Buber (1878–1965) in their use of terms (cf. Smith 2006:22–23) (see Casper 2002).

In other words, love is not a theoretically ethical action. Love is not the action to sanction an ideology, or the implementation of a cultural custom. The requirement to show love, as it is found in the 'Sermon on the Mount' (Mt 5–7) or in the 'Parable of the shepherd separating sheep from goats' ('the heritage of the *basileia* ordered ever since the foundation of the *kosmos*')¹³ (Mt 25:31–46), has nothing to do with the question of *what* I must do ('*ein Was des Handelns*' – Bultmann [1930] [1933] 1958:235), and also not with the realisation of virtues. In a strictly concrete sense, love is the expression of an enriching understanding of what it means that *I* am in a relation with *you*. According to Matthew's 'kerygma of the divine *basileia*' this relationship realises primarily where Jesus and his followers constitute an 'I-Thou relationship' and subsequently result in seeing 'the hungry and feed thee', seeing 'the stranger and welcome thee' or seeing 'the naked and clothe thee' (Mt 25:37ff.): 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least (*tōn elachistōn*) of these of my kin, you did it to me' (Mt 25:40) (RSV [1981] 1992, p. 74).¹⁴

Bultmann ([1930] [1933] 1958:235) pinpoints the meaning of Jesus' interpretation of neighbourly love: You will find your neighbour where you find yourself and what you will discover, is that which you *must* do (own paraphrasing). All of humanity is my neighbour (Bultmann [1930] [1933] 1958:236). I do not choose who I want to see as my neighbour. The person to whom I show love, is more important than any formality, which is when *relationship* presides over institutionalism or cultural conventionalism and tradition.

'Différance' – when love is not love

Love is therefore not always love. There is *sameness* that is *not-identical* (Derrida [1968] 1982:1–28). 'Mutuality' is identified above as pivotal in a love relationship and not symmetry as a necessity before one can speak of authentic love. In a relationship of friendship symmetry is taken for granted, but symmetry would not always be inevitably necessary in relationships, for instance such as parent-child, employer-employed. Social roles, activities and gender images might change. However, where mutuality – the 'Ich und Du' aspect – in any kind of relationship is distorted, love is not love anymore. The common human vocation of mutual love is unchangingly rooted in the identity of authentic humanity (cf. Gaylin 1976). Mutuality is essential to human fulfilment (Nolan & Kirkpatrick 1982:109). Where a relationship becomes an abstract idea and the I-Thou relationship only an idea, love is potentially distorted and has an impact, although in different ways, on human relations. Richard Nolan and Frank Kirkpatrick (1982:108–129) discuss examples of such a distortion.

Springtime love is initial feelings of emotion and infatuation. When the real person behind the feelings starts to emerge, the giddiness will dissipate quite quickly. A willingness

13. '... klēronomēsate tēn hētoimasmenēn humin basileian apo katabolēs kosmou' (Mt 25:34; Nestle et al. 1992:74).

14. Translation adjusted, from Nestle et al. (1992:74).

to let reality replace illusion might give way to a deeper relationship with another person.

Dependent love is like springtime love. This is also a relationship between images instead of persons, based on feelings of need that is mistaken for love.

Solo love is the self-infatuation wherein I am the centre of my universe. Herein the word love means little if directed outward at someone else. The mask that is worn here is the image of low self-esteem. This is 'masked' by solo love.

Debit love is a transaction wherein both parties 'owe' one another and this is what the 'love' is based on. There is a bargaining quality to the relationship and the emotions of people involved in debit love are not between people. The emotions are between performances. The relationship is based on manipulation.

Aggressive love's primary ingredient is a sense of contest or victory. Love is stimulated by challenge, or attack or winning. Without the contest, the people involved in a relationship based on this have little in common.

With *martyr love* the emotions of misery are idealised by people as love. The 'glow' of misery and joyful self-pity are identified as loving emotions by those who nurture such feelings in their own lives. Martyr love is the subtle collection of injustices.

Possessive love is characteristic of relationships between people who enjoy the feeling of power, control and ownership. It involves a dominating person who exerts power and control in a relationship with someone who is submissive and welcomes the possession. Another type is of a relationship in which everyone involved possesses everyone else. Individual, authentic personality is discouraged by assimilated restrictive patterns (Nolan & Kirkpatrick 1982:114).

Longing love is the main ingredient in a certain use of *eros*-love – one of desire, 'wanting to have'. Relationships are then based on satisfying cravings or longings.

Selfless love is by nature not mutual or reciprocal. Rather it is unconditionally given. Feelings and implied service are directed exclusively to the needs of others. In the classic volume on the comparison *agape*-love and *eros*-love in the New Testament, Anders Nygren ([1930] 1982) wrote that true love is selfless and serving love. According to Nygren ([1930] 1982:130–131), *agape* is in opposition to self-love.¹⁵ Selfless love can demand identifying as 'giver', and will then recoil from receiving (Nolan & Kirkpatrick 1982:116). This could lead to a depletion of energy and a frequent feeling of burn-out. Idealisation of selfless love does occur and it is dangerous.

15. See footnotes elsewhere in this text on the work and paradigm of Nygren. His sharp distinction between *agape* and *eros* was a theological distinction (cf. Barr 1987:3–18) and not a distinction based on an adequate reading of the Greek text, nor the biblical use of language (see also Jeanron 2010:28).

Interpersonal love is closely linked to one's self-acceptance (Nolan & Kirkpatrick 1982:116). Self-acceptance does not automatically promote the other kinds of love mentioned previously. The element of mutuality that is absent from selfless love however is integral to interpersonal love. Giving is not the goal. Communion with others is the goal. Herein the love is unconditional, supportive, reciprocal in its effects, creative and enables the person to treat life as an art (Montagu 1955:296–298). Within interpersonal love there is a readiness for patience, for errors confessed and forgiven and for the appropriate self-sacrifice.

Is it thus possible to say what love is? Not in the least, is Rudolf Bultmann's ([1930] [1933] 1958:240) answer. Whoever sees humanity as an isolated subject and an abstract human being, will not be able to understand love, because love manifests itself in togetherness and can only be understood in connectedness. Love is thus a manner of being with the other ('*eine Art des Miteinanderseins*') (Bultmann [1930] [1933] 1958:240). Human beings cannot explain their love for the other to the other (Bultmann [1930] [1933] 1958:241). The others can only recognise love when they are loved in their togetherness ('*wenn er sich in seinem Mit-andern-sein als Geliebten zu verstehen vermag*') (Bultmann [1930] [1933] 1958:241).

There are no demonstrable criteria for the experience of love. Only those who believe that love exists can recognise and receive love (Bultmann [1930] [1933] 1958:241). Love is only received in love and to be loved means to also love (Bultmann [1930] [1933] 1958:242 n. 1). Therefore, Christian ethics is not predetermined by traditional cultural roles, but is motivated by the kerygma about the divine kingdom rather than by enslavement by the law of nature. It is this love that must be understood as 'eschatology' – in the sense of *Entscheidung*, it is a decision to detach oneself from those philosophical ideas or cultural convention which allegedly provide security. Neighbourly love as an *Entscheidung* (detachment) presupposes a *metanoia*, a *palingenesis*, a regeneration, a reordering of values. To consider the 'divine economy' as our ethos – not our ideology – we are energised to nurture the notion '*ecodomy*' as *life* in its fullness – if love rules the *oikoumenē*.

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