

THE UNIVERSAL SCOPE OF LOVE FOR ENEMIES

Summary

Even in Jesus' lifetime the principle of love for enemies seemed to be something revolutionary and unrealistic, although from the onset it enchanted with its beauty and nobility. It was not at once that those listening to Jesus took notice of the timeless significance of the love for enemies which he was proclaiming. Nevertheless, Jesus was untiringly teaching the universal character of love. He emphasized, that a neighbour is every single man. Hence, love is supposed to encompass all, both friends and enemies.

The evangelical principle of love for enemies confirms the equality of all people in God's eyes. All are equal in their dignity before God since all are sons of the same Father who is in heaven. Also, all are called to perfection just like the Father is perfect (compare Matthew 5:48). The dignity of a God's child stems from the fact, on the one hand, of common origin of all people from one God the Creator; on the other hand, a man becomes a child of God thanks to God's grace, entering the path of following God's love. Especially in the latter point the childlikeness towards God ought to be expressed in loving God and those whom God loves, that is enemies, too. Only such love makes a man a true child of God.

He who has a true love within himself, loves his friend in God and loves his enemy because of God. Love for God stimulates love for a neighbour. There is a close connection between the love for God and neighbour – he who does not love his neighbour does not love God as well; by the same token, he who loves his neighbour with supernatural love, by doing so loves God, too. For this reason the principle of love for enemies must not be separated from the order of love established by Jesus, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love you neighbor as yourself”. On these two commandments hang all law and the prophets too” (Matthew 22:37–40).

Thus, how are we to understand the universal scope of love for enemies? To give a synthetic answer to this question let us first consider that if a man treated God as his enemy – and, sadly enough, this is often the case – this should at least refer to God in the spirit of this love which Jesus recommended towards enemies. However, the main obligation to love enemies takes place when hatred sneaks into interpersonal relationships. In turn, towards Satan as an enemy, the human attitude has not changed – Satan has been and will be forever beyond the realm of love for enemies.