AS I LOVED YOU:
MORAL PROGRESS, THE ETHICAL TURN, AND THE LOVE COMMAND IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

by

GARY W. MICHELBERGER

B.A., Biblical Studies, Shasta Bible College, 1996
M.S.N., Western Governors University, 2011

Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS in
BIBLICAL STUDIES and CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

in the

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

April 2023

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. Cummins who provided constant encouragement to me throughout this writing project. There were many times I was ready to quit, and I was certainly carried along by his commitment to my success.

I would also like to thank Dr. Hatina, my second reader. Much of this thesis was directly inspired by comments he made to me while taking his classes.

The faculty of Trinity Western University were supportive of my choice of thesis topic. When I applied to the program, I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Allert about my reasons for applying and had already in mind a thesis topic. I am grateful for receptivity of the faculty in helping me achieve my personal goals.

A special thanks to Amon Greene who shared with me his own thesis from Simon Fraser University, “A Global Dao: Diagnoses and Prescriptions for Artificial Reductive Binaries in The West and The East.” Reading your thesis drafts inspired me to return to biblical studies.

Abstract

This thesis proposes a theory of ethics grounded in the love command in the Gospel of John (John 13:34 and 15:12), as situated in the narrative of the footwashing and Farewell Discourse (John 13-17), and integral to the Gospel's overall theological intent. Though the commands to love the Lord and to love one's neighbor appear throughout the New Testament, ostensibly they fail to effectively avert hatred, violence, and disregard often perpetuated by Christians. Johannine scholars often question the nature and extent of the ethical content evident in John's Gospel. This thesis employs a multi-disciplinary approach to discuss the nature of ethical inquiry, arguing for a normative ethic of theosis that reflects the Gospel's cognitive environment, employs techniques of mimesis, and resembles the virtue ethics that dominated 1st century ethical discourse. It thus offers a significant challenge to theories of Christian ethics that instantiate violence to accomplish moral objectives.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

ASQ	*Administrative Science Quarterly*
Adv Exp Soc Psychol	Advances in Experimental Social Psychology
AJT	Asia Journal of Theology
Aristot. *Poet*.	Aristotle's *Poetics*
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
Biol. Sci.	Biological Science
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CEJ	Christian Education Journal
CJ	*Classical Journal*
Conspec.	Conspectus
COED	*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*
CPT Press	Center for Pentecostal Theology Press
CRR	Critical Research on Religion
CTJ	*Calvin Theological Journal*
CurBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
Curr. Dir. Psychol. Sci.	Current Directions in Psychological Science
DJG	*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels.* Edited by Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013
Ethical Theory Moral Pract.	Ethical Theory and Moral Practice
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
Front. Psychol.	Frontiers in Psychology
HCDR	HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion
Hist.	Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte
HTS	*Harvard Theological Studies*
IJERPH	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health

IVP	InterVarsity Press
JBIB	Journal of Biblical Integration in Business
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
J. Consum. Psychol.	Journal of Consumer Psychology
JDM	Judgment and Decision Making
JEAC	Journal of Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity
J Exp Child Psychol	Journal of Experimental Child Psychology
J Exp Psychol Gen	Journal of Experimental Psychology: General
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
J Mark Res	Journal of Marketing Research
J Moral Educ	Journal of Moral Education
J Pers Soc Psychol	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
JTPP	Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LXX	Septuagint
MMWR	Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report
MOJES	Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Sciences
NASB	New American Standard Bible
Neuroscientist	The Neuroscientist
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
Pers Soc Psychol Bull	Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin
Perspect Psychol Sci	Perspectives on Psychological Science
Philol. Clas.	Philologia Classica
Philos. Psychol.	Philosophical Psychology
Plat. *Rep*.	Plato's *Republic*
PLoS One	PLoS one
PRI	Physiotherapy Research International

Psychol Rev	Psychological Review
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
RBL	*Review of Biblical Literature*
Relig.	Religions
Relig. Compass	Religion Compass
Res Organ Behav	Research in Organizational Behavior
Rhet.	Rhetorica
SCP	Spirituality in Clinical Practice
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
Soc. Justice Res.	Social Justice Research
Soc Psychol Personal Sci	Social Psychological and Personality Science
Soc. Sci. Med.	Social Science & Medicine
Stud Christ Ethics	Studies in Christian Ethics
TiCS	Trends in Cognitive Sciences
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
TLNT	*Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*. Ceslas Spicq. Translated and edited by James D. Ernest. 3 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
TWOT	*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke. 2 vols. Chicago: Moody, 1980
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
Verbum Eccles.	Verbum et Ecclesia
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZEMO	Zeitschrift für Ethik und Moralphilosophie

Introduction. When Scholars Argue, "Love Does Not Mean Love": Whether the Command to Love One Another is an Ethical Injunction

1. A Situation of Ethics

A terminally ill patient is in the hospital's Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and her life is sustained by a respirator. She has requested to have her life support discontinued, and at 3pm, surrounded by her family, she dies peacefully. As a student nurse I was present for this scenario. Most people have no trouble with the ethics of this decision. It was voluntary (the patient's decision), and it was passive (she was allowed to die). But what happens if a terminally ill patient is not on life support, but requests to die? In this example we have a case of voluntary *active* euthanasia. It is the active forms of euthanasia that people struggle with. But I am a psychiatric nurse, and many of my patients have been heroically resuscitated after they attempted to euthanize themselves. The patient's voluntary decision could have been respected and the patient allowed to die, but in psychiatric care the ethical act is to override the patient's autonomy and compel her to live. Why? These kinds of enigmas are the province of ethics.

Ethics is a complicated matter that puzzles over the nature of our moral actions and what we owe to each other. In 2002 Belgium decriminalized euthanasia hoping this would eliminate "clandestine euthanasia." Hospitals established protocols and it became the legal and ethical duty of the medical staff to provide euthanasia services.[1] Though euthanasia, as conducted by a trained professional, promises to be less painful and gruesome than poisoning, hanging, or shooting, the medical professional must still wrestle with the plain fact that they are taking the life of another human being. No matter what it is called, this is not a matter of theoretical speculation; a healthcare provider who took an oath to "do no harm" is being asked to kill another human being, and no matter where one sits on the morality of euthanasia, it is an entirely different discussion when one is asked to do the killing.[2]

---

[1] Eric Vermeer, "The Slippery Slope Syndrome," in *Euthanasia: Searching for the full story* (ed. Timothy Devos; Cham: Springer, 2021), 1–14.

[2] Timothy Devos, ed., *Euthanasia: Searching for the Full Story* (Cham: Springer, 2021). Much of this volume presents the issue from the perspective of the healthcare provider.

This thesis will explore the ethics of the Gospel of John, with particular reference to Jesus's love command (13:34; cf. 15:12) as set within the Gospel's longest dialogue, the Farewell Discourse of chapters 13-17. As evidenced in this example of euthanasia, the discussion will necessarily concern the nature of ethical inquiry and the purpose of ethics, especially in respect to human suffering. Does ethics serve only to inform us of what constitutes moral behavior, or can the study of ethics guide us toward the proper response to human suffering and perhaps even serve to prevent it?

2. Background and Literature Review

John 13-17, commonly referred to as the *Farewell Discourse*, contains the last words of Jesus to his disciples before the crucifixion and represents nearly a third of Jesus's dialogue in the Gospel of John. At the outset of the discourse the author tells the story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. Following this scene, the Gospel writer records Jesus as saying, "A new command I give to you, that you love one another; just as I loved you so you should love one another" (13:34).[3] In the past this love command, itself seen to be problematic, has been a focal point for discussions on ethics in the Gospel of John, otherwise viewed as having little ethical content. These discussions have more recently been taken up within a somewhat broader approach, which includes recognition of an "implicit ethics" in John – a welcome development, but which still warrants the even more wide-ranging approach to the love command, the Farewell Discourse, and ethics in the Gospel of John offered in this thesis.

Jack Sanders remarks, "The Gospel and Epistles of John teach an ethics that is at once almost naively simple and yet tantalizing and intriguing."[4] Though the command to love one another is simple enough for a child to understand, it seems that the adult mind can readily find exceptions to this rule. Jennifer Knust observes that iterations of the love command in early Christian writings do not specify the content of love, nor do they clearly designate who is or who is not "your neighbor." In her article "Love's Limits: Love of Neighbor in the first three Christian Centuries," she offers a history of the love command's problematic Christian interpretation in which the love command is often used by those who radicalize hate to

[3] John 13:34, ἐντολὴν καινὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

[4] Jack Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament: Change and Development* (London: SCM, 1986), 91.

disenfranchise minorities and rebrand this hate as a form of national love. Examples include Christian slaveholders in both the Roman Empire and the United States, and Christianity's long history of anti-Semitism. In fact, the love command, ideally suited to challenge abuses of power, is often used to reaffirm oppressive hierarchies as subjugated persons are commanded to respect those in power. Knust asserts, "The love command was not, and is not now, a reliable prophylactic against hatred, violence, and disregard."[5] Indeed, Knust argues that the love command is poorly understood and too frequently disregarded.

It is widely recognized that the "double love" command in the synoptic tradition combines Deut 6:4 and Lev 19:18, where love of God and love of neighbor form a summation of "the law and the prophets."[6] The love command is derived principally from Lev 19:18, and in most cases the New Testament quotes the LXX, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself," but John's echo of Lev 19:18 in John 13:34 and 15:12 deviates significantly.[7] The divergence from the LXX is substantial enough to cast doubt on whether the Gospel of John's love command is based on Lev 19:18, or if it is even aware of the synoptic tradition. The various NT versions of the love command in relation to John's rendering are discussed further below [page 14]. Suffice to say here that the divergence leads commentators such as Eduard Lohse and Jack Sanders to interpret John's love command separately from either Deut 6:4 and Lev 19:18 found in the Synoptics, Paul's Epistles, and James. Moreover, Sanders argues that John's love command excludes love of neighbor and predominantly refers to love *within* the believing community.[8] Sanders also objects to associations made between John's love command and God's love of the world in John 3:16: "this mission of love involves only the carrying of the gospel to the world, not unlimited care exercised toward one's fellow man."[9] While Sanders and Lohse may not directly link John's love command to Lev 19:18, neither do they entirely disavow its influence on John's text.

Other scholars do acknowledge the influence of Lev 19:18 on John's love command. This includes Kengo Akiyama's *The Love of Neighbour in Ancient Judaism*, which

---

[5] Jennifer W. Knust, "Love's Limits: Love of Neighbor in the First Three Christian Centuries," *JEAC* 3 (2021): 52–77.
[6] Matt 22:40.
[7] Lev 19:18 LXX, καὶ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν; cf. John 13:34, ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους.
[8] Eduard Lohse, *Theological Ethics of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 52–61, 166–179; Sanders, *Ethics*, 95–96.
[9] Sanders, *Ethics*, 95.

recognizes a "highly developed understanding of neighbourly love" informed by the double love command tradition, but declines to explicitly address the love commands of the Johannine literature, noting that further exploration of the topic beyond overt citations would require a separate monograph.[10] Craig Keener considers John's love command as an extension of a synoptic tradition that also seemed to link Lev 19:18 with 19:34 and which expands the command to include sojourners. But Keener concludes that John's focus, though not contradicting the synoptic tradition, is directed toward internal community cohesion.[11] Alicia Myers observes that John 13:34-35 "resembles commands to love God (Deut 6:4-5) and love neighbor (Lev 19:18) that were commonly combined in first-century Judaism as a summary of the Torah," while emphasizing imitation of Jesus with the phrase "just as I loved you."[12] Marianne Meye Thompson recognizes the affinity of John's love command to both Deut 6:4 and Lev 19:18, and notes that Jesus's example of footwashing gives the command "flesh and bones."[13] The love command in John's Gospel bears an affinity to the synoptic tradition, and the Jewish texts from which that tradition is derived, but its distinctive wording indicates the Gospel is not content to assert the love command as a summary of the law, but seeks to expound it.

Richard Hays's *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (1996) anticipated later work in Johannine ethics by looking beyond individual ethical injunctions to discern a holistic method of ethical decision making. Hays does not explicitly link John's love command to Lev 19:18 or Deut 6:4, but he does acknowledge John's similarity to the synoptic tradition through comparisons with Matthew and Luke. Like Sanders, Hays acknowledges an intracommunal emphasis in John's love command, but differs with Sanders by insisting that John 1:29 and 3:16 directly imply that Christ's mission to the world requires that believers not be indifferent to those outside the community of faith.[14] Hays recognizes the ubiquitous presence of the love command in the New Testament, but concludes "the concept of love is

---

[10] Kengo Akiyama, *The Love of Neighbour in Ancient Judaism: The Reception of Leviticus 19:18 in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, the Book of Jubilees, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 135.
[11] Craig S. Keener, The *Gospel of John: 2 Volumes* (Baker Publishing Group: Kindle Edition, 2003), 925.
[12] Alicia Myers, *Reading John and 1, 2, 3 John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Reading the New Testament, 2nd Series; Smyth & Helwys Publishing: Kindle Edition, 2018), 159.
[13] Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2015), 300–301.
[14] Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* (Harper Collins: San Francisco, 1996), 145.

insufficient as a ground of coherence for the New Testament moral vision."[15] Indeed, with reference to John's Gospel he notes, the ethical significance of the New Testament narratives cannot be restricted to their didactic content."[16] For Hays, moral dilemmas – such as violence, divorce, homosexuality, anti-Judaism and ethnic conflict, and abortion, all discussed in his study – are not to be reduced to verdicts of correct vs. incorrect behavior but have been transformed into opportunities to realize the gospel message as a lived experience.

Hays's prescient move to appreciate ethical significance beyond the didactic content of the New Testament is indicative of more recent approaches in Johannine ethics. With John's love command often taken to be the only explicit ethical injunction in the Gospel, many scholars had been suspicious of finding any ethical content in the Gospel. Often cited is Wayne Meeks who notes, "The maxims (gnomes) that are so characteristic of Jesus's sayings in the Q, Synoptic, and Thomas traditions, and which are universally recognized in the ancient Mediterranean culture as the idiom of popular moral instruction, are missing altogether from John."[17] Others like Jack Sanders, argue that the sectarian nature of John's love command restricts the disciples' outreach to the world to gospel preaching: "the Johannine Christian asks the man bleeding to death on the side of the road. 'Are you concerned about your soul?'"[18] Harold Attridge argues that the Gospel lacks explicit commands or paraenetic warning, and an overarching or systematic framework for ethical reflection; nor does it resemble Greco-Roman ethical treatises or Jewish sapiential texts. Attridge thus argues for what he calls an "implicit" ethics that must be teased out of the text.[19] Indeed, "implicit ethics" has recently become the term adopted by Johannine scholars to describe ethical content in the Gospel that is not presented in acknowledged didactic forms.

The term "implicit ethics" was popularized in 2012 with the publication of *Rethinking the Ethics of John: 'Implicit Ethics' in the Johannine Writings*, a collection of articles edited

---

[15] Hays, *Moral Vision*, 5.
[16] Hays, *Moral Vision*, 140.
[17] Wayne A. Meeks, "The Ethics of the Fourth Evangelist," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* (ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 318.
[18] Sanders, *Ethics*, 100.
[19] Harold Attridge, Warren Carter, and Jan G. van der Watt, "Quaestiones Disputatae: Are John's Ethics Apolitical?" *NTS* 62 (2016): 484–97.

by Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmerman.[20] Since then studies on ethics in John have flourished, and Cornelis Bennema notes that the publication of another important collection of essays in 2017 edited by Sherri Brown and Christopher Skinner has confirmed the fruitfulness of its approach.[21] Skinner's article in this volume, "Ethics and the Gospel of John: Toward an Emerging New Consensus?" reviews the old consensus of the Gospel's ethics and plots the transition toward a new consensus in which John's ethical material is considered robust, albeit "implicit" in the text.[22] Citing Ruben Zimmerman's contribution to the discussion, Skinner observes that the old consensus was largely due to Rudolf Bultmann's comparison between Johannine and Pauline ethics, where he attempted to separate the ethical material from its theological content. Zimmermann contends that such an approach does not reflect ancient thinking and restricts discussions of ethics to an "indicative-imperative schema."[23]

Skinner's article offers reviews of four notable recent works, the first of which is Cornelis Bennema's *Mimesis in the Johannine Literature: A Study in Johannine Ethics*.[24] Bennema discusses mimesis (imitation) as a method of moral teaching common to 1st century philosophical literature and which, in the Gospel of John, points to Jesus through the use of specific mimetic language.[25] Skinner next reviews Lindsey Trozzo's revised Baylor dissertation *Exploring Johannine Ethics: A Rhetorical Approach to Moral Efficacy in the Fourth Gospel Narrative*.[26] Trozzo's work focuses on the *bios* genre (biography) as a medium for moral instruction, noting John's unique appropriation of biographical genres, metaleptic elements that blur the narrative boundary, and genre-bending tendencies that

[20] Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann, eds., *Rethinking the Ethics of John: 'Implicit Ethics' in the Johannine Writings*, WUNT 291 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).
[21] Cornelis Bennema, "Moral Transformation Through Mimesis in the Johannine Tradition," *TynBul* 69 (2018): 183–203; referencing Sherri Brown and Christopher W. Skinner, *Johannine Ethics: The Moral World of the Gospel and Epistles of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).
[22] Christopher W. Skinner, "Ethics and the Gospel of John: Toward an Emerging New Consensus?" *CurBR* 18.3 (2020): 280–304.
[23] Skinner, "Ethics," 282; citing Ruben Zimmerman, "Is There Ethics in the Gospel of John?" in *Rethinking the Ethics of John: 'Implicit Ethics' in the Johannine Writings,* WUNT 291 (eds. J.G. van der Watt and R. Zimmerman; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 44–88.
[24] Cornelis Bennema, *Mimesis in the Johannine Literature: A Study in Johannine Ethics,* LNTS 498 (London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2017).
[25] Skinner, "Ethics," 286.
[26] Lindsey Trozzo, *Exploring Johannine Ethics: A Rhetorical Approach to Moral Efficacy in the Fourth Gospel Narrative* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

compel ethical deliberation.[27] Skinner then considers the volume he edited with Sherri Brown, *Johannine Ethics: The Moral World of the Gospel and Epistles of John*. This volume, is divided into three sections that respectively cover the Johannine imperatives, the implied ethics of the Johannine literature, and the future direction of scholarship in Johannine ethics.[28] The final work reviewed by Skinner is Sookgoo Shin's *Ethics in the Gospel of John: Discipleship as Moral Progress*.[29] Shin also considers the Gospel in terms of 1st century *bios* genre, and building on the Greco-Roman idea of moral progress, characterizes discipleship as working toward the goal of imitating Jesus, especially in terms of love, unity, mission, and otherworldly status.[30]

Paul Anthony Hartog offers a more recent review of the scholarship.[31] Hartog's review replicates and expands on the assessments of Skinner and Bennema, and additionally notes the recent contributions of William Loader's *Christology, Soteriology, and Ethics in John and Hebrews*, Olivia Rahmsdorf's *Zeit und Ethik im Johannesevangelium*, and Jan G. van der Watt's *A Grammar of the Ethics of John*.[32] Two additional works that will later be discussed in this thesis, but which are not addressed in the previous reviews are Michael J. Gorman's *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John,* and Andrew J. Byers's *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John*.[33] Both volumes have engaged the ethics of John's Gospel in terms of the early Church's concept of *theosis*, and treat its ethics as inseparable from the rest of the Gospel's theology.

If John's ethics are indeed inseparable from the rest of the Gospel's theology, then a review of the relevant secondary literature expands considerably. Some volumes pertinent to this study include John Christopher Thomas' *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine*

---

[27] Skinner, "Ethics," 290–1.
[28] Skinner, "Ethics," 292.
[29] Sookgoo Shin, *Ethics in the Gospel of John: Discipleship as Moral Progress,* BIS 168 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).
[30] Skinner, "Ethics," 296–7; Sookgoo Shin, "Ethics in the Gospel of John: Discipleship as Moral Progress," *TynBul* 68.1 (2017) 153–56.
[31] Paul Anthony Hartog, "Johannine Ethics: An Exegetical–Theological Summary and a 'Desiderative' Extension of Mimesis," *Religions* 13.6 (2022): 1–18.
[32] William Loader, *Christology, Soteriology, and Ethics in John and Hebrews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022); Olivia Rahmsdorf, *Zeit und Ethik im Johannesevangelium: Theoretische, Methodische und Exegetische Annäherungen an die Gunst der Stund* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019); Jan G. van der Watt, *A Grammar of the Ethics of John: Reading John from an Ethical Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019).
[33] Michael J. Gorman, *Abide and go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018); Andrew J. Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John*, SNTSMS 166 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Community, a book referenced by most considerations of the footwashing in its cultural and literary context.[34] Additionally Ferdinand Segovia's *The Farewell of the Word* addresses the complexity of the Farewell Discourse's genre and structure and should not be overlooked.[35] Most commentators see the obvious connection between Jesus's role as servant in washing the disciples' feet and his identification in the New Testament literature as the Isaianic servant. As such, Adam Day's *Jesus, the Isaianic Servant* explores the servant motif throughout John's Gospel.[36] Additionally, there is the notable monograph by Bincy Matthew, which expands on Thomas' work, and is focused solely on the footwashing episode of John 13.[37]

3. Thesis Statement

The previous review acknowledges Skinner's claim that scholarship in the ethics of John's Gospel has embraced a new consensus: John's ethics are not contained in *explicit* didactic commands but are *implicitly* expressed through the text's narrative and dialogue. However, while the terminology of "implicit ethics" and "explicit ethics" has been helpful for broadening the approach to John's ethics and facilitating the new consensus, it needs to be reconsidered and amended to take account of and align with already extant terminology widely adopted by the broader fields of moral theology and moral philosophy. The field of ethics, especially as represented by the dominant systems of deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics, does not restrict itself to the study of ethics' prescriptive elements; rather, ethical prescriptions are understood to be the *product* of moral reasoning. Hays' *Moral Vision* rightly positions itself within the field of ethics in that moral prescriptions are deduced from a systematic approach to New Testament ethical material. Additionally, ethical content is not restricted to certain literary forms. Narratives and dialogues have been used for explicit moral purposes since ancient times, whereas the current consensus would consider them to be only "implicitly" ethical due to their lack of resemblance to Greco-Roman ethical treatises or Jewish sapiential texts.[38]

---

[34] John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community,* 2nd ed. (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2014).
[35] F. Segovia, *The Farewell of the Word: The Johannine Call to Abide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).
[36] Adam W. Day, *Jesus, the Isaianic Servant* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2018).
[37] Bincy Mathew, *The Johannine Footwashing as the Sign of Perfect Love* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).
[38] Modern representatives include Albert Camus, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (Paris: Gallimard,1942); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (trans. R.J. Hollingdale; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961); Martin Bell, ed.,

This thesis proposes that John's Gospel narrative operates throughout with explicit ethical content, not least as evident in the footwashing account and Farewell Discourse, that informs and explicates the nature, scope, and significance of its love command. Here it first may be noted that commands and paraenetic warnings have no inherent ethical content. In a parallel discussion on law, Hershey H. Friedman, a business professor at Brooklyn College, clarifies the distinction between rules and ethics when he notes, "Ideally, ethics should be an integral part of every legal system. The reality is, however, that law is not ethics, and it is quite possible to have a legal system that is completely immoral."[39] Therefore, commands and warnings ought to be regarded as only "implicitly" ethical since they are the products of moral reasoning to meet ethical objectives. This thesis will engage in a close reading of the love command and consider how its ethical content is informed by and evident in the Gospel's narrative.

Secondly, literary works can be explicitly ethical despite a lack of conformity to the generic forms of ethical treatises or sapiential texts. John's Gospel is regarded as only "implicitly" ethical by the new consensus because its ethical material is imbedded in narrative and dialogues. However, G. S. Kirk argues in *The Nature of Greek Myths* that narratives and myths are capable of conveying a robust and systematic and ethical outlook: "philosophy has no monopoly of either rationality or speculative interest. Myths were subjected to careful arrangement and organization even by the time of Homer and Hesiod, and in a way which already reduced human experience to a kind of system."[40] This thesis will consider the footwashing, Farewell Discourse, and other aspects of John's narrative as integral to a broader understanding and appreciation of John's love command.

Finally, this thesis argues that since human experience can be rationally discussed in narrative forms, and ethics is not delimited to commands and paraenetic warnings, the Gospel of John contains a wealth of ethical material that can be systematically organized. The thesis will therefore consider a broad range of ethical theories and approaches and reflecting on the love command as located in relation to the footwashing, Farewell Discourse,

---

David Hume: Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (London: Penguin, 1990). Ancient examples of explicitly ethical material include Plato's dialogues (c. 427–348 BCE), and the *Bhagavad Gita* (c. 400 BCE–200 CE).

[39] Hershey H. Friedman, "'Let Justice Pierce the Mountain': Morality, Ethics, and Law in the Talmud" (June 2, 2015): 1–35. Cited 31 May 2022. Online: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2613759

[40] G. S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths* (New York: Penguin, 1983), 300.

and John's Gospel overall, it will argue for a theory of moral mimesis and transformation (transfiguration), centered in Jesus and operative in the community and its mission in the wider world.

4. Methodology and Chapter Summaries

On Methodology

In recent years ethics has enjoyed a renewed distinction as a principal way for theorizing about culture, society, and politics, as well as the arts and creative enterprise. This shift is often referred to as "the ethical turn." In biblical studies this shift prompts a renewed consideration of specifically ethical texts, it often regards texts as inherently and principally "ethical," and it considers the ethical impact of biblical studies upon the wider culture. This thesis will aim to offer a theory of ethics grounded in the Gospel of John's command to love one another (John 13:34 and 15:12) as situated in the broader narrative of the footwashing and Farewell Discourse, which will be most fully delineated in chapter 3.

In as much as the ethical turn has a broad society-wide influence, this thesis will also engage the love command from a multi-disciplinary perspective. With this in view, Chapter 1 considers the contributions to ethical theory offered by the academy, the commercial sector, literary studies, historical studies, and when possible, through the avenues of modern human subject research. In literary studies the ethical turn suggests that all literature is written with explicitly ethical intention. Rather than assuming the ethical intent of the Gospel of John, chapter 2 argues for its ethical merit by placing it within the cognitive environments of Mediterranean literature which utilized and preferred the narrative genre for ethical instruction. From this standpoint it will explore the ethical significance of John 12 and the footwashing in John 13 as the narrative prelude to John's love command. Chapter 3 will then formally offer an ethical theory developed along the lines of command, mimesis, and theosis.

The ethical turn scrutinizes the ethical impact of public policies and new technologies. In fact, under scrutiny, there are no technologies, sciences or policies which fail to have rippling ethical impacts. Though heralded by Emmanuel Levinas' statement, "Ethics is the first philosophy," most of the actors operating within the ethical turn are unaware of its association with the academic disciplines. By way of example, chapter 4 considers the influence of Christian ethics upon society through two case studies: a look at the modern face of Christian ethics in 21st century United States in relation to religious trauma and violence;

and what may be learned from the pre-Constantinian Christian responses to pandemics in the Roman Empire. Christianity's influence upon the Roman Empire in late antiquity was an ethical turn. The values of society were challenged by new paradigms of moral reasoning that spread throughout the empire.

Methodologically, this thesis has an exploratory character. The thesis makes use of a wide range of secondary literature as it offers a particular ethical vision of the Gospel of John that I believe can be exegetically supported. A deep dive into the minutia of certain arguments is unnecessarily tedious and distracting from the thesis' main point. As an example of a contentious but unresolved area, in the appendix I discuss matters of the Johannine community as debated by Adele Reinhartz and Richard Bauckham. This thesis is inclined to side with Bauckham's argument and asks the reader to suspend their own judgments and entertain Bauckham's conclusions only insofar as it is not absurd to approach John's Gospel with the assumption that its author was already cognizant of broader Christian traditions, and anticipated that the Gospel would be read by persons outside a hypothetical Johannine community.

Modern ethical discourse is dominated by deontic and utilitarian paradigms. A contribution shared by anthropological studies within the ethical turn, and by the cognitive environments of the 1st century philosophic and religious milieus, is their tendency to favor an approach to moral reasoning that resembles virtue ethics. Much of the appeal here to modern research, whether from the sciences or from philosophy, is not intended to "read into" the text, but to offer a touchstone for understanding an ancient text which may be otherwise unintelligible to the modern reader.[41] When this thesis observes examples of deontology and utilitarian ethics in the Gospel of John, it is not asserting a 1:1 correlation with modern theories, but is arguing that the Gospel's preference for a virtue ethic is made in the context of an ethical debate that bears similarity to our own modern debates. Similar comparisons could be made with G. E. Moore's concept of "the Good" and Plato's discussion of piety in *Euthyphro*. The point is that these discussions, though two millennia apart, possess a shared relevance not entirely obliviated by the passage of time.

[41] Anecdotally, while writing this thesis I was in conversation with a pastor who had forty years of experience in ministry and who had never considered the ethics of the Bible apart from strict authoritarian structures in which all disobedience was punishable with hellfire. Deontology was a difficult concept, no less virtue ethics.

Chapter Summaries

The remainder of this introduction and the appendix address several questions of introduction – authorship, audience, date, and text – as they bear on our interests, with emphasis on John's allusions to Lev 19:18 in the Farewell Discourse. It will argue that the Gospel is likely informed by the synoptic and epistolary traditions of the New Testament canon, and that its use of Lev 19:18 is consonant with other New Testament texts.

Chapter one of this thesis will further define the scope of this study along several interrelated avenues. [1.1] First, following John's lead in using signs and witnesses as evidence to support the Gospel's theology, the chapter will engage contemporary human subject research to examine moral decision making as it is typically practiced. One conclusion of this research is that when confronted with moral problems people tend to act intuitively, in their own self-interest, and offer post hoc justifications for ill-considered prior behavior. [1.2] The next section clarifies important definitions – law, morality, and ethics – noting especially the distinction between *ethics* and the seemingly moral injunctions found in rules, laws, and guidelines. [1.3] This is followed by a consideration of moral reasoning and ethical theories. As previously noted, a discussion of ethics does not refer to the rules themselves, but to the underlying moral justifications upon which these rules are based. [1.4] Further appeal to human subject research and recent work in the humanities is made to discuss *moral development*. Here the focus will be on how we learn moral values and grow as moral individuals. [1.5] The chapter will conclude with a discussion of what has become known as the *ethical turn*; a recent shift in focus among numerous disciplines in the humanities and sciences to prioritize the role of ethics, often as a discipline's motivation or goal.

Within the ethical turn, literary scholars have concluded that nearly all literature is written with explicit ethical intent.[42] Chapter two will therefore begin [2.1] a discussion of the ethics of the Gospel of John in terms of its "narrative theology." This includes consideration of Jesus as the *logos* in the Gospel's prologue, especially as it reflects wider Greek philosophical understanding and its evocation of various Jewish wisdom traditions, and wider reflections on the distinction between *mythos* and *logos* in storytelling. [2.2] A feature of classical and Jewish narratives is that they exist within their own "cognitive

[42] Nie Zhenzhao, "Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism," *Arcadia* 50.1 (2015): 83–101.

environments"; that is, native ways of thinking about the world so integral to that society, that their formal exposition was often unnecessary and often referenced in oblique and vague allusions.[43] The chapter will consider the cognitive environment of certain Jew-ish texts, especially those in the wisdom tradition.[44] [2.3] This paves the way for a discussion of John 12-13, arguing that these chapters are united by transfiguration imagery, and this imagery is a vital prelude to the ensuing analysis of the love command in the context of John's Farewell Discourse.

Chapter three begins with [3.1] a discussion of the footwashing in its literary and historical context, including a note on the genre of the Farewell Discourse. It then focuses directly on the love command in three parts: [3.2] the command as an explicit moral instruction; [3.3] the command as an imitation of Jesus's example in the footwashing narrative; [3.4] and the command as the goal of moral transformation. Much of this chapter will situate itself within Greco-Roman virtue ethics as a point of comparison and contrast with the Gospel's own cognitive environment, which is both aware of the assumptions made in classical ethics and yet operates from its own world view. Here especially important is an understanding of the love command as theosis, in relation to the community and its divine mission in the world.

Chapter four concludes this thesis and is divided into two main sections. [4.1] Its first section will revisit the road travelled in the previous chapters, exploring their theological and exegetical implications. This section will revisit the topics of this thesis as assemblages of an integrated whole. These topics include the human condition, ethics as a method, understanding "the good", and the presuppositions of the Mediterranean world. The human moral condition is largely an unconscious and externally imposed construct. Ethical theories provide a method of understanding and critiquing this construct. All ethical systems make some claim on the nature of "the good", and an ethics rooted in the John's text would ideally account for the presuppositions inherent to the cognitive environments of the Mediterranean world. [4.2] The second section will conclude this thesis with a practical application of John's ethics in the context of recent developments in the field of psychology, the treatment

[43] John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 13; Kirk, *Greek Myths*, 14.
[44] The term "Jew-ish" is used to denote a broad cognitive landscape that includes non-Israelite cultures.

of those who suffer from the trauma of religious violence, and the Christian response to pandemics in the pre-Constantine era as a shared experience of our own recent global pandemic. In midst of suffering, ancient and modern, we note the need for Jesus-like love evident in humility and service. In stark contrast is religious trauma and violence, which is antithetical to and whose antidote to is the ethic argued for in this thesis: Jesus's love command as mimesis, moral transformation, and theosis.

5. The Text of the Love Command

The love command of Lev 19:18 is found in all four Gospels and in James, Romans, and Galatians. Below we compare the synoptic texts with the LXX, Jas 2:8, Rom 13:9, Gal 5:14 and its occurrences in John 13:34 and 15:12. Immediately it's easy to see that except for the Gospel of John, the other texts follow the LXX. John's Gospel replaces τὸν πλησίον σου (your neighbor) with ἀλλήλους (one another), and ὡς σεαυτόν (as yourself) with καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς (as I loved you). John's deviation from the LXX prompts the reader to ask whether the Gospel quoted from a different source or chose its wording with a specific aim.

Synoptics	**LXX Lev 19:18**	**John**
Mark 12:31 Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον <u>σου ὡς σεαυτόν.</u> Matt 22:39 Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον <u>σου ὡς σεαυτόν.</u> Lk 10:27 καὶ τὸν πλησίον <u>σου ὡς σεαυτόν.</u>	ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον <u>σου ὡς σεαυτόν</u> ἐγώ εἰμι κύριος	John 13:34 ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε <u>ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς</u> John 15:12 ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε <u>ἀλλήλους καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς.</u>
James	**Romans**	**Galatians**
Jas 2:8 Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον <u>σου ὡς σεαυτόν</u>	Rom 13:9 Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον <u>σου ὡς σεαυτόν.</u>	Gal 5:14 Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον <u>σου ὡς σεαυτόν</u>

However, John's expression of Lev 19:18 can be found in Rom 13:8 and Gal 5:13. In Rom 13:8 Paul precedes his quotation of Leviticus by stating, "To no one owe nothing except loving one another; for the one who loves the other, has fulfilled [the] law."[45] Here, ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν (love one another) is commanded as the fulfillment of Lev 19:18, and Paul uses the term as shorthand for the Levitical command. In Gal 5:13-14 Paul writes, "but through love serve one another. For all the Law in one word is fulfilled in this."[46] The phrase "but through

[45] Rom 13:8, Μηδενὶ μηδὲν ὀφείλετε εἰ μὴ τὸ ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν· ὁ γὰρ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἕτερον νόμον πεπλήρωκεν.
[46] Gal 5:13b–14a, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις. ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἑνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ·

love serve one another," like its counterpart in Romans 13, precedes the quote of the Levitical love command. Kengo Akiyama notes, "Paul's call for slavery to love assumes mutuality of self-sacrifice, that is, to one another (ἀλλήλοις)."[47] In this instance the themes of love and service bear affinity to John's love command and footwashing, while once again utilizing ἀγάπης and ἀλλήλοις as shorthand for Lev 19:18.

In summary, when placed in conversation with Romans and Galatians, John's love command more directly evokes Lev 19:18 while applying it to specific lived contexts as addressed by the Epistles. The assumption that John's Gospel should be interpreted *within* the New Testament tradition was long held until only recently, and there is now a growing openness to accepting John's knowledge of other New Testament texts.[48] John's publication history with its parallels to other New Testament texts, widely held late date, and broad readership bring us to closer agreement with the apostolic tradition, and shift the burden of proof upon scholarship to convincingly demonstrate the Gospel ought to be understood in isolation from the rest of the New Testament corpus as possessing a unique identity and theology.

6. Considerations

This thesis will argue that John's Gospel contains complex and explicit ethical claims. Whether composed by a primary author or compiled by a Johannine community, we will continue to refer to the Gospel as the Gospel of John in deference to historic tradition. Moreover, though it may have a complex compositional history, we will agree with the majority opinion of a late publication in the last decade of the 1st century. Along with late publication we also note that scholars are generally agreed the Gospel is best interpreted as a synchronic unity that is familiar with at least some of the New Testament Gospels and Epistles.

---

[47] Akiyama, *The Love of Neighbour*, 142.

[48] Klaus Scholtissek, "The Johannine Gospel in Recent Research," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (eds. Grant R. Osborne and Scot McKnight; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 472.

Chapter 1: What is Immeasurable Does Not Exist: An Empirical Approach to the Human Condition

Why is ethics a proper subject for biblical studies? Richard Hays observes that the study of biblical ethics is caught in a potentially embarrassing hermeneutical crisis: "the Bible itself contains diverse points of view, and diverse interpretive methods can yield diverse readings of any given text."[1] Critically, this diversity of biblical texts and interpretations can lead one to defend of long entrenched beliefs while neglecting the obligation to actually interpret Scripture. A vivid historical example of this hermeneutical crisis can be found in Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address where he reflects on the motivations and interpretative approaches of both the Northern and Southern armies in the war he hoped would preserve the nation's unity and end slavery:

> Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God and each invokes his aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered ~ that of neither has been answered fully.[2]

Hays continues, "Those who can naively affirm the bumper-sticker slogan, 'God said it, I believe it, that settles it,' are oblivious to the question-begging inherent in the formulation: there is no escape from the imperative of interpreting the Word."[3] Indeed, while one might suppose that "The main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things," people differ widely on what constitutes those main things and plain things. As such, it seems reasonable to choose a text for this study which, at its face seems to be both a main thing and a plain thing, Jesus's words, "Love one another as I have loved you, by this all will know that you are my disciples, that you love one another." (John 13:34-35). If our ethics are to be informed by the biblical text, then surely ethics is a proper subject for biblical studies.

John's Gospel begins with the words, "In the beginning was the *logos*," and so signals to the reader its intention to cast a wide net and engage its contemporary audience using

---

[1] Hays, *Moral Vision*, 1.
[2] Abraham Lincoln, *Second Inaugural Address of the Late President Lincoln* (James Miller, New York, 1865). Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/2020770559/.
[3] Hays, *Moral Vision*, 3.

familiar language.[4] Following a similar strategy, this chapter of the thesis takes stock of the moral landscape as understood in our modern time. It begins [1.1] by exploring ethical claims, issues, and problems evident in modern human subject research. Then it [1.2] establishes definitions for important terms – law, morality, and ethics – by appealing to their most common uses as adopted by moral philosophers and currently taught in educational and corporate settings. It is also important [1.3] to take account of moral reasoning and prevalent ethical theories, such as deontology (ethics as obligation) and utilitarianism (ethics as the greatest good). Then follows [1.4] a discussion of some theories of moral development, shedding light on how we adopt moral beliefs initially, and how we change our moral perspectives through the course of life. [1.5] The chapter will conclude with a look at a what has been recently styled "the ethical turn," a recent phenomenon within the humanities to explicitly focus research on ethics and morality.[5] The study of ethics is as wide-ranging as John's *logos* and has considerable bearing on our ensuing study of John's ethics as evident in Jesus's love command, footwashing, and Farewell Discourse.

1.1 *Modern Human Subject Research*

In human subject research actual persons are presented with moral dilemmas and their responses are observed for study. A major impetus for human subject research in ethics were the atrocities of World War 2, especially the holocaust. Resistance to the Nazi regime was the work of outliers, and even mainstream Lutheran and Catholic churches were complicit in what took place, issuing belated apologies decades after the war.

Thus, early research focused on the allure of power and the human response to authority. In 1950 Theodor Adorno produced the F-Scale, a personality assessment intended to discern which people were naturally predisposed to follow strong and brutal leaders, even

[4] The concept of *logos* enjoyed prominence in many interpretive traditions. G. S. Kirk notes Heraclitus' use of *logos* as an impersonal natural force; Kirk, *Greek Myths*, 298. In the *Poetics* Aristotle uses *logos* along with *mythos* and *praxis* as fundamental aspects of storytelling; in Christopher Seglenieks, "Faith and Narrative", *TynBul* 70 (2019): 23–40. William Loader connects *logos* to its use in Jewish wisdom traditions and Philo; William Loader, "Wisdom and Logos Traditions in Judaism and John's Christology," in *Reading the Gospel of John's Christology as Jewish Messianism* (eds. Benjamin Reynolds and Gabriele Boccaccini; Leiden: Brill, 2018), 303–34. Two exceptional commentaries with thorough treatments of John's use of *logos* are Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: 2 Volumes* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), and Alicia Myers, *Reading John and 1, 2, 3 John: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Reading the New Testament, 2nd Series (Smyth & Helwys Publishing: Kindle Edition, 2019).

[5] Michael Klenk, "Moral Philosophy and the 'Ethical Turn' in Anthropology," *ZEMO* 2.2 (2019): 331–53.

if that leader advocated unethical "solutions."[6] Christopher Brittain focused on one aspect of Adorno's research, whether religion contributed to authoritarianism. It cautioned that Christian symbols and terminology, though not *causing* authoritarianism, risked being exploited for explicitly political objectives that bear no relation to the Christian faith, as evidenced by examples of Christian *support* for the German Reich during World War 2 and continued support for authoritarian leaders in modern times.[7] In Stanley Milgram's famous study research subjects were ordered to administer electric shocks of escalating intensity to anonymous people in an adjacent room. Unbeknownst to them the "anonymous" person was an actor, and the "shocks" were fake. Many research subjects obeyed orders, even if the actor was screaming and the shocks were clearly labeled as lethal.[8] A notable outlier: when family members and friends took on the various roles, participants overwhelmingly refused to obey authority and administer shocks.[9] People are unlikely to allow or cause harm to those they care about. Love was a prophylactic to blind obedience to authority.

Authoritarianism and its prophylaxis (love) collided in one of the more famous studies in which psychologist Phillip Zimbardo assigned college students to one of two controls: they were either prisoners or prison guards in a make-shift prison in the basement of Stanford university. Without provocation or encouragement, the "guards" began to abuse the "prisoners" physically and psychologically. The study was prematurely terminated at the behest of a colleague and after five of the prisoners exhibited clear signs of psychological trauma. Three decades later Zimbardo was consulted to help the U.S. military understand why American soldiers would abuse Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. He noted that the environmental circumstances in both Stanford and Abu Ghraib created the necessary conditions for abuse, but that in each instance a single lone voice advocated for the prisoners

---

[6] T. W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950).
[7] Christopher Craig Brittain, "Racketeering in religion: Adorno and evangelical support for Donald Trump," *CRR* Vol 6, 3 (2018): 269–88. Recently the political movement in Christian circles has been dubbed "Christian Nationalism." For an argument in support of the movement see Andrew Torba and Andrew Isker, *Christian Nationalism: A Biblical Guide to Taking Dominion and Discipling Nations* (Gab AI Inc.: Kindle Edition, 2022); for a critique of Christian nationalism see the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, "Christian Nationalism and the January 6, 2021 Insurrection," (9 February 2022): 1–63. Online: https://bjconline.org/jan6report/.
[8] S. Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).
[9] Nafsika Athanassoulis, "The Milgram experiment no one (in philosophy) is talking about," *JTPP* (Pre–print copy, 2022): n.p. Cited 31 October 2022. Online: https://www.academia.edu/68529426/The_Milgram_Experiment_No_One_in_philosophy_is_Talking_About.

and brought the abuse to an end. In Stanford it was his colleague, Christina Maslach; in Abu Ghraib it was a low-ranking Army reservist.[10]

Such research on authoritarianism indicates that on average people tend to "follow the crowd," obey symbols of authority, are attracted to power, and are easily led down dark paths. So how do individuals fare on their own in moral decision making? Most people like to think of themselves as outliers who would refuse to shock a stranger, or heroically speak out against abuse. But modern research paints a different picture.

Peter DeScioli et al. cite a body of research in which subjects evidenced "moral hypocrisy" in behavior that was inconsistent with their moral judgments. For example, subjects were inclined to apply rules more leniently to individuals they liked. They also altered judgments about facts, causes, intentions and harm to support previously held moral conclusions. And there is evidence that people are inclined to selectively apply deontic or consequentialist moral rules to achieve consistency with their other values on prejudice and racism.[11] DeScioli et al. concluded, "People seek not only to benefit themselves but also *to persuade other people that they are morally right in doing so* [emphasis added]."[12]

Jennifer Jordan et al. appeal to prior research that asserts people who wish to view themselves as moral beings, will actually take steps to maintain this belief even when they behave immorally, and will do so even when these steps involve sacrificing gains or investing valuable resources.[13] For Jordan et al., moral self-image (MSI) represents the

---

[10] Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil* (London: Rider, 2007).

[11] Peter DeScioli, Maxim Massenkoff, Alex Shaw, Michael Bang Petersen, and Robert Kurzban, "Equity or Equality? Moral Judgments Follow the Money," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Bio. Sci.* 281, no. 1797 (2014): 1–6; on "moral hypocrisy" see C. Daniel Batson and Elizabeth R. Thompson, "Why Don't Moral People Act Morally? Motivational Considerations," Curr. Dir. Psychol. Sci. 10, no. 2 (2001): 54–57; for applying moral rules leniently, see Konrad Bocian and Bogdan Wojciszke, "Self–Interest Bias in Moral Judgments of Others' Actions," Pers Soc Psychol Bull 40.7 (2014): 898–909; for inclinations to alter judgments about facts, causes, intentions and harm to support their moral conclusions, see J. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2012) and J. Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychol Rev* 108 (2001): 814 – 34; for the selective application of deontic or consequentialist rules, see Eric L. Uhlmann, David A. Pizarro, David Tannenbaum, and Peter H. Ditto, "The Motivated Use of Moral Principles," *JDM* 4.6 (2009): 479–91.

[12] DeScioli, "Equity or Equality," 5.

[13] Jennifer Jordan, Marijke C. Leliveld, and Ann E. Tenbrunsel, "The Moral Self–Image Scale: Measuring and Understanding the Malleability of the Moral Self," *Front. Psychol.* 6 (2015): 1–16; citing research that people desire to view themselves as moral beings, C.M. Steele, "The Psychology of Self–Affirmation: Sustaining the Integrity of the Self," in *Adv Exp Soc Psychol,* 21 (ed. L. Berkowitz; San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1988), 261–302; David Dunning, "Self-image Motives and Consumer Behavior: How Sacrosanct Self-Beliefs Sway Preferences in the Marketplace," J. Consum. Psychol. 17.4 (2007): 237–49; Benoît Monin and Alexander H. Jordan, "The Dynamic Moral Self: A Social Psychological Perspective," in *Personality, Identity, and*

degree to which we view ourselves as moral beings (i.e. "Am I a good person?"), and is distinct from related concepts of moral identity (the content of moral belief) and self-esteem (perceived worthiness to be loved and accepted), but provides researchers, "with a more nuanced understanding of the intersection between the moral self and moral behavior."[14] Jordan et al. found that, "the MSI was affected by three sources of influence—social comparison, explicit feedback, and one's own behavior."[15] In their study subjects, moral behavior was not entirely motivated by ethical values, but was valuable in so much as it serves to boost the MSI. As Constantine Sedikides and Aiden P. Gregg conclude in their own research, "the self, for all its notorious elusiveness, demands to be so positively evaluated."[16]

One might respond to these data with the assertion that they are characteristic of the general populace, whereas the Christian is divinely equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit to live a more exceptional example. In their seminal study "From Jerusalem to Jericho," John Darley and C. Daniel Batson recreated the story of the Good Samaritan found in Luke's Gospel and recruited students from Princeton Theological Seminary to measure the likelihood that ministry students would stop to help an ailing stranger. They discovered, "Subjects in a hurry to reach their destination were more likely to pass by without stopping. Some subjects were going to give a short talk on the parable of the Good Samaritan, others on a non-helping relevant topic; this made no significant difference in the likelihood of their giving the victim help."[17] Darley and Batson's study is especially pertinent to this thesis for two reasons: first, its focus is on the parable of the Good Samaritan, a companion text to John's love command; second, it targeted Christians, and not just any Christians, but

---

Character: Explorations in Moral Psychology (eds. D. Narvaez and D. Lapsley; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 341–354; for "will take steps to maintain this belief when they behave immorally," see Nina Mazar, On Amir, and Dan Ariely, "The Dishonesty of Honest People: A Theory of Self–Concept Maintenance," *J Mark Res* 45.6 (2008): 633–644; Rachel Barkan, Shahar Ayal, Francesca Gino, and Dan Ariely, "The Pot Calling the Kettle Black: Distancing Response to Ethical Dissonance," *J Exp Psychol Gen* 141.4 (2012): 757–773; Shaul Shalvi, Francesca Gino, Rachel Barkan, and Shahar Ayal, "Self–Serving Justifications: Doing Wrong and Feeling Moral," *Curr. Dir. Psychol. Sci.* 24.2 (2015): 125–130; for "sacrificing gains," see J. Keith Murnighan, Jae Wook Kim, and A. Richard Metzger, "The Volunteer Dilemma," *Adm. Sci. Q.* 38 (1993): 515–538.

[14] Jordan et al., "Moral Self–Image," 15.

[15] Jordan et al., "Moral Self–Image," 14, citing M. H. Kernis, and B. M. Goldman, "Stability and Variability in Self–Concept and Self–Esteem," in *Handbook of Self and Identity* (eds. M.R. Leary and J. P. Tangney; New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 106–127.

[16] Constantine Sedikides and Aiden P. Gregg, "Self–Enhancement: Food for Thought," *Perspect Psychol Sci* 3.2 (2008): 102–116.

[17] John M. Darley and C. Daniel Batson, "From Jerusalem to Jericho: A Study of Situational and Dispositional Variables in Helping Behavior," *J Pers Soc Psychol* 27.1 (1973): 100–108.

Christians who committed themselves to a seminary education. Such a study invites us to reconsider claims of Christian exceptionalism.

Jeremiah 17:9 states the heart is "desperately wicked," and Proverbs 14:12 indicates that even our moral judgments are askew in ways that may seem right but can lead to calamity. The need for humility regarding our moral character was the subject research conducted by Ben Tappin and Ryan McKay who observed that "Most people consider themselves paragons of virtue; yet few individuals perceive this abundance of virtue in others."[18] In their own study they measured the *rationality* of moral self-enhancement as compared with nonmoral traits and concluded that virtually all individuals irrationally inflated their moral qualities."[19] These conclusions are especially troubling in that ethical behavior strongly correlates with moral humility defined as "(a) a recognition of one's own moral fallibility, (b) an appreciation for the moral strengths and moral views of others, and (c) a moral perspective that transcends the self."[20]

This section has addressed the moral landscape where we make ethical decisions. In many of the studies noted, exceptional people acted "ethically" in that they chose not to administer electrical shocks to anonymous people, helped a stranger on the road, or advocated for others; but these are outliers. More commonly, people are inclined to follow the herd; they advocate for their own self-interest rather than the moral weight of their actions or consequence; and, preoccupied with self-image, they convince themselves and others that these decisions are exemplars of moral virtue. The last point is especially salient: we tend to be ignorant of our moral failings. As David Dunning observes, "the scope of people's ignorance is often invisible to them … or is disguised by erroneous beliefs and background knowledge that only appear to be sufficient to conclude a right answer."[21] Given this complex and contested landscape, it is important to define and carefully consider the current use of certain crucial but often misunderstood terms: law, morality, and ethics. This

---

[18] Ben M. Tappin and Ryan T. McKay, "The Illusion of Moral Superiority," *Soc Psychol Personal Sci* 8.6 (2017): 623–31.
[19] Tappin, "Illusion," 629.
[20] Isaac H. Smith and Maryam Kouchaki, "Moral Humility: In Life and at Work," *Res Organ Behav* 38 (2018): 77–94.
[21] David Dunning, "The Dunning–Kruger Effect: On Being Ignorant of One's Own Ignorance," in *Adv Exp Soc Psychol*, vol. 44 (San Diego: Academic Press, 2011), 247–296; the "Dunning–Kruger effect" is coined by researchers Justin Kruger and David Dunning in their paper, "Unskilled and Unaware of it: How Difficulties in Recognizing One's Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self–Assessments," *J Pers Soc Psychol* 77.6 (1999): 1121–1134.

will further pave the way for our later study of John's love command in the Farewell Discourse, and its application in moral decision-making.

1.2 *Law, Morality and Ethics*

The terms *law*, *morality*, and *ethics* enjoy broad semantic overlap and in many contexts are used interchangeably. As observed in the Introduction, laws and commands can be incorrectly regarded as delineating "explicit ethics" when the relationship between ethics and law is in fact only loosely inferential.[22] In the following section *laws* will be defined in terms of their function to enforce moral standards. The section will consider *morality* as an umbrella term that encompasses various matters of law, ethics and custom. And finally, *ethics* will be addressed as forming the underlying moral foundation upon which the rules and customs of society are based.

1.2.1 *Law*

Of the three terms *law* has the most consistent definition; typically, by law we refer to, "the principles and regulations established in a community by some authority and applicable to its people, whether in the form of legislation or of custom and policies recognized and enforced by judicial decision."[23] The features of law most pertinent to this discussion are, first, its limited scope. Laws apply only to a community within a defined jurisdiction. Second, laws are established by an authority *external* to the individual and applicable to all members who fall under the jurisdiction of that authority. Third, as Kengo Akiyama notes, "legal commands are justiciable [enforceable]. For a command to be a legal command, it needs to be both practicable by the addressee and also assessable by a court of justice."[24] As Geoffrey Robertson notes, "'Law', in common parlance, means a rule which (unlike a rule of ethics) is actually capable of enforcement through institutions created for that purpose."[25] Closely tied to the justiciable nature of law is the assumption that legal principles and regulations have been codified. Fourth, laws are purposed for the well-ordering of society. An example is the preamble to the US Constitution which indicates its

---

[22] Friedman, "Justice," 1.
[23] Dictionary.com, "Law," n.p. [cited 19 June 2022]. Online: https://www.dictionary.com/browse/law; The *COED* offers a corollary definition, "a rule or system of rules recognized by a country or community as regulating the actions of its members and enforced by the imposition of penalties," "Law," *COED,* 807.
[24] Kengo Akiyama, "How Can Love be Commanded?: On Not Reading Lev 19, 17–18 as Law," *Bib* 98.1 (2017): 1–9.
[25] Geoffrey Robertson, *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice* 3rd Ed. (New York: The New Press, 2002), 90.

laws are written to "establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity…."[26]

Given the current moral landscape delineated above, the practical necessity of law is readily apparent. As people are prone to offer post-hoc ethical justifications for actions that serve their own self-interest, a recognized standard of conduct guards against a society wide moral relativism. Additionally, the justiciable nature of law affords protection and recompense when standards have been violated. But laws are not always moral, and it is for this reason a distinction must be made between the (merely) legal and the ethical. It was partly for failing to recognize this distinction that Adolf Eichmann was sentenced to death for his participation in the Holocaust. Eichmann insisted he was not guilty and held no remorse because his actions were legal and he was only following orders.[27] In his book *Law's Empire*, Ronald Dworkin explains that in much legal theory laws exist as "plain facts," and when we distinguish between *good* laws and *bad* laws, we are not discussing the nature of the laws themselves, but what they *should* be. The "disagreement is really over issues of morality and fidelity, not law."[28] Though legal, Eichmann's actions were inherently immoral.

Dworkin's distinction between law and morality is recognized in Isaiah 10, when the prophet decries unjust laws and oppressive decrees. Romans 13 acknowledges the justiciable nature of laws. And as 1 Tim 1:9 indicates, the New Testament recognizes a moral landscape in which society is populated by those predisposed to unrighteousness. Laws *should* be moral but themselves have no *inherent* moral value. They serve the pragmatic function of regulating communities and their moral value is only *implicitly* present as they serve that function (or fail to do so). For this reason, this thesis argues that it is ironically misleading to associate "explicit ethics" with commands and moral instructions. The purportedly explicit commands are only implicitly ethical, and it is elsewhere in John's narrative that we will find the Gospel's explicit ethics. Having more clearly defined the scope of law, the next section will continue with a discussion on morality.

---

[26] United States Constitution. preamble.
[27] Hannah Arendt and Jens Kroh, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), *passim*.
[28] Ronald Dworkin, *Law's Empire* (London: Fontana, 1986), 7.

1.2.2 *Morality*

As an umbrella term, this thesis understands *morality* to include discrete moral beliefs (e.g., commands, customs, values) as well as the theoretical foundations which undergird those beliefs. This broad scope makes it difficult to establish a definition that would satisfy everyone. T. M. Scanlon remarks, "Terms such as 'moral,' 'morality,' and 'morally wrong' occur frequently … But it is often unclear what the people using these familiar terms have in mind, and unclear whether they are all even referring to the same thing."[29] Hence, two questions we will continually return to are first, *what* is moral? And second, *why* is it moral? Indeed, in this thesis, we are ultimately concerned with whether the Gospel of John weighs in on the *whats* and the *whys* of morality.

Definitions of morality typically fall into either *descriptive* or *normative* categories. Descriptive approaches "refer to certain codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group (such as a religion), or accepted by an individual for her own behavior"; normative approaches "refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational people."[30] In the extreme, descriptive definitions would assert that all moral claims are unique to a particular culture or place or time. Ruth Benedict considered all forms of morality to be descriptive, viewing morality as "a convenient term for socially approved habits." She adds, "Mankind has always preferred to say 'It is morally good,' rather than 'It is habitual,' and the fact of this preference is matter enough for a critical science of ethics. But historically the two phrases are synonymous."[31] Benedict is representative of early discussions on ethics in cultural anthropology in which the morals of a given society were understood as primarily *functional*, and like laws, their function was to maintain order and social cohesion.[32] In the other normative extreme there is the example of *shariah* in the Islamic faith; God's eternal and immutable will for humanity.[33] It is uncertain whether sharia would meet the aforementioned criterion for a normative ethic, as that "being put forward by

---

[29] T. M. Scanlon, "What Is Morality?" in *The Harvard Sampler* (ed. Jennifer M. Shepherd, Stephen M. Kosslyn and Evelynn M. Hammonds; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 243–266.
[30] Bernard Gert and Joshua Gert, "The Definition of Morality," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* n.p. [cited 31 May 2022]. Online: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/morality–definition/.
[31] Ruth Benedict, "Anthropology and the Abnormal," in *Sourcebook in Abnormal Psychology* (eds. L. Rabkin and J. Carr; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), 9–20.
[32] Benedict, "Anthropology," 16.
[33] John L. Esposito, ed. "Shariah," *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 287–8.

all rational people." Certainly, Muslims consider shariah to be normative, but those outside the faith of Islam may object to shariah laws, as have non-Christians when governed by state churches.[34]

Some, such as Jan G. van der Watt, make a distinction between morality and ethos. Van der Watt's work is focused on the Gospel of John, and in many respects his use of terms is *descriptive* of a hypothetical Johannine context. He defines *morality* as, "a set of prescriptions of concrete actions … that a *particular group* [emphasis mine] shares consciously or unconsciously, and that cognitively and emotionally guide individuals to shape their everyday life in a good and beneficial way."[35] He then defines *ethos* as, "the canon of institutionalized practices of the Johannine community through which their ethical identity becomes apparent."[36] Van der Watt's distinctions between morality and ethos allow for a moral system that, in agreement with the other definitions considered, includes both descriptive and normative elements. Even Islam differentiates between normative and descriptive morality when shariah is contrasted with *fiqh*.[37]

In the professional sphere, ethical principles are fundamental to operating a successful business and avoiding litigation. Nearly every career specialty will require academic exposure to ethics and rely on working definitions. So, for example, the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin, indicates that "Morals are the prevailing standards of behavior that enable people to live cooperatively in groups. Moral refers to what societies sanction as right and acceptable."[38] Similarly, *The Ethics Centre*, a not-for-profit organization based in Australia, which provides ethics training in professional and private spheres, states: "Morality refers to an informal framework of values, principles, beliefs, customs, and ways of living. Moralities aren't usually enforced by the State but there are often social pressures to conform to moral norms."[39] Both of these definitions are concerned

---

[34] Justo L. Gonzales, *A History of Christian Thought: From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 319–22; here I refer to Galileo's condemnation by the Inquisition and Descartes' fear of the same.
[35] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 26.
[36] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 27–9.
[37] Esposito, "Islamic Law," 148–9.
[38] McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin, "Morals," n.p. [cited 6 June 2022]. Online: https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/morals.
[39] The Ethics Centre, "Ethics explainer: Ethics, morality & law," n.p. [cited 6 June 2022]. Online: https://ethics.org.au/ethics-explainer-ethics-morality-law/.

primarily with descriptive aspects of morality, and this is appropriate when running a business since a business must operate within defined legal parameters.

It is noteworthy that in all the definitions considered there is a similarity to law, especially in its role of maintaining order in society. Like law, morality's descriptive aspects have a limited jurisdiction, and moral systems are *external* to the individual. Indeed, except that morality is not enforced by the State, which is impossible due to the sheer magnitude of discrete moral injunctions and practices, there is little difference between what is legal and what is moral. But like law, moral claims are frequently limited to *whats*, and when they fail to address the *whys*, they paradoxically risk having no inherent moral value.

In summary, as noted at the outset of this section, morality is an umbrella term that encompasses discrete moral beliefs as well as the theoretical foundations which undergird those beliefs. Law, as a subset of morality, represents those moral injunctions which have been codified and are enforced by the State. Religious, philosophic, and even commercial definitions distinguish between normative and descriptive moralities. But we have not yet put forward a method for asserting normative moral claims that would be accepted by "all rational people." The next section on *ethics* intends to address this deficiency. Later, when we discuss the ethical content of the Gospel of John, our attention will not be limited to whether it has any moral prescriptions, but whether it offers a theoretical foundation that rationally undergirds its moral claims.

1.2.3 *Ethics*

Like the word *morality*, defining *ethics* is complicated by its variety of accepted uses and applications. It is commonly taken as a synonym for morality.[40] It can also refer to *professional ethics* and denote the special codes of conduct adhered to by those who are engaged in the profession.[41] While professional ethics is not itself an ethical theory, it does make use of ethical theory. Citing R.B. Purtilo (2000), Greenfield and Jensen note: "the tools of ethics are designed for sifting through muddy details of everyday life, examining them for why, to whom, and how we must show care and be accountable."[42] The introduction to this

[40] Mohammad Chowdhury, "Emphasizing Morals, Values, Ethics, and Character Education in Science Education and Science Teaching," *MOJES* 4.2 (2018): 1–16.
[41] Chowdhury, *Emphasizing Morals*, 1–2.
[42] Bruce Greenfield and Gail M. Jensen, "Beyond a Code of Ethics: Phenomenological Ethics for Everyday Practice," *PRI* 15.2 (2010): 88–95.

thesis addressed the issue of euthanasia as an example of the intersection of professional ethics, personal ethics, and ethical theory. Hospital policies may not be sufficient to resolve the moral conflicts of doctors who have been ordered to euthanize their patients. And so, with the introduction of *ethical theory* we are now ready to discuss the limits of descriptive moralities and consider the theoretical basis for making normative moral claims.

So, what is *ethical theory*? Bernard Williams offers the following, "An ethical theory is a theoretical account of what ethical thought and practice are, which account either implies a general test for the correctness of basic ethical beliefs and principles or else implies that there cannot be such a test."[43] Harold Attridge, who we earlier noted alleges that John's Gospel lacks a system of ethics, would nonetheless agree with Williams's description of ethical theory as "a general test for the correctness of basic ethical beliefs." So would the McCombs School of Business, who notes that "ethics" often refers to both an analytical and investigative method for developing rules and regulations, and the rules themselves.[44] Jan G. van der Watt likewise acknowledges the dual use of the word "ethics" describing ethics as having two basic pillars: the *what* regarding the content of ethical behavior, and the *why* as conscious reflection of what motivates that behavior.[45] Moreover, presumably this is a *deliberate* reflection in pursuit of a proper goal.[46] In agreement with this last point Jarrett Zigon describes ethics as *conscious acknowledgement* of a moral dilemma that, "leads to a person or persons ethically working to overcome this question or dilemma."[47]

In summary, we have examined a variety of definitions for ethics offered in college curricula, moral philosophy, the business sector, and biblical studies. What these definitions have in common is a concern to acknowledge ethics as a *method* of conscious moral reflection. In ethics we distinguish between the content of moral claims and the underlying moral foundations of those claims. In all these definitions, ethics distinguishes itself by offering a *method* by which rules, codes, and values can be tested. Moral and legal codes are considered ethical when they are either the product of or have been tested by an ethical theory.

---

[43] Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 72.
[44] McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin, "Ethics," n.p. [cited 6 June 2022]. Online: https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/ethics.
[45] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 20–26.
[46] The Ethics Centre, "Ethics, Morality & Law," n.p.
[47] Jarrett Zigon, *Morality: An Anthropological Perspective* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), 18.

At least some of the debate on whether John's Gospel contains any ethical content can be attributed to confusing explicit moral commands and claims with the systematic frameworks (i.e., ethical theories) that test and validate them. J. L. Houlden's comments seem to indicate as much when he says, "'Love one another' is the only moral rule given by John … He gives no ruling of Jesus on marriage, divorce, property or the state. That which the other writers see as the crown and guiding principle of Jesus's ethical teaching is (with its limitation to 'one another') for John its whole content."[48] Codes of conduct, laws, and moral principles cannot exhaustively dredge the muddy waters of everyday life. Greenfield and Jensen argued the need for ethical theories in professional practice, even in the presence of clear codes of conduct. Whether we are conscious of it or not, all of us use some form of ethical theory to navigate life's ambiguities.[49] Ethical theories do what codes of conduct, moral stipulations and laws cannot do; they provide us with the ability to make moral decisions in the absence of rules. But more than that, ethical theories allow us to critique the rules themselves. In concluding this discussion on law, morality, and ethics, this thesis argues that the dearth of explicit commands in the Gospel of John does not necessarily correspond to a dearth of ethical content. The love command must reasonably be understood, not as the "only moral rule given by John," but similarly to all commands, as the product of an ethical theory.

1.3 *Moral Reasoning and Ethical Theories*

In the previous section we established working definitions for the terms, morality, ethics, and law. In this section we will discuss the term *moral reasoning* and how moral reasoning and ethical theories relate to each other. The Gospel of John offers examples of deontic and utilitarian ethical theories, and their examination will be an appropriate prelude to the following chapters where this thesis argues that John's Gospel offers its own ethical theory.

Like many terms we have encountered, there is semantic overlap between *moral reasoning* and *ethical theories,* and it is not uncommon for philosophers to address ethical

[48] J. L. Houlden, *Ethics and the New Testament* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1973), 36–7.
[49] Greenfield and Jensen, "Beyond a Code of Ethics," 94.

theories as modes of moral reasoning.[50] A clarifying definition is offered by the McCombs School of Business:

> Moral reasoning applies critical analysis to specific events to determine what is right or wrong, and what people ought to do in a particular situation … How we make day-to-day decisions like "What should I wear?" is similar to how we make moral decisions like "Should I lie or tell the truth?" … Moral reasoning typically applies logic and moral theories, such as deontology or utilitarianism, to specific situations or dilemmas. However, people are not especially good at moral reasoning. Indeed, the term moral dumbfounding describes the fact that people often reach strong moral conclusions that they cannot logically defend.[51]

The term *moral dumbfounding* was coined by Jonathan Haidt, Fredrik Björklund and Scott Murphy.[52] It is a phenomena which correlates with what has already been said regarding laws and morality when distinguished from ethics; many of our moral beliefs are not consciously deliberated, but unconsciously reflect "embodied dispositions, customs and habits."[53] And so it comes as no surprise that people frequently cannot state *why* an act is moral or immoral. Citing further research from Haidt and Björklund, Catriona Mackenzie distinguishes four kinds of moral reasoning. These include (1) post hoc rationalization, (2) reasoned social persuasion, (3) reasoned judgment, and (4) private reflection.[54] This thesis has already observed "post hoc rationalization" in DeScioli et al. where subjects select moral theories to support preconceived moral intuitions.[55] Additionally, it has noted "reasoned social persuasion" as the theory advanced by Ruth Benedict and others who state morality, coinciding with habits and customs, serves a functional purpose to maintain social cohesion. Haidt and others decline to equate *moral reasoning* with *ethical theory* because, while it is *ideal* that moral reasoning should employ a theory of ethics, people seldom do so in practice.

---

[50] Amartya Sen, "Gender Inequality and Theories of Justice," in *Women, Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities* (eds. Martha Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 262.
[51] McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin, "Moral Reasoning," n.p. [cited 6 June 2022]. Online: https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/moral–reasoning.
[52] J. Haidt, F. Bjorklund and S. Murphy, "Moral Dumbfounding: When Intuition Finds No Reason," (Honors Thesis, University of Virginia, 2000), 1–23.
[53] Zigon, *Morality*, 162.
[54] Catriona Mackenzie, "Emotions, Reflection, and Moral Agency," in *Emotions, Imagination, and Moral Reasoning* (eds. Robyn Langdon and Catriona Mackenzie; New York: Psychology Press, 2012), 237–256. Citing Jonathan Haidt and Fredrik Björklund, "Social Intuitionists Answer Six Questions About Moral Psychology," in *Moral Psychology, volume 2 The Cognitive Science of Morality: Intuition and Diversity* (ed. W. Sinnott–Armstrong; Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 181–217; and Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog," 818–19.
[55] DeScioli et al., "Equity," 2; citing Uhlmann et al., "Moral Principles," 489.

1.3.1 *Deontology and Utilitarianism in the Gospel of John*

Of concern to this thesis is whether John's Gospel understands the concepts of *moral reasoning* and *ethical theories* in the same way we have described them. Studies have shown that Greek philosophy debated moral notions similar to what contemporary ethics terms deontology and utilitarianism.[56] And, as will be seen below, examples of deontology and utilitarianism are both found in the Gospel of John.[57]

The label "deontology" is derived from the Greek word for duty and implies a duty-based ethic in which rules and/or actions are seen to be inherently moral by virtue of their *material content* regardless of context.[58] In what Kant called his *categorical imperative*, he summarized his theory, "I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law."[59] B. E. Winston argues that John's Gospel contains many examples of deontic moral reason. So, for example, when Nicodemus asks, "Our law does not judge a man without first hearing from him and knowing what he does?" (John 7:51), his appeal resembles a Kantian imperative to apply the law equally to all.[60] Significantly, the Pharisees do not object to Nicodemus's *reasoning*, but their appeal to Jesus's place of origin is little more than a "post hoc rationalization." Additionally, the objection that Jesus lacks support from leadership is clearly a form of "reasoned social persuasion" used to reject Nicodemus's argument.

In utilitarian ethics, also called consequentialist or teleological ethics, "The morality of an action is evaluated … based on its consequences."[61] In John Stewart Mill's formulation,

---

[56] Andrei V. Seregin, "Intentionalism and Deontology in the Early Stoic Ethics," *Philol. Clas.* 17.1 (2022): 32–47; Lisa Hill and Eden Blazejak, "Stoicism and Utilitarian Thought," in *Stoicism and the Western Political Tradition* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 117.

[57] Coincidentally, Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill, who respectively delineated the modern forms of deontology and utilitarianism, both claimed the love command as inspiration for their theories; Immanuel Kant, *The Moral Law: Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (trans. H. J. Paton; London: Hutchinson, 1978), 22; John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism," in *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, and Considerations on Representative Government* (ed. H. B. Acton; London: Guernsey Press, 1983), 1–64.

[58] Joseph B. Onyango Okello, "Deontological Theories of Ethics," in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics* (eds. Joel B. Green, Jacqueline Lapsley, Rebekah Miles, and Allen Verhey; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 214-16.

[59] Kant, *The Moral Law*, 22.

[60] B. E. Winston, "Nomos: Developing People from Rules to Love," in *Biblical Principles of Hiring and Developing Employees* (Cham: Macmillan, 2018), 85–105; John 7:51 Μὴ ὁ νόμος ἡμῶν κρίνει τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐὰν μὴ ἀκούσῃ πρῶτον παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ γνῷ τί ποιεῖ. Winston identifies numerous examples of deontology throughout the New Testament.

[61] Scott Paeth, "Teleological Theories of Ethics," *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, 766–769.

"moral action is oriented toward achieving the greatest good for the greatest number."[62] In common parlance it is perhaps oversimplified by the phrase, "The ends justify the means." Stephen De Wijze argues that utilitarianism allows for "dirty hands" scenarios which, "are those situations where a conscientious moral agent does wrong in order to do right."[63] De Wijze argues that "dirty hands" is a necessary consequence of statecraft, an observation long recognized since Machiavelli.[64] Recognizing this possibility, critics of utilitarianism argue that it is an example of an ethical theory that permits violence, and that violence is the inevitable result of attempts to instantiate a particular vision of justice as utilitarian models cannot objectively ascribe values that would be agreed upon by all interested parties.[65] According to Larry Locke et al., all of these aspects of utilitarianism are in view in the moral argument offered by the Pharisees after Lazarus is raised (John 11:47-53):

> They expressed their concern: "If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation" (John 11:48). The high priest resolved the problem by suggesting that Jesus should be killed, stating, "It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish" (John 11:50). His proposal represents a clear application of utilitarian theory.[66]

These examples from John's Gospel favor the argument that the Gospel is cognizant of diverse ethical theories and is even aware of their misuse. The pharisees rejected Nicodemus's deontic appeal, and then chose a utilitarian mode of reasoning to justify Jesus's death.

In summary John's Gospel offers examples of moral reasoning through the logical application of ethical theories, but also portrays some of Haidt's other forms of moral reasoning. Specifically, we find examples of post hoc rationalization and reasoned social persuasion. Not only is John's Gospel emphatically concerned with ethical matters, but Jesus's opponents also bear many of the character flaws noted earlier in our review of human subject research: they are motivated by self-interest, concerned about their moral self-image,

---

[62]Paeth, "Teleological Theories," 767.
[63] Stephen De Wijze, "Punishing 'Dirty Hands'—Three Justifications," *Ethical Theory Moral Pract* 16.4 (2013): 879–97.
[64] De Wijze, "Dirty Hands," 881.
[65] Neal DeRoo and Brian Lightbody, eds., *The Logic of Incarnation: James K. A. Smith's Critique of Postmodern Religion* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2008), 11–12.
[66] Larry G. Locke, Taelyn Shelton, and Baylee Smith, "A Defense of Biblical Ethics in Business," *JBIB* 24.1 (2021): 80–89.

and irrationally convinced of their moral superiority. The next section will discuss moral development and why so many moral decisions are based on intuition and not clear moral reasons. This will have bearing on John's ethics, as it will further delineate the reason why it's so hard to be "good."

1.4 *Moral Development and Moral Identity*

Bruce Waltke offers an insightful translation of Proverbs 22:6, "Dedicate a youth according to what his way dictates; even when he becomes old, he will not depart from it."[67] Though there is some debate as to whether *his way* refers to the "physical and mental abilities of the developing youth" or "the way of wisdom as explicated in the book of Proverbs," commentators agree that Proverbs 22:6 places a high premium on early childhood education.[68] Implicit in this verse, and many others that refer to the education of children, is that the moral and cognitive abilities of children develop over time, and they require guidance.[69] Tracking the developmental milestones of children is a fundamental part of being a parent, and many theories of childhood development have been formulated to recognize and follow these milestones. The developmental theories of Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget and American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg figure prominently in our understanding of human cognitive and moral development. Their theories clarify how people can have strong moral convictions and yet remain morally dumbfounded, offering no moral reason for their convictions.

1.4.1 *Stages of Moral Development*

In Jean Piaget's developmental model children up to two years old learn through the senses but have not developed conceptual or reflective thought. Children begin to think symbolically, and then logically, but cannot grasp complex ethical, political, or social issues until about twelve years old.[70] In Lawrence Kohlberg's schema the earliest moral stages are self-centered and based on rewards and punishments. As a child's moral maturity advances, they begin to recognize the importance of social relationships, and may eventually acquire

---

[67] Translation by Bruce K. Waltke, *Proverbs: Chapters 15–31* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 194.
[68] Waltke, *Proverbs*, 205 argues *his way* refers to the youth. Tremper Longman, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 404–5 argues *his* refers to God's path and the way of wisdom.
[69] E.g., Matt 18:3–6; 1 Cor 3:1–2; Heb 5:12–15. While Matt 18 explicitly addresses children, the New Testament frequently assumes the moral and cognitive development of children as an analogy for spiritual formation.
[70] Kathleen Stassen Berger, *Invitation to the Life Span,* 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 2019), 26–7.

complex moral reasoning that acknowledges universal ethical principles.[71] An implication of these theories is that in early stages of development a child's entire cognitive and moral schema is dependent upon upbringing, and children experience the world through culturally defined rules which are imposed or inculcated as habits.[72] Yet each person has a particular experience of maturation which, as we shall see below, can be further complicated by the experience of trauma, especially trauma in early childhood. This further indicates how modes of moral reasoning are learned through upbringing.

1.4.2 *Abnormal Moral Development*

Since the 1990's a standardized tool, known as the ACE scale, has been used throughout the United States to track public health data on childhood trauma. When measured by the ACE scale at least five of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States have been associated with childhood trauma. These include several contributors to declines in life expectancy, increased prevalence of mental health concerns, and lower socio-economic status in adulthood.[73]

But these data are not all bleak. Donald Meichenbaum notes that "resilience appears to be the general rule of adaptation …1/2 to 2/3 of children living in such extreme circumstances grow up and 'overcome the odds,' and go on to achieve successful and adjusted lives."[74] Research by Hafer et al., indicates that most people adjust to experiences of trauma (whether their own or others) by reference to a belief that the world is inherently just.[75] "Just World Beliefs" are typically described as believing that good things will generally happen to good people and bad things will happen to bad people. Interestingly, though, Hafer et al. also found that subjects often devalued or blamed victims of trauma as *deserving* their experience, a belief that helped them to maintain their own just world beliefs.[76] Those who have been victimized by trauma, even if they are resilient to its effects,

---

[71] Berger, *Life Span*, 303.
[72] Al Gini, *Why It's Hard to be Good* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 23–4.
[73] M. T. Merrick, D. C. Ford, K. A. Ports, et al. "*Vital Signs:* Estimated Proportion of Adult Health Problems Attributable to Adverse Childhood Experiences and Implications for Prevention — 25 States, 2015–2017," *MMWR* 68.44 (November 2009): 999–1005. Cited 21 July 2022. Online: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6844e1.htm.
[74] Donald Meichenbaum, "Bolstering Resilience: Benefiting From Lessons Learned," in *The Evolution of Cognitive Behavior Therapy* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 172–180.
[75] Carolyn L. Hafer, Laurent Bègue, Becky L. Choma, and Julie L. Dempsey, "Belief in a Just World and Commitment to Long–Term Deserved Outcomes," *Soc. Justice Res.*18.4 (2005): 429–44.
[76] Hafer, et al., "Belief in a Just World," 438.

have had a moral perspective that is colored by their experience. Similarly, research conducted by criminologist Lonnie Athens shows that although criminals typically have a trauma history and score high on the ACE scale, not all victims of trauma become violent criminals. But also notable is his observation that, the subjects he studied were groomed into their behavior through immersion in a "moral" community that perceived violence as a necessary part of one's survival in a society that is inherently unjust.[77] Criminals also have a moral perspective that has been skewed by their experience.

1.4.3 *Moral Identity*

Moral development leads to a consideration of moral identity. Charles Taylor proposes that our "self-identity" as human beings occupies a moral space in relation to the good.[78] If he is correct, the call of the Gospel of John is not one of simple obedience or moral correction, but a call to redefine our core identity.

With this in view, we may ask what makes a person the same person over time? A study by Jim Everett et al. indicates that, "contra the traditional philosophical view that memories are critical for identity persistence, it is instead moral values [such as honesty, empathy, or virtuousness] that are perceived to be central and essential for personal identity."[79] The study also demonstrated that when subjects were asked to assess a loved one, moral identity was the principal trait associated with the "self." As to which traits a person would self-designate as forming their own principal identity, a study by Tobias Krettenauer showed that "moral identity comes as a goal of moral action. Individuals act morally in order to uphold their moral identity."[80] According to Krettenauer, moral identity seems to be associated with the "self" in our own self-perceptions and in our perceptions of others. On the question as to what degree we exercise any self-determination in our moral identity, Krettenauer's studies indicated that children as young as five years old were already

---

[77] Richard Rhodes, *Why They Kill: The Discoveries of a Maverick Criminologist* (New York: Vintage, 2000), 112.

[78] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 25–52; Charles Taylor's thesis cannot be adequately summarized here, but it may be sufficient to say here that one's moral identity is a fundamental part of what it means to be a human being.

[79] Jim A. C. Everett, Joshua August Skorburg, and Julian Savulescu, "The Moral Self and Moral Duties," *Philos. Psychol.* 33.7 (2020): 924–945; this study asked participants to imagine a loved one's brain had been switched with a stranger. In a series of varying conditions participants were asked to identify which of the two bodies was their loved one.

[80] Tobias Krettenauer, "Moral Identity as a Goal of Moral Action: A Self–Determination Theory Perspective," *J Moral Educ* 49.3 (2020): 330–345.

concerned with their moral identity and capable of complex moral thought, even though their identity was largely external (pleasing others etc.), and that it is only gradually self-determined as we mature.

In summary, the question of moral development is complicated. Much of a person's moral identity is externally imposed through upbringing. Childhood experiences, especially exposure to trauma and abuse, have the effect of drastically altering the way people relate to the world around them. Additionally, there is a body of research that suggests our moral identities are fundamentally what we associate with notions of the "self." This equation of the "self" with "moral identity" was found to be a matter of concern even in children as young as five years old. This newly emphasized importance of moral identity is an ideal precursor to our ensuing discussion on *The Ethical Turn.* This is a society-wide movement that has drawn the attention of academic disciplines, and which prioritizes ethics as a focus of attention, the wider context within which recent studies on ethics in the Gospel of John have been undertaken.

1.5 Introducing the Ethical Turn

David Goodman and E. R. Severson begin their textbook *The Ethical Turn: Otherness and Subjectivity in Contemporary Psychoanalysis* as follows:

> Emmanuel Levinas makes the assertion that ethics precedes ontology and that 'ethics is the first philosophy.' We begin with the encounter and then the theory, systems, and ontological paradigms stagger forward into words, and institutions … It is this type of assertion … that has fueled an *ethical turn* in the humanities during the second half of the 20th century.[81]

The *ethical turn* in psychology, philosophy, and anthropology represents a shift in the emphasis formerly placed on the study of morality. Ethics is no longer being treated as a "sub-branch" of philosophy, but has become a way of theorizing culture, society, and politics, as well as the arts and creative enterprise.[82] This ethical turn has been recognized in biblical studies, with a particular interest in exploring the degree to which ethical imperatives inform theologically dense texts, such as the Gospel of John, and conversely how such

[81] David M. Goodman and E. R. Severson, "Introduction: Ethics as First Psychology," in *The Ethical Turn: Otherness and Subjectivity in Contemporary Psychoanalysis* (eds D. Goodman and E. R. Severson; London: Routledge, 2016), 1.
[82] Boothroyd, Dave, "The Subject of the Ethical Turn," in *Ethical Subjects in Contemporary Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 1–27.

theological texts inform ethics. Here ethical exhortation would not be resigned to the role of "application" of meaning but advance to being part and parcel of the text's intention and impact. David Clines writes, "We have a responsibility, I believe, to evaluate the Bible's claims and assumptions, and if we abdicate that responsibility, whether as scholars or as readers-in-general of the Bible, we are in my opinion guilty of an ethical fault."[83] Richard Briggs regards Clines' words as "a well-known manifesto for what we might call the 'ethical turn' in biblical studies."[84] And as recognized in the earlier literature review, this turn has been taken by certain scholars in their approach to Johannine ethics.

Among the aims and approaches of this thesis is to discern whether the Gospel of John offers a cohesive ethical theory, or in Bernard Williams's terms, a general test for the correctness of our beliefs and moral intuitions. Prior to the 21st century, work on Johannine ethics was stymied by an insistence that ethical matter be represented in the form of explicit commands or systematic ethical treatises after the fashion of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[85] But an insight of the ethical turn is that moral behavior, however poorly it may be practiced, is a central preoccupation of the human condition across its diverse cultures, and that many cultures engage in robust ethical discourse without producing literary works like Aristotle. According to Klenk, one of the conclusions drawn from the renewed study of ethics across diverse cultures is that "Morality is defined in reference to the virtue-ethics tradition and conceptualized as *character formation*," the nature of morality is not found in "written-down rules, but idealized characters," though there continues to be some debate as to whether character formation is one area of morality, or the exclusive area of morality.[86]

The ethical turn has redefined ethical inquiry to frame it as less about doing the right thing and more about *becoming* the right *person*. This sentiment is articulated by Nie Zhenzhao, who speaks of the impact of the ethical turn on literary studies:

> All literary works embed practical aims, which are mainly about moral enlightenment and education … Therefore, moral teaching is the fundamental function of literature … The primary purpose of literature is not to provide entertainment but to offer moral

[83] David J. A. Clines, "The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible," in *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 205 (ed. J. Cheryl Exum; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 9–25.
[84] Richard Briggs, "Reading the Sotah Text (Numbers 5: 11–31): Holiness and a Hermeneutic Fit for Suspicion," *BibInt* 17.3 (2009): 288–319.
[85] Meeks, "Ethics," 6; Attridge, "Apolitical?," 465; Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 1–15, 363.
[86] Klenk, *Moral Philosophy*, 338–39.

> examples for human beings to follow, to enrich their material and spiritual life with moral guidance, and to achieve their self-perfection with moral experience.[87]

This thesis positions itself within the ethical turn in as much as it treats the Gospel of John as a literary work with practical aims about moral enlightenment and education.[88] Coinciding with Zhenzhao's "self-perfection with moral experience," some of the research discussed in this chapter has asserted that one's moral identity is fundamental to the concept of the "self." Additionally, the virtue ethic approach of the ethical turn has subtly shifted the goal of ethics from moral behavior as such, to character formation and one's own self-perfection as a moral agent. Moreover, the ethical turn has broadened the definition of "explicit ethics" to include moral examples as they appear in genres of literature beyond ethical treatises and moral commands. Therefore, approaches to the Gospel of John that regard it as an example of the *bios* genre, encomiastic biography, or as presenting Jesus's footwashing as a mimetic exemplar, can all be regarded as *explicitly ethical* approaches to John's moral teaching, and John's explicit moral teaching can be expanded to encompass its entire narrative theology.[89]

Pressing further what has just been said about character formation, and anticipating interests addressed later in this thesis, we may ask, "What happens when people strive to become their best possible selves?" In research conducted by Cui et al., morality was empirically associated with happiness.[90] They found that "The more a person's moral identity is central to their sense of true self, the bigger the role it plays in behavior and commitment, … but the commitment must be consistent with one's daimon or true self to have a eudaimonic function."[91] In agreement with the research of Everett et al. noted earlier, they concluded, "Given that human morality is much more essential to identity than personality traits, memory, or desire … more attention should be given to the relationship between moral

---

[87] Zhenzhao, "Ethical literary criticism," 88.
[88] From *within* the ethical turn, we could *assume* the text is inherently ethical, but because scholarship on the Gospel questions its practicable ethical content, this thesis argues for intentional ethical aims by the Gospel's author.
[89] For *bios* as genre see Trozzo, *Exploring Johannine Ethics*; for encomiastic biography see Myers, *Reading John*; for mimetic exemplar see Cornelis Bennema, "A Model of Johannine Ethics," *Stud Christ Ethics* 35 (2022): 433–56.
[90] Peng Cui, Yanhui Mao, Yufan Shen, and Jianhong Ma, "Moral Identity and Subjective Well–Being: The Mediating Role of Identity Commitment Quality," *IJERPH* 18.18 (September 2021): 9795, 1–14. Cited 21 July 2022. Online: https://www.mdpi.com/1660–4601/18/18/9795.
[91] Cui, *Moral Identity*, 3.

identity and well-being."[92] By placing Cui et al. in conversation with Zhenzhao, all literary texts (including the Gospel of John) would best be understood as having explicit moral objectives (Zhenzhao), which address the fundamental nature of our human identity as moral creatures (Cui et al.). One might say the central preoccupation of literature would be: What is the meaning of life?[93]

This chapter has covered considerable ground in discussing various important aspects of the current ethical landscape as the context of its ensuing analysis of Jesus's love command in the Farewell Discourse of John. It began by noting certain significant features and findings of modern human subject research. It defined and differentiated the nature and scope of crucial and complex terms: law, morality, and ethics. It considered the important role of moral reasoning and ethical theories, which included examining instances of deontology and utilitarianism in the Gospel of John. And it took account of integral issues related to moral development and identity. All this led to an introduction to the ethical turn in the humanities and biblical studies. This chapter has thus demonstrated the importance of ethical inquiry to biblical studies, and it suggests that ethics ought to be a *primary* focus of biblical studies. Additionally, this chapter has demonstrated that the terms "explicit ethics" and "implicit ethics" as restricted to specific genres of written literature by Johannine scholars are somewhat misleading. Another finding of the ethical turn is that ethical discourse is explicitly ethical in a wide variety of genres. Finally, in anticipation of this thesis's ensuing chapters, research by Cui et al. associated moral identity with eudaimonic well-being, suggesting that the study of ethics transcends the scholarly and theoretical, and has practical implications for living a meaningful life. Having described the state of ethical research in our modern world and with relation to Johannine scholarship, the next chapter will explore the ethical content of selected portions of John's narrative theology, which together provide an important literary context for understanding John's love command.

---

[92] Cui, *Moral Identity*, 2.

[93] Terry Eagleton, *The Meaning of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Eagleton here discusses the various meanings of *meaning* (36 ff.), and the ethical turn offers to narrow the focus of the meaning of *meaning* by directing attention toward *ethical* significance.

Chapter 2: Ethics and Theology in John's Gospel Narratives

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter[1]

"You know, I remember the words from the Bible. There is no other love rather than if someone gives soul for their friends."[2]

While speaking at a rally to celebrate the eighth anniversary of Crimea's annexation, Russian President Vladimir Putin invoked John 15:13 as the moral justification for the previous month's invasion of Ukraine. John 15:13 follows Jesus's repetition of the command to love one another, and as Vladimir Putin uttered this quote, crowds cheered to celebrate the war in Ukraine as a true expression of brotherly love.[3] Lest we judge him too harshly we ought to remember the words of Martin Luther in "Whether Soldiers Too Can Be Saved," where he says, "Now slaying and robbing do not seem to be works of love. A simple man therefore does not think it is a Christian thing to do. In truth, however, even this is a work of love."[4] Luther and Putin are both arguing that "war" can be an act of love. This may be a comparison of apples and oranges, or both may be engaged in post hoc utilitarian and Orwellian reasoning, but Luther and Putin are both making truth claims about the definition of love and what it means to be "good."

This chapter will argue that John's Gospel makes its own truth claims regarding the nature of love and what is good, and that both are explicitly demonstrated in the footwashing and Farewell Discourse. John's Gospel overall offers an ethical theory different from deontology and utilitarianism. While similar to the virtue ethics that dominated 1st century philosophy, is nevertheless distinct from it, in ways that we shall indicate in this chapter and develop even further in the next. This will include reckoning with "the good", which is at the heart of all moral reasoning, but is difficult to discuss because, as G. E. Moore observes, it is

---

[1] Isaiah 5:20 (NIV)
[2] John 15:13 as quoted by Vladimir Putin.
[3] Anugrah Kumar, "Putin quotes John 15:13 to hail Ukraine invasion at Moscow rally: 'The words from the Bible'," *The Christian Post* (19 March 2022): n.p. [cited 15 November 2022]. Online: https://www.christianpost.com/news/putin–john–15–to–hail–ukraine–invasion.html.
[4] Martin Luther, "Whether soldiers too can be saved," in *A Textbook of Christian Ethics* (ed. Robin Gill; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 289–305.

a simple concept, a whole with no constitutive parts, which as such can't be defined.[5] This thesis does not pretend to solve this fundamental conundrum of moral philosophy, but we may be able to discuss "good" things and talk at length about the nature of what is "good" in terms of John's ethical theory.

The main goal of this chapter is to offer an understanding of John's narrative ethics by focusing on Jesus as *Logos* in the prologue and on chapter 12, which frame the first half of the Gospel, and so together provide the immediate and illuminating narrative context for the ensuing love command and Farewell Discourse. I begin by arguing that John's literary forms approach ethical matters differently from commands and ethical treatises; they compel us to *reflect* on our lives and how we should live. I then consider John's use of the word *logos* in the Gospel's prologue, first in relation to Greek literature such as Plato's *Republic*, which never abandoned the use of narrative to discuss matters of philosophy and ethics, and then in relation to its evocation of Jewish wisdom traditions. This leads to a consideration of its "cognitive environment," which includes frequent assumed and oblique references to cultural values and religio-historical traditions. The chapter will then conclude by arguing how, in light of this material, John 12 asserts its own truth claims on the nature of "the good" through transfiguration imagery that alludes to the divine attributes of Exod 34:6, and positions Jesus as mimetically fulfilling those attributes in the footwashing of the Farewell Discourse.

2.1 *Narrative Ethics*

As noted in the previous chapter, Jarrett Zigon argues that we engage ethical theories in response to problems that disrupt our comfortable moral discourse. But do we need to wait for a moral crisis before we examine our lives? The ancients readily recognized the role of literature in examining how one should live.[6] When we earlier engaged the "ethical turn" in literature, we noted Zhenzhao's claim that "The primary purpose of literature is not to provide entertainment but to offer moral examples for human beings to follow, to enrich their material and spiritual life with moral guidance, and to achieve their self-perfection with

[5] G. E. Moore, *Principia ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 9–10.
[6] Williams, *Ethics*, 1; quoting Plat. *Rep*. 1.352d. Williams notes Socrates role in the narrative, "It is not a trivial question, Socrates said: what we are talking about is how one should live…" Williams adds his own comment: "almost all books, come to that, which are any good and which are concerned with human life at all."

moral experience."[7] For Zigon and Zhenzhao, ethics is a contemplative process, and in all our definitions of ethics there has been agreement that *ethics* implies a *method* of moral reasoning. Literature provides a low-stakes environment where we can question the comfort of our moral habitus and explore matters of the spiritual life and our own self-perfection.

Moreover, if we reduce ethics merely to "a set of laws or commands sanctioned by the promised punishments or rewards of God," we limit ourselves to the *whats* and absolve ourselves of the burden of logically applying ethical theories to moral dilemmas; we no longer ask the *whys,* and we cease to engage in moral reasoning.[8] Indeed, Bernard Williams argues, "A less crude religious ethics will not add the religious element merely as an external sanction but will give an account of human nature that provides equally for ethical objectives and for a relation to God."[9] As we engage John's narratives of the footwashing and Farewell Discourse, we are not limiting ourselves to an inquiry of proper moral behavior. Rather, we are reflecting on an account of human nature that provides equally for ethical objectives and for our relationship with God. We are fully immersed in what it means to engage in moral reasoning.[10]

The reflective and imaginative aspect of narrative – which includes the role of envisaging outcomes in making moral decisions – is recognized in biblical studies, and Jan G. van der Watt's *Grammar* offers a chapter specific to the ethics of John's narrative.[11] Similarly to works of fiction, John's Gospel creates a *narrative world*, with its own significance and agenda.[12] John's narratives stand out when compared to the Synoptics. Richard Bauckham observes that they are longer, more reflective, and contain "significant indications of the meaning of the event recounted."[13] Alan Culpepper adds, "The narrator's

---

[7] Zhenzhao, "Ethical Literary Criticism," 88; Zhenzhao goes so far to claim that the aesthetic value of literature is fully realized only when it works together with ethics.
[8] Williams, *Ethics*, 32.
[9] Williams, *Ethics*, 32–33.
[10] Neurobiologically, our decision making is a cognitive imagining of future outcomes, see Timothy D. Wilson and Daniel T. Gilbert, "Affective Forecasting: Knowing What to Want," *Curr. Dir. Psychol. Sci.* 14.3 (2005): 131–134. Functionally this cognitive imagination resembles the ways we form and recall memories, and we are in effect "remembering the future"; see Sinéad L Mullally and Eleanor A. Maguire, "Memory, imagination, and predicting the future: A common brain mechanism?" *Neuroscientist* 20.3 (2014): 220–234. But akin to moral dumbfounding, our predictions frequently fail; see Timothy D. Wilson and Daniel T. Gilbert, "The impact bias is alive and well," *J Pers Soc Psychol* 105.5 (2013): 740–748.
[11] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 69.
[12] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 75–78.
[13] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 74. Richard J. Bauckham, "Did Jesus Wash His Disciples' Feet?" in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* (eds. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 411–30.

claims and the norms of the story woo, beckon, and challenge the reader to believe that the story, its narrative world, and its central character reveal something profoundly true about the 'real' world in which the reader lives."[14] The Gospel of John, like other narrative literature, operates in its own narrative world and asserts truth claims about the world in which we live. And in doing so it makes certain assumptions about the world that may or may not be shared by its readers. With these considerations on narrative ethics in general and in John, we will next consider John's use of the *logos* in the Gospel's prologue.

2.1.1 Logos *and* Mythos *in John's Prologue*

This section will argue that one aspect of John's use of *logos* is that it both reflects and responds to the wider Greek philosophical understanding that associated the word *logos* with reason and empiricism. Greek philosophy was concerned to describe the universe in terms of a natural cosmology, in opposition to *mythos*, that is the stories of the gods. However, as will be demonstrated through a look at Plato's *Republic*, the use of story to communicate complex philosophic ideas was never abandoned. And John's use of *logos* serves to describe the incarnation as rational and empirical, explicating this throughout the ensuing narrative, which includes the love command and Farewell Discourse.

The 7th century BCE was characterized by an enlightenment similar to the European enlightenment of the 17th century that opposed unilateral authorities, such as religion.[15] Gordon Clark tells us, "Greek philosophy began on May 28, 585 B.C. at six-thirteen in the evening" when Thales of Miletus predicted an eclipse.[16] The birth of philosophy was seen as the birth of *logos*, a distinct view of the world in which natural events had natural causes, and these events could be described propositionally without reference to the gods or a divine order.[17] The *logos* stood in contrast to *mythos*, the old way of truth telling through the traditional narratives of gods and men. Like the later European enlightenment, the world began to be a little less "enchanted" and a little more "natural." A short time after Thales, Heraclitus (c. 540-480 BCE) denied the fundamental assumptions of *mythos* by rejecting the

---

[14] R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1987), 4.
[15] Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 69.
[16] Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey: A History of Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 3.
[17] Donald Palmer, *Looking at Philosophy: The Unbearable Heaviness of Philosophy Made Lighter,* 4th ed. (New York, McGraw–Hill, 2006), 2.

divine nature of the universe: "this *kosmos* … which has not been made by either gods nor men but was and is and ever shall be an eternal fire."[18] As G. S. Kirk says of Heraclitus, "the crucial objective was to name, and explain the working of, a central *directive* constituent in nature. He called it '*logos*,' meaning something like 'proportion' or 'measure', and it is in many respects identical with fire itself."[19] Heraclitus's contribution to the philosophical tradition was to conceive of a natural κόσμος (*kosmos*) governed by a natural λόγος (*logos*) unadulterated by superstition.

Since Plato's time (c. 428-348 BCE) *mythos* (μῦθος) had gradually taken on the character of denoting stories that were untrue, often in reference to stories of the gods, while *logos* (λόγος) became more commonly associated with faculties of reason.[20] Plato's student, Aristotle (c. 384-22 BCE) went on to write the *Nichomachean Ethics* and established a basis for ethical living grounded in reason and without reference to the gods. In his *Poetics* Aristotle made a literary distinction between *mythos* and *logos*. "For Aristotle, the imitation of actions in the real world, *praxis*, was seen as forming an argument, *logos*, from which were selected (and possibly rearranged) the units that formed the plot*, mythos*."[21] Following Aristotle, Zeno of Citium (c. 335-263 BCE) founded the Stoic school of philosophy. Robert Kysar in his commentary on John notes the prevalent Stoic notion in which the *logos* became akin to the laws of nature as "a sort of cosmic reason" or "the mind at the center of the universe."[22]

The Gospel of John opens with the words "in the beginning there was the *logos*," and goes on to identify this *logos* with the person of Jesus. While there are many possible interpretations of this phrase, it is likely that Greek readers attuned to their wider philosophical environment, would typically take this *logos* to be the embodiment of nature and reason, and as standing in opposition to the divine. Yet remarkably John's Gospel is resolved to emphasize the *logos*'s divine character; the *logos* is with God and is God. John's

---

[18] κόσμον τόνδε ... οὔτε τις θεῶν οὐτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ' ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται πῦρ ἀείζωον. Brooks Haxton, *Fragments: The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus* (ed. and trans, Brooks Haxton; New York: Penguin, 2001), 14–15. Haxton lists this as fragment 20 and I have modified the translation for emphasis and to maintain literalism.
[19] Kirk, *Greek Myths*, 298.
[20] Robert L. Fowler, "Mythos and Logos," *JHS* 131 (2011): 45–66.
[21] S. B. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 19.
[22] Robert Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 29–30.

Gospel invites 1st century readers to see the reunion of the *logos* with the divine. The Gospel's opening verse casts a wide net and challenges the reader to reassess the old distinctions between *mythos* and *logos*, and John's introduction of Jesus as *logos* makes the assertion that the following stories (*mythos*) are true.

2.1.2 *Storytelling, The Republic, and John's Gospel*

As noted previously, Johannine scholars have been skeptical of finding explicit ethical content in John's Gospel on the grounds that the Gospel has few commands and does not conform to the recognized genres of ethical treatises in the classical period.[23] But this insistence upon conformity to certain literary forms does not seem to have been recognized by the classical authors. Plato's dialogues, for example, establish settings that locate the argument's systematic analysis within narrative contexts. And the *Republic* begins with the words, "I went down yesterday to the Peiraeus."[24] Geoffrey Bakewell observes that the topographical framing of the journey is significantly linked to the philosophical content of the book.[25] The astute reader may also recall that the Peiraeus was captured by the Spartans in the Peloponnesian war and a number of those present in the dialogue were killed by the Spartan regime. Plato thus employs a technique common to the *mythos* of storytelling, the use of oblique references to enrich the content of the text.[26] John's Gospel has much the same flow as Plato's dialogues; the dialogue is accompanied by a narrative which affords a context for the discussion. And John's Gospel makes frequent reference to Jewish customs and rituals, sometimes in passing, that enrich the content of the narrative. Moreover, much like the Peiraeus in Plato's *Republic*, which had since been captured by Spartan tyrants, the socio-political climate described in John's Gospel had irrevocably changed by the time of its publication, with the Jerusalem temple, which centers much of the narrative, no longer there.

The distinction between *mythos* and *logos* was not simply one of superior vs. inferior generic forms, but whether truth could be apprehended without reliance upon the gods.

---

[23] Meeks, "Ethics," *passim*; this point has already been made and need not be stressed further.

[24] Plat. *Rep*. 1.327a "κατέβην χθὲς εἰς Πειραιᾶ"

[25] Geoffrey Bakewell, "'I Went Down to Piraeus Yesterday': Routes, Roads, and Plato's *Republic*," *Hesperia* 89.4 (2020): 725–55.

[26] Debra Nails notes the *dramatic date* of the *Republic* as Plato blends past and present through narration. Debra Nails, "The Dramatic Date of Plato's *Republic*," *CJ* 93.4 (1998): 383–396. For John's use of narrative time see Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 51–76. Further, this leads to a consideration of the differences between the actual author and the narrative author, the audience of the story vs. the intended readers etc., all of which are addressed in detail in Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*.

Logocentric philosophy relied on reason and investigation *alone.* Yet it is evident that the stories used were capable of complex philosophical speculation. G. S. Kirk remarks that "philosophy has no monopoly of either rationality or speculative interest. Myths were subjected to careful arrangement and organization even by the time of Homer and Hesiod, and in a way which already reduced human experience to a kind of system."[27] Plato's *Republic* is an explicitly ethical treatise on the nature of justice, yet it begins with a narrative setting and includes the allegory of the cave and the story of the "Ring of Gyges." Narrative tropes govern the argument of the *Republic* throughout, and then Plato reconfirms the value of narrative for moral pedagogy by concluding the *Republic* with the "Myth of Er."

In summary, at no point was narrative rejected as a proper medium for ethical instruction. Rather, what is rejected in our examples of Greek logocentric philosophy is the attribution of truth to supernatural origins rather than natural causes. Even Aristotle asserts the value of narrative for pedagogy in the *Poetics* where we find the famous adage, "art imitates life." He points to *imitation* as a key function of storytelling, and it is through imitation that, as children, we learn our first lessons.[28] John's Gospel unites the *logos* with the divine in the prologue, to assert the divine *logos* as *reasonable*. The *logos* is united with the human as an *empirical* validation through signs and witnesses. The Gospel uses the techniques of *logos* to prove the continued relevance of the divine and to re-enchant the cosmic order. John's Gospel often depicts unbelief as ignorance remedied by facts and evidence. But the Gospel also depicts unbelief as sin, as Jesus's opponents are said to be "unbelieving" even after having seen the evidence.[29] In this sense John depicts unbelief as a willful choice to ignore the rational. From a logocentric perspective, John's Gospel portrays belief in Jesus as a rational choice; as *logos* Jesus is the embodiment of reason, and this is evident throughout the entire narrative.

2.2 *Cognitive Environments of "Jew-ish" Texts*

> There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes "What the hell is water?"[30]

---

[27] Kirk, *Greek Myths*, 300.
[28] Aristot. *Poet.* 1448b.
[29] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 141.
[30] David Foster Wallace, "This Is Water," (Kenyon College Commencement Address, Gambier, Ohio, May 21, 2005).

David Foster Wallace began his Kenyon College commencement with this story to point out that the most obvious realities are sometimes the hardest to see. We addressed this point in the last chapter when we discussed moral development and methods of moral reasoning. Most of us are unaware of *why* we believe what we believe about morality, as it has been bequeathed to us through our upbringing. Matters are further complicated in that our own understanding and outlook is not the only one. All cultures are pluralistic, and so we are compelled to approach John's Gospel mindful of the pluralism inherent to its own wider context and culture. We have just considered an aspect of John's moral universe through the eyes of Greek *logos* traditions, and below we shall consider its moral universe in terms of Jewish wisdom traditions. But first we take up certain broader matters regarding the "cognitive environment" of the Gospel of John that may have inspired John's text and influenced its interpretation. This involves consideration of three main features: what John Walton terms the ontological relationship between formal concepts and their function; Mircea Eliade's concept of divine presence in "*axis mundi*"; and Russell McCutcheon's argument that *religion* in the 1st century CE did not exist *sui generis*.

John Walton stresses the hermeneutical importance of what he calls our *cognitive environments*. For example, he reminds the reader that Israel's Scriptures were heavily influenced by their ancient Near Eastern cultural context: "Israelite literature reflects the broad ancient stream of culture from which it was watered in the course of centuries or even millennia," and he notes that much of this cultural influence "had become a 'native' way of thinking."[31] Consequently, aspects of the cognitive environment may be "assumed" by the authors and editors of our texts and often only hinted at in oblique literary trails.[32]

Walton sees the ANE cognitive environment operative, for example, in the unity of form and function as key to understanding the cosmology of the creation account. He draws attention to the Hebrew text's use of metonymy (substituting a word to imply additional characteristics) to express the functional properties of textual elements as ontologically inseparable from their forms. Walton's initial example is God's designation of "light" as "day" (Gen 1:5). By calling the light "day" we understand through this metonym that the

[31] Walton, *Genesis 1*, 13.
[32] Walton, *Genesis 1*, 2; Kirk, *Greek Myths,* 14.

subject of the text is not restricted to light and day as "plain facts," but directs the reader's attention to the function of "day" as marking the passage of time.[33] Walton states that Genesis 1 is not, "an account of material origins but that, as in the rest of the ancient world, the focus of the creation accounts was to order the cosmos by initiating functions."[34] John's own use of metonyms is widely recognized and Lindsey Trozzo devotes a chapter of her book on John's use of metalepsis to break down the barrier between the narrative world and the world of the audience.[35]

The unity of form and function is an ubiquitous claim made repeatedly throughout history and applied to a diversity of disciplines. For example, in our earlier discussion of *law* we observed an analogous ontology in that commands have no *inherent* moral value, except as their value is derived from an ethical theory, or their function to order society. Walton has been criticized for emphasizing function to the neglect of form.[36] But notwithstanding such criticism, the unity of form and function remain directly applicable to a study of Johannine ethics because the Greco-Roman ethics of the 1st century were dominated by theories of virtue ethics. Moral acts were considered moral, not in themselves, and neither for their outcomes, but only in so much as they were performed by moral agents.[37] As we consider the ethics of John as explicated by the love command and exemplified by the footwashing, the focus of the passage is on cultivation of moral character. Good deeds and fruit can only be birthed by good trees and moral agents.

A second feature of the Near Eastern cognitive environment to be considered is the presence of *axis mundi*. In Mircea Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion* the term denotes the sacred places where one goes to meet the gods. It is the "central point" where heaven and earth meet, and it is only at this center where one can break through and traverse from one cosmic region to the next.[38] The sacred "tree of life" or "cosmic tree" is found in many cultures and is a symbolic axis.[39] Walton is not alone in associating the cosmic imagery

---

[33] Walton, *Genesis 1*, vii.
[34] Walton, *Genesis 1*, ix.
[35] Trozzo, *Johannine Ethics*, 101.
[36] See Nathan Mastnjak and Dennis Pardee, "Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology" (review of John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*), *JTS* 66.1 (2015): 283–87; Jacques Doukhan, "Review of John H. Walton's *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*" (review of John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as ancient cosmology*), *AUSS* 51.1 (2013): 83–8.
[37] Seregin, "Intentionalism and Deontology," 35.
[38] Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (trans. Rosemary Sheed; New York: Meridian, 1958), 111.
[39] Eliade, *Comparative Religion*, 3.

of Genesis 1 with Israelite temple worship.[40] The decorations of the tabernacle and the temple are replete with garden imagery that presents them as re-creations of the primordial garden, and as *axis mundi*.[41] The garden as *axis mundi* may be what is on display in John 15 where Jesus portrays Himself as the True Vine.

Walton's ontology of form and function figures prominently as the Gospel of John describes the incarnation in terms of *axis mundi*. Jesus "tabernacled" among us (ἐσκήνωσεν) and we beheld his glory (1:14). Jesus also associates Himself with another *axis mundi*, Jacob's Bethel stone (1:51).[42] And his claim to be the "way" (14:6) assumes additional nuance if He is seen as the "ladder" which intersects between heaven and earth. Moreover, Jesus's promise of *another* comforter (14:16), implies the continuation of his ministry, granting believers continued access to the sacred center, even in the absence of Jesus's physical presence.[43] The abiding presence of the Holy Spirit fulfils Jesus's claim to the Samaritan woman of a time when God need not be worshipped on the mountain, but can be worshipped in spirit and in truth (4:21-24).

A third consideration is the character of religion and whether it can be defined as *sui generis*.[44] Russell McCutcheon has argued that the term "religion" is a scholarly invention and ought to be discarded.[45] Kurt Noll, for example, acknowledges that if you were to ask Canaanite peoples to describe their "religion" they would be dumbfounded as there was no equivalent term in their languages.[46] The point is that religious life was woven into the fabric of a complex social, cultural, political, and economic network, and was not envisioned as a distinct entity. This continued to be the case for religious observance across the Mediterranean through and beyond the 1st century.

Religion as an inseparable part of community life combines what has already been said regarding Walton's unity of form and function and *axis mundi*: neither the "religion" or

---

[40] Walton, *Genesis 1*, 4.
[41] Daniel T. Lioy, "The Garden of Eden as a Primordial Temple or Sacred Space for Humankind," *Conspec.* 10.1 (2010): 25–57; this article is just one example of what is largely a consensus among biblical scholars.
[42] Eliade, *Comparative Religion*, 231.
[43] Keener, *John*, 964–6.
[44] *Sui generis,* lit. "of its own kind" refers to something that can be discretely identified.
[45] Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[46] Kurt L. Noll, "Canaanite Religion," *Relig. Compass* 1.1 (2007): 61–92.

the "community" are things in themselves, but function to instantiate the divine in daily life. In Israel, this instantiation finds its locus in the reality of its own redemptive history.[47] The Israelite rituals of covenant renewal are not simple matters of annual remembrance, but instances of their own history as "perpetually being reenacted."[48] The covenant was not made only with the ancestors, but with every Jew directly. It is possible that the frequent critique of "the Jews" throughout the canonical Gospels – not least the Gospel of John – and Acts, is not directed to the *Jewish* community so much as it is directed toward the Jewish *community* which fails to reflect the character of the divine in its daily life. Moreover, being mindful of the *reflective* nature of ethics in literature, John's critique may also be directed to the 1st century Christian *communities,* as a reminder of their obligation to reflect God's living presence. The themes of form and function, *axis mundi*, and religion in community will figure prominently in the following chapters, but they are also echoed in the following discussion of John's use of the Jewish wisdom traditions.

2.2.1 Logos *as Wisdom in John's Moral Universe*

We have already begun to explore the nature of John's moral universe through the Greek *logos* tradition and aspects of the near eastern cognitive environment. We will now consider some of the Jewish traditions that describe wisdom along much the same lines as the Greeks described the *logos*. Significantly, however, unlike the Greek *logos*, in these traditions Wisdom was never separated from the divine, but is rather personified, "so that it seems to be a hypostasis of God," stopping "just short of giving it separate existence."[49] Here I first consider three particular strands of wisdom: its identification with Torah, existence prior to creation, and its rejection by the world. Then follows a brief analysis of the wisdom tradition as displayed in Ecclesiastes and Job.

In the MT, the word "wisdom" translates the Hebrew "חָכַם." It's base meaning, to be wise or act wisely, is applied to a wide range of contexts that include but are not limited to skill and craftmanship, secular governing, prudence and discernment, and leadership in battle. It is also noteworthy that "The wisdom literature … majors on ethical and spiritual

[47] Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape: Nature and religion in early Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8.
[48] Keener, *John,* 967.
[49] Louis Goldberg, "חָכַם," *TWOT*, 282–4.

conduct."[50] Yet, considering its broad range of application, Wisdom does not appear to be restricted to moral discernment, but is a necessary component for success in just about every area of life. Indeed, 'wisdom' generally appears to be a soteriological category, a circumlocution for God's wise and saving activity in the world through the communication of revelatory saving wisdom to people."[51] And this point leads us to a question this thesis hopes to answer: if Jesus personifies Wisdom, how is He engaged in work that is *presently* salvific, not just eschatologically? This discussion of Wisdom and its salvific moral character aims to establish an ethic that is not simply *prescriptive* but is presently *redemptive*.

2.2.2 *Three Strands of the Wisdom Tradition*

William Loader notes three distinct strands within the Wisdom tradition.[52] First, Wisdom is identified with Torah. So, for example, the salvific efficacy of Torah is prominent in Psalm 1, as the righteous one who meditates on the law is sustained like a tree planted by streams of water.[53] The Wisdom/Torah tradition is associated with Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and John. Matthew 11:28 finds a parallel with Sirach 51:26 which reads, "Take her yoke upon your neck; that your mind may receive her teaching. For she is close to those who seek her, and the one who is in earnest finds her."[54] And John 1:16-17 also alludes to the Torah tradition: "For of his fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (NASB). Jesus and the law are here both described as gifts of God's redeeming grace, and Thompson understands this verse to indicate the abounding nature of that grace.[55]

Of the more familiar depictions of Wisdom, there is Lady Wisdom who stands in contrast to Dame Folly in the opening chapters of Proverbs. Applicable here is the second strand of the wisdom tradition noted by Loader: Wisdom is preexistent to creation, present with God as a participant in creation, and sustains the created order. In Prov 8 Lady Wisdom states she was established from eternity (v.23) and stood by God at the creation of the world

---

[50] Goldberg, *TWOT*, 282–3.
[51] F.W. Burnett and C. Bennema, "Wisdom," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin; Downers Grove: IVP, 2013), 996.
[52] Loader, "Wisdom and Logos," 303–334.
[53] In her commentary on the Gospel of John, Marianne Thompson notes many traditions commonly associated with the *logos* that include the *Memra* of the Aramaic Targums and various uses for the "word of the Lord." Thompson, *John,* 37.
[54] Loader, "Wisdom and Logos," 310–11.
[55] Thompson, *John*, 35. Regarding the preposition ἀντὶ, Thompson states, "It is in the Word made flesh that there is 'grace in place of grace,' 'one grace after another,' or 'grace abounding.'"

as a craftsman (v.30). Like Wisdom, in John 1:2-3 Jesus pre-exists the created order and has his hand in its creation. Prov 8:12 also parallels John 1:14 where tabernacle imagery is applied to Wisdom who dwells/pitches her tent.[56] The imagery applied to both Jesus and Wisdom hint of God's abiding glory in the wilderness tabernacle and Wisdom as a manifestation of that glory.[57]

The presence of Dame Folly as an antagonist to Lady Wisdom informs us that the world, at least in part, does not exactly cohere with the designs of its creator. A third strand of the Wisdom tradition identified by Loader involves Wisdom's rejection by the world, an indication of a broken cosmic order. 1 Enoch 42:1-2 depicts Wisdom as going forth to dwell among the sons of men but can find no place to stay.[58] John's prologue prefaces the incarnation by alerting the reader that the darkness is unable to receive the light (John 1:5), the world (*kosmos*) which He created does not recognize Him (John 1:10), and the cross is already implied in 1:11 when even his own [people] did not receive Him.[59] John's *kosmos* was created by the *Logos*/Wisdom and ostensibly has God's moral Wisdom as its foundation. The world ought to be characterized by God's justice, yet, the world rejects its own moral foundation, and the prologue introduces the reader to a world of conflict.

The conflict is reinforced and given a moral character through the recurring theme of light and darkness (John 1:4-9, esp. v.5), a metaphor ubiquitously found throughout the world and hardly unique to the Judeo-Christian tradition. *Theomachy* is the war-like struggle among cosmic deities frequently present in ancient Near Eastern texts, and Walton notes that its vestiges are found throughout the poetic and wisdom literature.[60] The moral struggle is a cosmic struggle, and examples are readily available in Prov 4:18-19 and Eccl 2:13, where darkness is associated with wickedness and light with righteousness. In the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., 1QM; 4QWar Scroll) the "sons of light" and "sons of darkness" are locked in apocalyptic conflict. When John's Gospel returns to the passion narrative, darkness will still

---

[56] LXX κατεσκήνωσα; MT שָׁכְנָ֥תִי; John 1:14 ἐσκήνωσεν.
[57] Reynolds, "Logos," 526. "Affinities also exist with the wisdom traditions found particularly in Proverbs 3 and 8; Sirach 24; Wisdom of Solomon 7—9, specifically wisdom's tabernacling, glory and role in creation." Reynolds also notes that in Wis. 9:1–2 *logos* and Wisdom are spoken of in parallel, and like the Johannine *Logos*, the *logos* of God is referred to by Philo as God's "firstborn." Reynolds, "Logos," 523–26.
[58] Loader, "Wisdom and Logos," 304.
[59] κατέλαβεν is variously translated as "overcome," "seize," and "comprehend," but John frequently prefers variations of λαμβάνω, "to receive."
[60] Walton, *Genesis 1*, 5.

be there (cf. John 1:5 and 13:30), indicating that John is framed by and narrates a cosmic battle. When we return to our discussion of the Farewell Discourse and the footwashing, we will consider the implications of theomachy on the text's ethical reasoning.

2.2.3 *The Wisdom Tradition in Ecclesiastes and Job*

Proverbs 8 is commonly cited as a clear parallel (along with Gen 1) to John's prologue. However, as noted by Walton and Kirk, and demonstrated in our discussion of Plato's *Republic*, a powerful feature of narrative is to insinuate broader contexts through oblique allusions. John's depiction of Jesus as wisdom may well intend to evoke aspects of the wisdom *tradition* not limited to specific literary citations. Therefore, I want to briefly consider the character of the moral universe depicted in various features of the wisdom tradition evident in Ecclesiastes and Job, which are of additional interest for our later analysis of Jesus's love command in the Farewell Discourse of John. My preference to address Ecclesiastes and Job lies in what seems to be the main thrust of Wisdom literature: the difficult search for wisdom in a world where God *seems* absent. The lofty depictions of Wisdom's exalted (divine) status and role in creation found in Proverbs 8, Sirach 24, and elsewhere remind the community that this search is not futile.

If theomachic motifs suggest a world in conflict with God, Ecclesiastes and Job portray a world similar to 1 Enoch in which God is *seemingly* absent. The sayings of Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes) declare that everything is *hevel*, a vapor, a chasing after the wind.[61] Qoheleth empirically demonstrates that all of life is meaningless in what most scholars consider to be a pessimistic, or even hopeless perspective, and only a minority of scholars see the book as an affirmation of joy.[62] Qoheleth even concludes that, though wisdom is better than folly, both the wise and the foolish share the same fate, and wisdom brings no advantage to the wise (2:12-17).

For many, the book's epilogue with its concluding admonition to "fear God and keep His commandments," (NASB) is seen as *the* key to understanding the book.[63] But Stephan Brown argues that the theological core of the book is wrapped in a chiasm at 7:25-29. The "woman" of v. 28 which Qoheleth has not found is analogous to the "answer" of vv. 27-28

[61] Victor P. Hamilton, "הֶבֶל," *TWOT*, 204–5.
[62] Craig G. Bartholomew, "Ecclesiastes," in *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008) 179–85.
[63] Bartholomew, "Ecclesiastes," 183.

which Qoheleth also seeks but cannot find.[64] Indeed, there is an uncanny resemblance to Gen 2:18-20 as Qoheleth, like Adam, cannot find a suitable woman in all of creation.[65] Nothing adds up; yet even as all of life is *hevel*, we have the frequent calls to enjoy "all the days of your fleeting life … for this is your reward" (9:9).

These entreaties to enjoy life seem facetious, but eastern readers tend to approach Ecclesiastes with a more cheerful nihilism. It is *because* the particulars of life are meaningless that we can relinquish our attachments to the things of the world and enjoy the present moment. Mindful contemplation and enjoyment of the present moment is the key to happiness because this moment is all we have.[66] Qoheleth may be seen as standing within the contemplative tradition.[67] Here mindfulness means "Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally."[68] Qoheleth calls us to bring meaning to our lives through contemplation of every passing moment, not because it is all we have, but because it is a gift that has been given to us by God.

John's Gospel may well be drawing from the wisdom tradition of Ecclesiastes when Jesus remarks that "The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will have eternal life."[69] Qoheleth's inability to find an answer has led him to "hate life" (Eccl 2:17), and to "hate his labor" (Eccl 2:18).[70] John's use of μισῶν may be reflecting the LXX use of ἐμίσησα. Moreover, Jesus's call to serve Him then recalls the *key* to Ecclesiastes, to "fear God and keep His commandments." The call to hate one's life would seem absurd, but against the assumption that the world is *hevel*, this call loses its absurdity. The nature of this world is transient, and the only thing of permanence is God.

In Job the world is not only meaningless but is clearly unjust. Job is blameless and upright; and, like Jesus, he is demonstrably undeserving of the disaster to follow. Moreover,

---

[64] Stephen G. Brown, "The Woman as a Metaphorical and Epistemological Paradigm in Ecclesiastes 7:25–29," *Evangelical Theological Society* (1998): 1–21. This paper has been acquired directly from the author and was presented at an Evangelical Theological Society conference.
[65] Commentators note language that explicitly recalls Adam in the opening chapters of Genesis. See T. Longman, *The Book of Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 205–7, and C. L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 272–6.
[66] See S. Lorgunpai, "The Books of Ecclesiastes and Thai Buddhism," *AJT* 8 (1994): 155–62.
[67] The traditional attribution of Qoheleth to Solomon would also make possible such a contemplative reading.
[68] Jon Kabat–Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 4.
[69] John 12:25, ὁ φιλῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπολλύει αὐτήν, καὶ ὁ μισῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον φυλάξει αὐτήν.
[70] Eccl 2:17 LXX, "καὶ ἐμίσησα σὺν τὴν ζωήν"; Eccl 2:18. "καὶ ἐμίσησα ἐγὼ σύμπαντα μόχθον μου."

Job's righteousness, again like Jesus, is essential to the argument of the book.[71] And ironically, it is his righteousness that allows him to be so relatable, for we have all experienced suffering that appeared meaningless and undeserved. It is in Job's suffering, that he becomes an "Everyman, grieving for all of human misery."[72] Jesus, in his final discourse in the Gospel of John, proclaims that faith in Him is the remedy for a broken cosmic order and brings comfort to a suffering world (John 1:4-5,9-10; 17:3, 13; cf. Rom 7:24-25).

Yet for Job the *kosmos* is a bleak place. Even his friends attack him, claiming that the *kosmos* is just, and that Job must have done something to deserve his suffering. As noted earlier in relation to modern research conducted by Carolyn L. Hafer et al. on "just world" beliefs, "when the belief in a just world is threatened … seemingly well-adjusted individuals committed to working toward the future and earning their rewards—may be the ones who most readily blame innocent victims for their fate or otherwise justify innocent suffering."[73] As Job's friends become his accusers, we also find parallels in the Farewell Discourse where Jesus indicates to the disciples that they will be killed and cast out by those who believe they are doing a service to God (John 15:20; 16:2).

The presence of the Satan as an adversary in both Job and the Farewell Discourse offers further support for reading Jesus's discourse in the context of theomachy.[74] Satan's bargain with God in the introduction to Job is followed with an abundant use of quasi-juridical rhetoric throughout the book.[75] Job is constantly faced with God's apparent silence in an unjust world.[76] And his recurring petition to God is for an advocate that can mediate between them (9:33; 16:19; 19:25). Legal rhetoric is also taken up repeatedly in John; for example, in pronouncements of judgment (12:31, 16:8-11), and in the *paraclete* (14:16), a term which can denote an unofficial courtroom advocate, and who counters the adversarial role of Satan.[77]

---

[71] Francis I. Anderson, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1976), 79.
[72] Stephen Mitchell, *The Book of Job* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), xvi.
[73] Hafer et al., "Belief in a Just World," *passim*.
[74] Elaine Pagels, ''The Origin of Satan in the Christian Tradition,'' *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 20 (1997): 1–18.
[75] Anderson, *Job*, 33.
[76] Jean–Pierre Fortin, "Lament of a Wounded Priest: The Spiritual Journey of Job," *Religions* 9.12 (2018): 1–14.
[77] J. Behm, "paráklētos," *TDNT*, 782–4.

An answer to Job's ongoing petition is found in Jesus's call to serve (John 12:26). Though many regard God's response to Job in the book's final chapters as a form of rebuke, it is in fact an answer to Job's plea for comfort in his time of suffering. The book concludes with God condescending to speak to Job, affirming for the reader that God is not oblivious to or unconcerned about the sufferings of mankind. As Andrew R. Prideaux remarks, "More than anything else, Job yearned to hear the voice of his Maker, to be assured by him that God was for and not against his world, including his creature Job."[78] The call to serve, as a righteous Job does in the midst of his suffering, is also a promise to be with Jesus, whose death, resurrection, and sending of another paraclete (John 14:16), ultimately addresses Job's plight and that of an afflicted world.

As we proceed to discuss the Gospel of John directly, the full weight of the wisdom tradition comes to bear. Famously David Hume challenged teleological proofs for God's existence by reasoning that our arguably imperfect world only proves the existence of an imperfect God.[79] The wisdom tradition anticipates and addresses Hume's critique by acknowledging both our imperfect world *and* God's perfect existence. Indeed, the Proverbs assert that God's flawless character can actually be inferred from our recognition of this world's faults.[80] The Bible's Wisdom literature assumes Hume could not have hypothesized an imperfect designer or an imperfect universe if God's perfect design had not already been written in his heart.[81] Like Hume, Qoheleth despairs of *empirically* finding Wisdom in the universe. Against this backdrop Jesus's words in John 12:25 make sense of Qohelth's claim that all is *hevel*; eternal life cannot be found in the things of the world – understood as that which stands in opposition to the purposes of God – and if one wishes to find Wisdom, one must hate the "life" offered by such a *kosmos*. As the incarnation of the *Logos*/Wisdom,

---

[78] Andrew R. Prideaux, "Jesus, Job, and the Suffering Image of God," in *Honoring the Wise: Wisdom in Scripture, Ministry, and Life: Celebrating Lindsay Wilson's Thirty Years at Ridley,* Australian College of Theology Monograph Series (ed. Jill Firth and Paul A. Barker; Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2022), 202–28, 210.
[79] Bell, *David Hume*, 79.
[80] Though not addressing the Proverbs, this is the thrust of Descartes' argument for the existence of a perfect God. Christopher Biffle, *A Guided Tour of Rene' Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy,* 2nd ed. (trans. Ronald Rubin; Mountain View: Mayfield Pub, 1996), 58–61.
[81] Eccl 3:11, "He has also set eternity in their heart" (NASB)

Jesus's offer of eternal life even here and now is a remedy for Job's alienation in which one has eternal life in his presence.[82]

2.3 *John 12 as Prelude to Transfiguration*

In this section I will argue that John 12, which concludes the public ministry of Jesus which began right after the prologue and is recounted over the first half of John's narrative, prepares the reader for the immediately ensuing footwashing episode in John 13, which may be seen as John's unique transfiguration account intended to recapitulate the full glory of Jesus's earthly ministry. Alicia Myers acknowledges a hinge structure of various chain-links that begin in John 11 and continue through chapter 13:30.[83] In the Book of Signs (chapters 1-12), Jesus's "hour" is spoken of as a still in the future (e.g., John 2:4), though the signs reveal his glory (John 2:11). In John 12, within the transitional hinge, some Greeks request to see Jesus, and he responds by saying, "The hour is come for the Son of Man to be glorified."[84] Jesus then begins a dialogue at 12:24 that foreshadows the cross as a form of glorification. Jesus also prays to the Father "Glorify Your Name," and the prayer is answered by a voice from heaven: "I have glorified it and will glorify it again (12:28).[85] And here we are left with an enigma. In what way is Jesus's glory now being revealed?

The NT word translated "glory" is *doxa*, and originally had a meaning closer to "see" or "appraise." In the NT the word has secular and religious uses. As a secular word *doxa* conveys the meaning of honor, distinction, and reputation, and its verb form, *doxazo*, retains the meanings of *dokeo* (to "think, admit, claim") but also includes "honor, exalt, praise." In its religious usage, *doxa* preserves its LXX usage, translating the Hebrew *kabôd* to indicate God's presence. It retains a semblance of its meaning "see" and conveys luminescence, or a glory that is perceptibly evident. This sense is carried in Luke 9:32 ("and they saw his glory") with reference to the transfiguration.[86] "In John's Gospel, however, Christ' glory is exclusively a present reality in that John insists that the divine glory is present in Jesus's incarnation, ministry and death."[87] Indeed, Keener suggests that John's omission of an overt

---

[82] John 12:25–6. Mary Coloe observes the qualitative function of ζωὴν αἰώνιον and prefers to translate the phrase as "eternity life" throughout her commentary, Mary L. Coloe, *John 1–10* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2021), xlviii.

[83] Myers, *Reading John*, 150.

[84] John 12:23 ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

[85] John 12:28, πάτερ, δόξασόν σου τὸ ὄνομα ... καὶ ἐδόξασα καὶ πάλιν δοξάσω.

[86] Luke 9:32, δὲ εἶδον τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ; C. Spicq, "δόξα, δοξάζω, συνδοξάζω," *TLNT* 1:362–379.

[87] Dennis, "Glory," *DJG* 314.

transfiguration narrative is because Jesus's entire ministry function as such (John 1:14).[88] However, as with the concept of "good," a concept of glory that encompasses all of Jesus's ministry is arguably too amorphous to be defined. Indeed, it is a concern of this thesis that amorphous understandings of key concepts such a love and glory make it possible for Luther and Putin to claim that killing is an act of love. Perhaps, then, John has something more specific in mind when he states in 1:14, "and we saw his glory."[89]

John's use of the term "hour" (12:23) indicates that a unique display of glory is on the immediate horizon. And Jesus's declaration that judgment has come upon the world and the prince of the world has been cast out (12:31) signals the language of theomachy. The Greek secular understanding of "glory" associated it with honor arising from great deeds and heroism, such as prowess on the battlefield and the defeat of one's enemies.[90] If, with Myers, we regard John's Gospel as an encomiastic biography,[91] we must regard its hero's character as an exemplar to follow. With the arrival of "the hour" (12:23), the scene positions itself on the cusp of battle and the reader is called to attend to Jesus's actions more closely from this point forward.

In a Jewish context the element of theomachy coupled with the instantiation of the God's Glory, imply a divine invasion from the heavenly realm. But the theme of war is not the only motif present; the judgment of the prince of this world (12:31) has a forensic quality. Andrew Lincoln points to the disputations of Isaiah 40-55 as providing the resources for John's narrative.[92] Additionally, Craig Evans sees the servant songs evoked in the heavenly utterance of John 12:28, especially Isaiah 52:13 where the Servant is lifted up and greatly exalted, and Isaiah 52:6 with its reference to the Name of the Lord.[93] For Adam Day, the idea that God's Glory is embodied in Jesus's role as the Isaianic Servant is evident throughout John's narrative, and there is a concentration of references to the Servant here in chapter 12 and in the Farewell Discourse after the footwashing.[94] John 12 thus presents us

---

[88] Keener, *John*, 90.
[89] John 1:14, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ
[90] Mark W. Edwards, *Poet of the Iliad* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1987), 89, 123.
[91] Myers, *Reading John*, 32.
[92] Andrew T. Lincoln, *Truth on trial: The lawsuit motif in the fourth Gospel* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 38.
[93] Craig A. Evans, "The Voice from Heaven: A Note on John 12: 28," *CBQ* 43, no. 3 (1981): 405–8.
[94] Day, *Isaianic Servant*, 236–37.

with a confluence of theomachic themes and forensic language associated with the Isaianic Servant.

Another set of significant Isaiah related associations may be noted in relation to Jesus's glory in John. In 12:41 John states, "Isaiah saw his glory," and links the revelation of glory in John 12ff. to the theophanic revelation of God's throne in Isa 6.[95] This phrase also recalls John 1:14, "and we beheld his glory," thus linking John 1:14 and 12:41 to Isaiah's theophany as a unique display of that glory. Moreover, Craig Evans, referencing Rudolf Bultmann's commentary, notes the plausibility that the voice from heaven in John 12:28 may in some way reflect the synoptic account of the transfiguration.[96] It is with reference to the transfiguration that Luke states in 9:32, "and they saw his glory," which closely follows the Greek in John 12:41.[97] I propose that John intends to "show" God's glory through Jesus. The allusion to Isa 6, the textual parallel with Luke's transfiguration, along with the arrival of the "hour", and most obviously, the voice from heaven, would all leave a reader familiar with the synoptic transfiguration accounts in suspense, anticipating a transfiguration. But John's transfiguration follows a different path.

John 1 and John 12 also both allude to God's theophany to Moses in Exod 33-34, but what is being demonstrated in the Gospel of John is Jesus's actual embodiment of the divine attributes. Craig Evans notes that John 1:17-18 refers to Moses's request to see the glory of YHWH.[98] Evans also observes that the phrase "πρὸς τὸν θεόν" (John 1:1) indicates that Jesus has a face-to-face relationship with the Father which surpasses the revelation of God's back which Moses received (Exod 34). Moreover, while grace and truth (1:17) are contrasted with the law, they also "allude to the very words God spoke when He passed before Moses: 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness' (Exod 34:6)."[99] The recitation of the divine attributes corresponds to the second of two requests made by Moses: to see YHWH's glory, and to know how to walk in his way.[100] In John 12:20 some Greeks request to see Jesus, and what follows is a redux of

---

[95] John 12:41, εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ. Evans, "Voice from heaven," 407; also links John 12 to Isa 6:9–10.
[96] Evans, "Voice from Heaven," 407.
[97] Luke 9:32, δὲ εἶδον τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ
[98] Craig A. Evans, "Exodus in the New Testament: Patterns of Revelation and Redemption," in *The Book of Exodus: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (eds. Thomas B. Dozeman, Craig A. Evans, and Joel N. Lohr; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 440–64.
[99] Evans, "Exodus," 459.
[100] D.L. Lieber, ed., *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2001), 538–41.

Exod 34:5-8. The glory of the Son of Man is revealed (12:23-25) and this revelation is coupled with a call to serve Jesus (12:26), in effect equating service with the divine attributes of Exod 34:6-7. Jesus's association with the divine attributes is then further evidenced by reference to the Name of God in Exod 34:5 and in John 12:28.[101]

By associating Exodus 33-34 and Isaiah 6 with Jesus in John 12, Jesus's theophanic instantiation of God's glory is not restricted to form but becomes functionally operative as YHWH's divine attributes become embodied in Jesus's ministry as the Isaianic Servant. This instantiation of the divine glory is asserted by John to be a fuller revelation than that given to Moses, because Jesus is said to have "explained" the Father.[102] In wider use, the cognate noun for "explained" can denote a leader, spiritual advisor/diviner, or even the advice, plan or explanation itself. It can also imply moral direction. In Plato's dialogue *Euthyphro*, a religious advisor (exegete) is summoned for counsel on what to do about a murder.[103] And though not referencing Euthypro's exegete directly, John's Gospel can be seen as offering a solution to the Euthyphro dilemma of what constitutes "the Good."[104] John's prologue does not neglect the *moral* nature of Jesus's role as *Logos*/Wisdom, as the cosmic struggle between darkness and light serve as soteriological and *ethical* images.[105] As the "explanation" of the Father, Jesus answers Moses's request to know God's ways. He also assumes a role akin to Plato's exegete: Jesus reveals to us how we ought to act.

Jan G. van der Watt also sees a moral imperative in John 12, and in his *Grammar* draws attention to John 12:25-26 where the apodosis which begins in 12:23 is interrupted with a call to serve Jesus and be where He is. Van der Watt observes that John 12:23-27 is

---

[101] John 12:28, πάτερ, δόξασόν σου τὸ ὄνομα ... καὶ ἐδόξασα καὶ πάλιν δοξάσω.
[102] John 1:18, τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.
[103] Plato, *Euthyphro*, 4c, ἐξηγητοῦ.
[104] Robin Le Poidevin, "Euthyphro and the Goodness of God Incarnate," *Ratio* 24.2 (2011): 206–221. Le Poidevin sees an answer to Euthypro through the incarnation generally. George Van Kooten, "The Last Days of Socrates and Christ: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, and Phaedo Read in Counterpoint with John's Gospel," in *Religio–Philosophical Discourses in the Mediterranean World* (eds. Anders Klostergaard Peterson and George H Van Kooten; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 219–43. Van Kooten argues that John's Gospel engages the dialogue more directly, though without reference to Jesus's role as exegete. For a discussion on the role of the exegetes of Athens, see Sally Humphreys, "The Athenian *Exegetai*," in *Πλειών: Papers in Memory of Christiane Sourvinou–Inwood* (ed. Athena Kavoulaki; Heraklion: University of Crete, 2018), 85–96. Like the Athenian exegetes, Jesus's knowledge of the Father is direct. Unlike the exegete of Euthyphro, Jesus is present in the world.
[105] Thompson, *John*, 29.

linked to John 13:31-14:3 by a series of Greek terms exclusive to these contexts, as outlined in the chart below:[106]

12:23 The hour has come that the **Son of Man** should be *glorified*.	13:31 Now the **Son of Man** is glorified, and God is *glorified* in Him. 32 If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.
12:25 He who loves his **life** (ψυχὴν) will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.	13:37 Lord, why can I not **follow** (ἀκολουθῆσαι) You now? I will lay down my **life** (ψυχὴν) for Your sake. (Peter's words)
12:26 If anyone serves Me, *let him **follow** (ἀκολουθείτω)* **Me**; and *where* I am (*ὅπου* εἰμὶ ἐγὼ) *there (ἐκεῖ)* My servant will be also.	13:36 *Where* (ὅπου) I am going you cannot **follow** (ἀκολουθῆσαι) Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.
12:27 Now my soul is ***troubled** (τετάρακται)*, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose, I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name.	14:1 Let not your heart *be **troubled** (ταρασσέσθω);* you believe in God, believe also in Me.
	14:3 *where* I am (ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ), *there* you may be also.

Van der Watt states that the call to follow Jesus and to *serve* imply mimesis, that is, imitation of an example.[107] The manifestation of the divine glory in John 12:23-27 and 13:31-14:3 curiously bookend a portrayal of Jesus in the act of service which is described by Jesus as an *example* that has been *given* to the disciples for them to follow.[108] This example is the footwashing of John 13. While Keener considers Jesus's entire ministry to function as a transfiguration, Joseph Fitzmyer considers that, "This act [footwashing], unrecorded in the earlier tradition about the supper, either Pauline or synoptic, is evidently intended to give a symbolic summation of the whole life of Jesus."[109] Juraj Feník and Róbert Lapko develop this theme further and assert that the attention to detail in Jesus's change in appearance in the footwashing account indicates a sort of "inverse" transfiguration. The passage is careful to affirm Jesus's appearance and function as a slave, yet Jesus's remains the disciples' Lord and

[106] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 171.
[107] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 168.
[108] John 13:15, ὑπόδειγμα γὰρ ἔδωκα ὑμῖν ἵνα καθὼς ἐγὼ ἐποίησα ὑμῖν καὶ ὑμεῖς ποιῆτε.
[109] Joseph Fitzmyer, *A Christological Catechism: New Testament Answers* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1991), 67.

teacher.[110] Feník and Lapko also argue that metamorphoses of heroes were common in classical literature. The Synoptics each contain a transfiguration narrative (metamorphosis), and it would be natural for John to do the same.[111] But as an *example* that the disciples are expected to *follow*, Jesus's footwashing it is an explicit answer to Moses's request in Exod 33:13 to be shown the way of God.

2.4 *Summary*

At the start of this chapter, I set out to discuss John's concept of "the good" and the moral character of the universe. I addressed *Logos* traditions in Greek philosophy and surveyed Plato's *Republic* to demonstrate that the *Logos* traditions rejected the supernatural aspects of *mythos*, but never abandoned the use of narrative as a form of rational or speculative investigation. Along the way it was observed that John's narrative is built on sometimes oblique references to Jewish traditions that the Gospel assumes are understood by its readers. Allusions to Prov 8, Gen 1, and Exod 33-34 are some of the more obvious, but none of these are fleshed out in detail. This narrative technique is a common feature of storytelling and was especially evident in Plato's *Republic*. Jesus's role as the *Logos*/Wisdom satisfies various aspects of the wisdom traditions. He is Qoheleth's answer to life's meaninglessness as the only locus of permanence in an ephemeral world. The incarnation is not only an *axis mundi*, but a comfort to Job's sense of alienation. Form and function become ethically and ontologically united in the footwashing as God becomes what God does. The call to follow Jesus becomes, in this sense, a call to be like God. And finally, if theomachy is in view, it seems the only weapons at our disposal are to love and to serve.

As noted by Evans, "grace and truth" allude to the divine attributes of God uttered to Moses but are contrasted with the law to elucidate the surpassing greatness of God's revelation through Jesus. I am here making the case that these attributes are particularly embodied in the example of the footwashing which is juxtaposed with transfiguration language. Additionally, like Moses's reception of new stone tablets on the holy mountain, the footwashing is coupled with a "new commandment" to love one another, a command which had already been understood as summarizing the law and the prophets. The footwashing

[110] Juraj Feník and Róbert Lapko, "Jesus's Inverse Transfiguration in John 13," *Neot* 55.2 (2021): 347–64; this attention to detail is noted by Mathew as "none of the parallels give supreme importance to the act of washing." Mathew, *Johannine Footwashing*, 125.
[111] Feník and Lapko, "Inverse Transfiguration," 358–60.

offers a tangible expression of Jesus's humility.[112] And as an example to follow, offers the Gospel's clearest demonstration of what would qualify as "good" and our moral duty to follow God.

[112] Day, *Isaianic Servant*, 1.

Chapter 3: Command, Mimesis, and Theosis: A Transformed Life

"If I am not myself, who am I? And if I am myself, *what* am I? And if not now, when?"[1]

This chapter will offer a three-fold interpretation of the love command in John 13:33-35 and expounded in greater detail in 15:8-17. The command is inseparable from the narratives that precede it and the discourse that follows, and so some understanding of the context is warranted. Thus, we begin by noting, alongside more recent commentators, that the command not only functions as a symbol and foreshadowing of Jesus's death, but also entails additional important matters. Also, noteworthy here is the genre of the Farewell Discourse, which brings into view significant thematic considerations.

In what follows we first consider that the command is discussed as a divine instruction presented to the disciples who are addressed as little children (13:33).[2] I argue that this address implies the command should be understood in its most plain and literal sense. Both Martin Luther and Vladimir Putin have creatively accommodated the command to love one another as a justification for war, and I am arguing that this is not the natural sense of the command as it would be understood by a child. Earlier we encountered the suggestion by van der Watt that the command to love and follow Jesus implies mimesis; it is a call to *imitate* his example. Thus, the second approach will take a closer look at the footwashing as the example Jesus points to as illustrating that love. Third, the culmination of Jesus's love is most notably manifested in his sacrifice on the cross.[3] The progress from little child to cross is a journey from the cradle to the grave and implies moral progress. If Johannine ethics are reflective of 1st century virtue ethics, then the goal of this moral progress is a moral transformation. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the early Christian doctrine of *theosis*, which has lately been revisited in Protestant and evangelical theology. Within a paradigm of theosis, themes of *axis mundi*, the religious significance of the church, and the unity of form and function are all incorporated in the character and significance of the transformed life.

---

[1] b.'Avot 1:14 "אִם אֵין אֲנִי לִי, מִי לִי. וּכְשֶׁאֲנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אֲנִי. וְאִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו, אֵימָתָי" Attributed to Rabbi Hillel c. 110 BCE–10 CE. Translation coordinated with my friend, Phyllis Novik. See text in Ch. Albeck, *Shishah Sidre Mishnah*, 6 vols.. Jerusalem, 1952-58.

[2] John 13:33, τεκνία.

[3] Cf. e.g., John 15:12–14.

3.1 *A Command Embodied in Narrative: The Literary and Historical Context of Footwashing*

Frequently when commentators address the love command in John 13:34, the imperative to love and follow Christ's example is acknowledged, but the example is quickly taken to refer to Jesus's later passion. The footwashing itself is thus largely understood as a symbol of Jesus's death. So Keener remarks, "The hour of Jesus's 'glorification' (13:31–32) in this context can point only to the passion (12:23–24; cf. 7:39; 12:16)."[4] Similarly, Raymond Brown, R. Alan Culpepper, and C. H. Dodd all state the footwashing primarily points toward Jesus's passion.[5] No doubt the footwashing scene includes many symbols for the passion and is itself a symbol of the passion; much has been written on this subject.[6] But is the death of Jesus the only, or even the primary example that believers are encouraged to follow in the love command?

In the last chapter I argued that the footwashing stands in place of the Synoptic transfiguration. As such, command, mimesis, and moral transformation are all represented in the example. The undue emphasis on the footwashing as pointing to the cross deprives the love command of its practical ethical significance, except as a call to martyrdom. However, it may also be seen as a lived example of love, an entire pattern of life, that grows and culminates in a willingness to relinquish one's life for the sake of love. Mary Coloe views the footwashing as both an example of humble service and as an invitation to the disciples to participate in Jesus's "hour." John 13:6-11 points to a time in the future when the disciples will understand all that is implied in the footwashing, while 13:12-15, "appear to offer a second interpretation—that Jesus's action is a 'model' of humble service that his disciples

---

[4] Keener, *John*, 920. "The foot washing (13:3–10) illustrated this love, because it foreshadowed the salvific work of the Suffering Servant (13:1–2, 31–38)," Keener, *John*, 923.

[5] "Such emphasis is intelligible if we understand the footwashing as a symbol for Jesus' salvific death," Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 555–6; "Jesus' new command has taken on additional significance following the foot washing. The close association of love with the foot washing and Jesus' death conveys the implication that Jesus was charging his disciples to love one another even if such love requires that they lay down their lives for the community…Jesus' death is the model for community," R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 208; "We now learn that (as a sequel to the death of Christ) His followers are to reproduce, in their mutual love, the love which the Father showed in sending the Son, the love which the Son showed in laying down His life," C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 405.

[6] Hans Boersma, "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John," *CTJ* 38 (2003): 103–19; here on p. 117 Boersma discusses the work of Raymond Brown, *John*, 558–78, who draws parallels to the passion that include, "(1) 13:1,3 mention that the hour has come to return to the Father; (2) Jesus 'lays down' (τίθησιν) his clothing and 'takes them up again' (ἔλαβεν ... πάλιν; 13:4,12), just as he will 'lay down' his life and 'take it up again' (10:17–18); (3) the foot washing episode can only be understood after Jesus' death and resurrection (13:7); and (4) the foot washing is necessary if one is to have part with Jesus (13:8)."

are to emulate."[7] Through humble service the disciples (and the church as heirs of this legacy), follow Jesus's example *and* participate in his glory.[8]

Indeed, interpretations of the footwashing that see it as an exemplar of the love command also recognize various aspects of its wide-ranging and practical application. Thus, for example, Lauren Sierra appreciates the footwashing as a form of instruction in which Jesus voluntarily relinquishes his status to demonstrate servant leadership.[9] Van der Watt prefers to highlight the particular use of "love" in this story, "Structurally and contextually there can be little doubt that the meal episode stands in token of the *intense* love of Jesus."[10] Similarly, for Matthew the footwashing is "an appropriate symbolic expression of 'loving in its utmost sense'" and "this symbol could challenge the social norms of its contemporaneous culture."[11] And Michael Gorman argues strongly for both humble servitude and intense love. For Gorman this love is extended even to one's enemies, especially since God's love is explicitly directed to the whole *kosmos* in John 3:16.[12]

In a reading of the footwashing that more closely follows my suggestion of a transfigured Christ, Nina Müller van Velden notes that while a normal function of footwashing is to affirm and legitimate roles and status in society, this scene in John 13 is immediately disruptive, as the footwashing action interrupts rather than precedes the meal. Van Velden notes, "There is no parallel in extant ancient literature describing a person of superior status voluntarily washing the feet of someone of inferior status, as is the case here, where Jesus, a rabbi, performs the task on his disciples."[13] Additionally, when Jesus removes his outer garments and wraps Himself in a towel, he assumes the role of a slave. Slaves were regarded as the sexual property of their masters having no boundaries in need of protection. The footwashing task is a gesture of passivity and subordination affronting even the gender

---

[7] Mary L. Coloe, "Welcome Into the Household of God: The Foot Washing in John 13," *CBQ* 66.3 (2004): 400–415.
[8] John Ashton's treatment on glory observes that John's use of the term is so situated in the ignominious humility of the cross that it is not a far stretch to assume that the disciples partake in that same glory through their own humble service. John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 363–73.
[9] Lauren K. Sierra, "The God who Condescends: Leadership in the Gospel of John," *Christian Education Journal* 18.1 (2021): 58–73.
[10] Jan G. van der Watt, "The Meaning of Jesus Washing the Feet of his Disciples (John 13)," *Neot* 51.1 (2017): 25–39.
[11] Mathew, *Johannine Footwashing*, 419.
[12] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 156–78; see also Myers, *Reading John*, 166.
[13] N. M. van Velden, "When gender performance is not straightforward: Feet, masculinity and power in John 13: 1–11," *Neot* 53.2 (2019): 291–309; see also Matthew, *Johannine Footwashing*, 125.

roles of male slaves.[14] The scene thus portrays Jesus as gender ambiguous, or at least as relinquishing his gender status.[15] Peter's two-fold emphatic objections demonstrate the absurd nature of the deed. Jesus's lordship is demonstrated by relinquishing his status in an act that could have been, for anyone else, a disastrous social experiment.[16] Van Velden and Mathew both observe that the footwashing is not simply a loving act or a moral lesson. It is a call to fundamentally acknowledge and confront one's own privilege and status in society. Perhaps the footwashing is intended to draw attention to systemic and institutional modes of oppression to which the disciples passively and ignorantly assent. Through Peter's reaction the reader of John's Gospel is implored to examine their own reaction when the gospel message takes hold of accepted norms and turns them up-side down.

Bincy Mathew notes that footwashing appears in a variety of contexts, a number of which may well be in play here in John 13.[17] First, in as much as Jesus's love command and footwashing are clearly calls to service, we should note that footwashing is strongly associated with priestly service and having one's "feet washed" was a euphemism for being ready for duty; so the sacramental aura of this chapter could indicate ordination for service. Second, footwashing was a customary form of hospitality; notably, following the command to love one another, the Farewell Discourse is front loaded in chapter 14 with a discussion on entering the Father's house (John 14:1-4).[18] Finally, festivals like *Saturnalia* and *Matronalia* granted a limited period of freedom to slaves in which they were served by their masters. While footwashing is not explicitly mentioned here, such festivals "echoed a mythological representation of a golden era in which there was no labor, no slavery, and no domination."[19]

In summary, while the footwashing certainly prefigures the cross, scholars have noted that it also has wider and more immediate associations and applications. Sierra points to servant leadership; van der Watt and Mathew to the intensity of love; and Gorman proposes that this love extends beyond the community and to our enemies. Mathew and van Velden

---

[14] Van Velden, "Gender Performance," 298.
[15] Van Velden, "Gender Performance," 306.
[16] Van Velden, "Gender Performance," 305.
[17] Mathew, *Johannine Footwashing*, 69–127; the following examples are selected from Mathew's chapter "Footwashing in the Ancient Jewish, Greek, and Roman Literature." Bernhard Kötting, "Fußwaschung," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 8 (1972): 743–77; Wolfram Lohse, "Die Fußwaschung (13:1–20); Eine Geschichte ihrer Deutung," PhD diss., Friedrich–Alexander–Universitat zu Erlangen, 1967; John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* 2nd ed. (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2014).
[18] Mathew weighs the merits of interpretations by Coloe and others; Mathew, *Johannine Footwashing*, 73.
[19] Mathew, *Johannine Footwashing*, 114.

also observe the unprecedented nature of the role reversal and how it challenges societal norms. In a similar vein, Mathew's survey of footwashing practices in Jewish, Greek, and Roman literature, identifies priestly service, hospitality, and an era in which oppression has ended. We may imagine, that just like Jesus as *Logos*, his footwashing could evoke a range of associations for readers living in a pluralistic first century Mediterranean world. Thus, for example, we can we expect that the footwashing offers believers an example to follow, expresses Jesus's intense love for his disciples, points toward the cross, and foreshadows the inauguration of an eschatological kingdom. Such a combination fits well with our earlier argument that the footwashing can be understood as a transfiguration narrative. This suggests the expression of Jesus's love and glory through his role of servant *and* through the cross. The transfiguration motif will continue to play a part as we now discuss the genre of the Farewell Discourse.

3.1.1 *Genres of Encouragement: Farewell Discourses and Pre-Battle Speeches*

Speeches are a common rhetorical feature in both modern and classical literature. The setting and genre of a speech lends nuance to its interpretation and, as we've noted previously, the Farewell Discourse bends genres and does not adhere strictly to the ridged form of "farewell speech." This section will briefly look to a few of the distinctive generic features of John's Farewell Discourse as they will relate to the ensuing discussion of the love command. Fernando Segovia observes that Jesus's triumphal entry and upper room discourse presents us with an "example of a recurrent episode in the lives of the biblical heroes—the testament or farewell of a hero who is about to die."[20] He adds that in antiquity "such scenes confer tremendous authority on the work in question and its message."[21] This is reinforced by its sapiential character, providing "a consolatory, didactic, and parenetic function."[22] Also entailed here is the designation of a successor, the paraclete, whose "dramatic portrayal here within the farewell context can only point to the great importance attached to this issue in the narrative as a whole."[23] Indeed, Craig Keener observes over a dozen instances where the personal functions of the Spirit in John's Farewell Discourse parallel Jesus's functions throughout the Gospel. He observes that the community of

[20] Segovia, *Farewell*, 5.
[21] Segovia, *Farewell*, 13.
[22] Segovia, *Farewell*, 15.
[23] Segovia, *Farewell*, 21–3.

believers would have "experienced the Spirit as the personal presence of Jesus or the mediator of that presence."[24]

Segovia also notes that commentators on Jesus's Farewell Discourses in Luke and John frequently focus on the influence of Jewish tradition and disregard the unique contributions of Greco-Roman discourses. Notably, in the Greco-Roman heavenly ascent traditions, the discourse is accompanied by a transfiguration. The divine hero assumes a glorious form and returns to his heavenly home.[25] Here we may note John's depiction of Jesus at 13:1-3 and 17:5. Jesus's divine nature has been introduced in the prologue to the Gospel, and when Jesus issues the love command to his disciples, he speaks as the embodied *axis mundi* of the tabernacle.[26] We need not, though, lose sight of the Jewish influence and significance: while Jesus speaks only this one command, He speaks with the full weight of the law and the prophets, as the command encapsulates all the law.[27]

The Farewell Discourse is addressed to a *community,* who are to demonstrate God's love through their love of each other, not least at the time of Jesus's leaving. Segovia comments that the main function of the discourse, "was to console a community deeply troubled by Jesus's departure by affirming his continued presence among the disciples, first explaining it from the point of view of his relationship to the Father and then describing it from the point of view of his relationship to the disciples."[28] Kellum agrees with Segovia and remarks that a significance of the vine analogy is its ability to express the nature of abiding in this new community.[29]

Kellum also notes the presence of a battle motif in Luke's Farewell Discourse signified by the prediction of trials, the presence of Satan, and the mention of carrying a sword.[30] Satan and a struggle with the world are also present in the Farewell Discourse. Moreover, an "eve of battle" setting for the Farewell Discourse is strongly supported by the Gospel's overtones of theomachy, and its use of the wisdom tradition which itself depicts

---

[24] Keener, *John*, 964–5.
[25] Segovia, *Farewell*, 6–7.
[26] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 127.
[27] As already noted in our treatment of Gal 5:14 and Rom 13:9.
[28] Segovia, *Farewell*, 42.
[29] Kellum, "Farewell Discourse," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin; Downers Grove: IVP, 2013), 268.
[30] Kellum, "Farewell Discourse," 267.

moral struggle as cosmic conflict. Judith Kovacs has proposed that the depiction of Jesus's death in John includes a cosmic battle motif, and Alicia Myers observes the prominence of the battle motif in 1 John.[31] Mogens Hansen notes that speeches in Greek and Roman historiography include those made by a general to his troops, and that Polybius (c. 2nd century BCE) uses as a technical term for the general's "harangues" to his army, *parakleseis*, or exhortation.[32] The Holy Spirit's designation as παράκλητος could insinuate the discourse's concern to exhort the disciples in the face of the struggles that lie ahead.[33] More broadly, Juan Zoido discusses three "main motifs" of battle exhortations with thematic parallels in the Farewell Discourse, "the nobility of giving one's life" (15:13), "earning the favour of the gods" (13:35; 14:15; 15:14), and "the idea of a crossroads at which one must either vanquish or meet an honourable death" (15:18ff.; 16:1-4).[34]

In summary, we have briefly reviewed aspects of the genre of the Farewell Discourse and given attention to some of its themes. The transfiguration motif applies significantly to ascension narratives, and the theme of theomachy can be observed in similarities to pre-battle exhortations. The gravity of what is implied in the discourse is on full display: for example, Peter is rebuked for taking up arms in defense of Jesus; and Jesus, when He appears before Pilate, offers no resistance or opposition, but pointedly states, "My kingdom is not of this world." Not losing sight of the main point of this thesis, that the love command functions as an *ethical theory*, the connotations present in the footwashing and the implications of the genre of the discourse will contribute to the Farewell Discourse's nuances in the love command's function. We shall now detail in several stages the significance of Jesus's love command in the Farewell Discourse as a command to be followed, as an example to be imitated, and as the goal of moral progress.

3.2 The Love Command as Divine Command

In Matthew 18:3 Jesus says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (KJV).[35] In this section we will discuss the

[31] Judith L. Kovacs, "'Now Shall the Ruler of This World Be Driven Out': Jesus' Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20–36," *JBL* 114.2 (1995): 227–247; Myers, *Reading John*, 261.
[32] Mogens Herman Hansen, "The Battle Exhortation in Ancient Historiography: Fact or Fiction?" *Hist.* 42.2 (1993), 161–80.
[33] John 14:16, 26 etc.
[34] Juan Carlos Iglesias Zoido, "The Battle Exhortation in Ancient Rhetoric," *Rhetorica* 25.2 (2007): 141–58; scripture references are my own.
[35] KJV was chosen purely for aesthetic purposes.

love command as a command simple enough to be understood by a little child. When we previously discussed the nature of *laws* and *morality*, we noted that laws, commands, and ordinances have no *inherent* moral value, nor does adherence to them *require* that we reflect on moral reasoning.[36] Presumably they are derived from an ethical theory, but they primarily serve a *functional* purpose to establish standards of conduct and facilitate the well-ordering of society.[37] They need not be moral to serve this function. However, they are ideal for communicating established societal norms to those who are either new to the community or lack the capacity to reason morally. They are a shortcut to moral behavior that allows us to live in what Zigon calls the "unreflexive comfort of the embodied moral habitus or the unquestioned moral discourse."[38] When Jesus addresses the disciples as little children (τεκνία) in John 13:33, they are being introduced to the love ethic in its simplest form. If there are any instances where it might be hermeneutically relevant to say, "The main things are the plain things," or "God said it, I believe it," I suggest it would be in those places where the text addresses its hearers (readers) as children. In this first section I suggest that, simply put, the command to love one another means that we should love. It does not mean to go to war, or to defend the Christian faith with violence, or to disparage sinners.

Moreover, again as previously noted, the love command also deviates from typical laws in that it is not "justiciable." Since it is given with no explicit rewards or penalties, it is similar to a virtue ethic paradigm, as the defining characteristic of community members. Observing this, Kengo Akiyama regards the Levitical command as functioning within the wisdom tradition, and as a "Wisdom-Law" is designed to facilitate resolutions in a self-executing manner.[39] Akiyama's "Wisdom-Law" has the defining characteristic of an ethical theory; it provides a framework to assess and resolve moral dilemmas.[40] We have argued that as *logos* Jesus is both the incarnation of God's Divine presence and God's Wisdom. Coupled with Akiyama's "Wisdom-Law," these observations further suggest the agreement that we earlier noted between John's sole command to love one another and the Pauline

[36] Dworkin, *Law's Empire*, 7; Friedman, "Justice," n.p.; Williams, *Ethics*, 32.
[37] Benedict, "Anthropology," 16.
[38] Zigon, *Morality*, 18.
[39] Akiyama, "How Can Love be Commanded?" 7.
[40] Zigon, *Morality*, 18; The Ethics Centre, "Ethics, morality & law," n.p.; Attridge, "Apolitical?," 465; Williams, *Ethics*, 72; Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 20–26.

appropriation of Lev 19:18. Significantly, Paul's discussions of law can target its justiciable nature while affirming its material content.[41]

Presumably the love command is simple enough to be comprehensible to little children, as Jesus so calls his disciples. But *is* this the case? We have previously discussed moral development as maturing with age and experience;[42] and also noted the theories of Lawrence Kohlberg and Jean Piaget, who assumed that children up to two years old have not developed conceptual or reflective capacities.[43] We might thus infer that if children are lacking "conceptual or reflective thought" they will have difficulty reasoning ethically. This section will conclude, though, by briefly noting two studies that tested and challenged the moral and cognitive models of Kohlberg and Piaget.

Developmental models typically suggest that very young children are egocentric and learn primarily through their senses. But in a series of recent studies by Lara B. Aknin, J. Kiley Hamlin and Elizabeth W. Dunn, children as young as two appeared to demonstrate empathy and some capacity for moral reasoning.[44] In various scenarios the children were prompted to share "treats" (cookies or crackers) to a puppet friend who promptly ate the treat. When the children's responses to each condition were compared, the children demonstrated the greatest degree of happiness (as monitored by an unseen neutral observer) when they sacrificially shared their own treats, as compared to treats that had been given or found by the study administrators.[45] Presumably, children with limited capacity for communication and who were ostensibly incapable of conceptual or reflective thought, found pro-social behavior to be inherently rewarding even in the absence of stipulations, rewards, or consequences.[46] The study challenges the assumption that pro-social behavior *requires* the presence of incentives in the form of material rewards or punishments.

---

[41] E.g., Romans 8:1, Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν χριστῷ ἰησοῦ. Compare with Romans 7:12, ὥστε ὁ μὲν νόμος ἅγιος, καὶ ἡ ἐντολὴ ἁγία καὶ δικαία καὶ ἀγαθή. On the nature of law see Akiyama, "How Can Love be Commanded?" 7.
[42] Roger Bergman, "Identity as Motivation: Toward a Theory of the Moral Self," in *Moral Development, Self, and Identity* (eds., Daniel Lapsley and Darcia Narvaez; Mahwah: LEA Pub, 2004), 21–46; Rhodes, *Why they kill*, 112; Merrick et al., "*Vital Signs,"* 999–1005.
[43] Berger, *Invitation to the Life Span*, 29.
[44] Lara B. Aknin, J. Kiley Hamlin, and Elizabeth W. Dunn, "Giving Leads to Happiness in Young Children," *PLoS One* 7.6 (2012): 1–4. [cited 6 June 2022]. Online: https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0039211.
[45] Aknin et al., "Giving," 2.
[46] Aknin et al., "Giving," 3.

Consideration of another study by Robert Hepach et al. paves the way for the next section on the love command as mimesis. In this study children aged 18 months to two years were observed in a variety of scenarios in which they both needed help and had the opportunity to help others.[47] In one condition the children played a game that was "rigged such that the game could not be continued by children themselves and needed the attention of the adult experimenter," and in another condition they observed an adult experimenter who needed help.[48] In this study the children actively engaged in pro-social helping behavior, and demonstrated a greater inclination to do so when the person they were helping had previously helped them. Additionally, children demonstrated sustained physiological arousal when they could not provide help for an adult who had helped them previously, even if the adult received help from another source.[49] Hepach et al. speculate that young children take a "positive stance toward those who have helped them" even though they may not be able to articulate *why*.[50]

In summary, as a "Wisdom-Law" the love command functions without leveraging compliance with rewards or punishments. Additionally, its function is not limited to regulating behavior, but allows for community building and problem solving. In this way the love command operates more like an ethical theory than a legal stipulation; it provides a framework to assess and resolve moral dilemmas. In the two studies reviewed very young children showed both the desire and capacity to engage in what the researchers call "pro-social behavior," but which we would recognize as kindness. Children who were expected to be egocentric chose to help others and preferred to engage in helping behaviors in the absence of rewards or punishments.

In John 13:35 Jesus offers a teleological justification for the love command, "all will know you are my disciples … that you love one another."[51] In our second study John 13:35 comes to life. The children had a greater inclination to be kind toward others when kindness had first been shown toward them. This should bring us consolation since in the unreflexive

[47] Robert Hepach, Amrisha Vaish, Katharina Müller, and Michael Tomasello, "Toddlers' Intrinsic Motivation to Return Help to heir Benefactor," *J Exp Child Psychol* 188 (2019): 1–17.
[48] Hepach et al., "Toddlers'," 4.
[49] Hepach et al., "Toddlers'," 14.
[50] Hepach et al., "Toddlers'," 15.
[51] John 13:35, ἐν τούτῳ γνώσονται πάντες ὅτι ἐμοὶ μαθηταί ἐστε, ἐὰν ἀγάπην ἔχητε ἐν ἀλλήλοις.

comfort of their embodied moral habitus, the children's unquestioned moral discourse still compels them to love others in response to having been loved.

We have previously asserted that the Gospel of John is aware of deontic forms of moral reasoning in our example of Nicodemus's argument to the Pharisees in John 7:47-51. [52] The ethics of the Gospel of John progress through different forms of moral reasoning as appropriate to the moral development of the disciples. The love command is deontic, and we may infer from the address to the disciples as children that deontology is for beginners. Moral development will eventually require the disciples to "graduate" from simple deontic commands. John 13:35 intimates that the love command also has utilitarian objectives.

3.3 The Love Command as Mimesis

In this section we will explore mimesis as a component of moral development and the footwashing as a mimetic exemplar in action. In the second study just noted children were able to learn helping behaviors through *imitation*. Epictetus wrote, "You become what you give your attention to."[53] Jesus's address of the disciples as little children may reflect the 1st century CE pedagogy inherent to this quote from Epictetus. The importance of learning through imitation, known as mimesis, was recognized, and studied at least as early as Aristotle.[54] Here we shall in turn discuss mimesis (imitation) as a method of moral progress, and John's injunction to imitate Jesus's example as the aspirational goal of moral conduct. We will furthermore attempt to narrow the scope of imitation through a survey of the New Testament's use of the word "imitate" represented by the word group μιμέομαι, μιμητής, συμμιμητής. And finally, we will demonstrate that the footwashing in John 13 is an imitable example of the command to love one another.

Though imitation, or mimesis, has been recognized as a frequent instructional technique for children, its role in the continued moral development of an ethically mature agent is less frequently discussed.[55] Andreas Vakirtzis argues that mimesis continues to play a role in the moral development of ethically mature people through what she terms

---

[52] Winston, "Nomos," *passim*.
[53] Sharon Lebell, *The Art of Living: The Classical Manual on Virtue, Happiness and Effectiveness* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995), 52; a free translation of Epictetus.
[54] Andreas Vakirtzis, "Mimesis, Friendship, and Moral Development in Aristotle's Ethics," *Rhizomata* 3.2 (2015): 125–142.
[55] Margaret Hampson, "Imitating Virtue," *Phronesis* 64.3 (2019): 292–320; Hampson and Vakirtzis cover similar ground with Hampson bridging the gap between childhood and adult learning, and Vakirtzis adopting the term "Interpretive Mimesis."

"Interpretive Mimesis," which "involves the agent using her friends' actions as patterns that she may use herself."[56] In Vakirtzis' theory the continued growth of an ethically mature agent depends largely on her relationships, specifically those she chooses. She will take pleasure in the virtuous actions of her friends and will cultivate her own virtues through character friendship.[57] Both contribute to her happiness, and each is enjoyed for its own sake and is its own reward.

Recent scholarship in Johannine ethics has also considered mimesis to be a focus of the Gospel's moral instruction. Paul Anthony Hartog, for example, assesses the numerous imperatives in the Gospel; he notes that John does not focus on propositionally prescriptive ethics, but he does address "obligations" (ὀφείλειν), which point toward Jesus as the example to be imitated (John 13:14; 1 John 2:6, 3:16).[58] Hartog notes other words used by John are associated with an ethic of imitation or mimesis; these include "just as" (καθώς), "commandment" (ἐντολή), and "example" (ὑπόδειγμα), all of which occur in John 13 with reference to both the love command and of the footwashing narrative. Cornelis Bennema notes that while the lexeme μιμεῖσθαι, typical of the Greek mimetic tradition, does not appear in the Johannine writings (except at 3 John 11); he is convinced that mimesis is conceptually present in John's own mimetic language that most often utilizes the word καθῶς either on its own or with the correlative καί or οὕτως.[59] The prevalence of such language in relation to Jesus and his disciples is consistent with Vakirtzis' finding that mimesis continues to play a role in the moral development of mature agents.

However, an injunction to follow the "example" of Christ in terms of his "whole life," such as is in view in John's love command, could be seen as presenting a rather amorphous example, one which is too broad to be practically applied. So, we must consider whether mimesis provides us with the specificity necessary to be practically useful. The word group from which we derive the term *mimesis* (μιμέομαι, μιμητής, συμμιμητής) is relatively rare in the New Testament and is not present in John's Gospel. However, as noted by Hartog and Bennema, mimesis is *conceptually* present in John's Gospel, and other terms associated with

[56] Vakirtzis, "Mimesis," 126.
[57] Vakirtzis, "Mimesis," 130.
[58] Hartog, "Desiderative Mimesis," 3–4.
[59] Bennema, "Johannine Ethics," 432.

mimesis (e.g., καθώς and ὑπόδειγμα) are found throughout the Gospel and in John 13. The word μιμοῦ is found in 3 John 11, urging the reader to imitate what is good and not what is evil, and it also points to Diotrephes (v.9) as an example of evil, and Demetrius as a witness to the truth (v.12).[60] Here the reader is not left to assume what is meant by "good" and "evil," but is given an example as a clear point of reference.

The pattern of narrowing the nature and scope of mimesis by identifying examples to follow is evident throughout the New Testament's use of the μιμέομαι, μιμητής, συμμιμητής word group. In Hebrews heroes of the faith are held up, with an injunction to imitate their examples of faith (cf. 12:2 and 13:7).[61] The remaining instances are in the Pauline material and W. Michaelis's entry in the TDNT arranges them into three distinct categories: imitation of an older example (1 Thess 2:14); encouragement to follow Paul and his authority, prompting obedience to his commands (2 Thess 3:7, 9; Phil 3:17); and imitating Paul in so far as he imitates Christ and God (1 Cor 4:16, 11:1; Eph 5:1; 1 Thess 1:6).[62] In most of the NT injunctions to *imitate* an example, a specific act or object is in view: for example, the goodness seen in Demetrius (3 John 11) and exemplary faith of the witnesses (Hebrews 11). In the Pauline examples involving obedience a corollary *performative* example is in view. All this suggests that Interpretive Mimesis is not only present in the New Testament but appears to be the preferred application of the μιμέομαι word group.

The subtlety of choosing a specific *performative* example gains a keen importance when we consider some ostensive problems noted by certain scholars regarding the application of mimesis in the Gospel of John. Lindsey Trozzo, for example, observes what we have previously noted, that if the Gospel's love command is compared to other forms of law, it is deemed neither practicable nor assessable. Trozzo remarks, "The most explicit moral imperative, the love command, is not explained in terms of tangible actions." In lieu of any explicit commands Trozzo considers John's use of mimesis but concludes, "the characters in the Fourth Gospel appear inimitable, since the hero is presented in the most exalted terms and the narrative does not put him or the other characters in contexts for normal ethical decision-making."[63] Trozzo thus conveys some common assumptions

[60] Michaelis, *TDNT* 4:595.
[61] Michaelis, *TDNT* 4:666. Heb 13:7, μιμεῖσθε τὴν πίστιν.
[62] Michaelis, *TDNT* 4:671–72.
[63] Trozzo, *Johannine Ethics*, 11.

regarding John's Gospel, that it lacks commands that can be obeyed and examples that can be emulated.

Cornelis Bennema offers a counterpoint to Trozzo and considers the footwashing in John 13 to be an imitable example which employs John's unique mimetic language.[64] He states, "The episode that illustrates this best is the footwashing episode in John 13 where Jesus exhorts his disciples to imitate him in serving one another in loving humility: 'For I gave you an example (ὑπόδειγμα), that just as (καθώς) I have done to you, you also (καί) should do' (13:15)."[65] Additionally, John 13:14 carries the "ought" injunction (ὀφείλειν), which Hartog associates with John's mimetic language "you *ought* to wash the feet of one another." If the footwashing is part of the intended context of the love command in 13:34, then the addition of the word ἐντολή (command) would bring all the mimetic language identified by Bennema and Hartog together in a unified scenario that includes an injunction associated with the example of the footwashing.

Indeed, Bennema and Hartog both point to the footwashing as the target of John's mimetic language in chapter 13. Bennema argues for emulation of the footwashing as "serving one another in loving humility." Hartog agrees with Bennema, but argues for the inclusion of Jesus's *desires* as part of that emulation, namely that we should "love as Jesus loved."[66] We have previously demonstrated that the footwashing, if understood as an example to be followed, yields a number of potentially imitable interpretations that include servant leadership (Sierra), humble service (Bennema and Coloe), intense love (van der Watt, Hartog and Mathew), or even the abrogation of one's privilege and social status (van Velden). Each of these interpretations would qualify as examples of "loving one another as I have loved you," and further demonstrate that the command to love one another, especially when understood as an ethical principle or "Wisdom-Law," is intended to be understood and obeyed.

We have discussed the imitation of Christ primarily in terms of the footwashing as entailing an example to follow, but as we noted earlier it also prefigures the cross. Jesus remarks, "No one has greater love than this: that one should have laid down his life for his

---

[64] To be sure, Trozzo argues against Bennema directly; Trozzo, *Johannine Ethics*, 87.
[65] Bennema's response here comes after the publication of Trozzo's objection. Bennema, "Johannine Ethics," 441.
[66] Hartog, "Desiderative Mimesis," 13.

friends" (John 15:13), from which is to be inferred that imitating Christ even includes surrendering our lives.[67] As noted previously, Mary Coloe argues that the footwashing also functions as an invitation to participate in Jesus's "hour." As we humble ourselves in his service we also partake of his glory. Moreover, this new expansion of the love command is not unique to John. We see it, for example, in Romans 12:1 which, if read along with Jesus's footwashing as a prefiguration of the cross, presents Jesus as a living sacrifice who his followers are to emulate, not least in surrendering privileged status. Van Velden noted that surrendering our status may also include surrendering our gender privilege and bodily autonomy. In Jesus's assumption of the form of a slave, he positions himself without status, but also as physically vulnerable since slaves have no boundaries in need of protection (Phil 2:5-8). Here he resembles Job who has lost everything and is threatened even in his body. We are called to embody his death through a lifelong pattern of self-sacrifice, a theme that occurs frequently in the New Testament (e.g., 2 Cor 4:10-12; Eph 5:1-2; Heb 12:1-3). The injunction to surrender our lives is on its face an absurd request. But from the standpoint of the wisdom literature, especially Ecclesiastes, the particulars of life in themselves do nothing to bring meaning or satisfaction. What we are asked to relinquish is at its core *hevel,* and we embrace the new way of life on offer in Jesus. In short, whether the footwashing serves as an imitable example, or as a prefiguration of the cross, John and the New Testament understand the Christian life in much the same way. To walk in love is to be a living sacrifice, where we always carry about in our bodies the death and new life of Jesus.

We have demonstrated that the command to love one another in John is both practicable and imitable. It offers ethical instruction akin to what Vakirtzis calls "interpretive mimesis," inviting specific *performative* examples or behavior. And, recalling the case studies demonstrating the pro-social behavior of little children, it entails a developmental progression. The love command is simple enough to be emulated by children who lack the linguistic ability to articulate their motivations, and it is robust enough to be applied to a multitude of life situations. Mimetic moral progression is in view throughout, and the growth of the disciples is implied when Jesus says they are no longer servants, but friends (John 15:15). A 1st century reader would readily understand the progression from simple obedience

[67] John 15:13, μείζονα ταύτης ἀγάπην οὐδεὶς ἔχει, ἵνα τις τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ θῇ ὑπὲρ τῶν φίλων αὐτοῦ.

to imitating Christ as his life-long friend, as a loving and self-giving servant alongside all such disciples.

In the previous section we addressed the function of commands as maintaining order in a community and insinuated that in John 13:35 the love command is given an explicit function that deviates from the function of law: "in this everyone will know that you are my disciples." John 13:35 lends a utilitarian aspect to the love command of the previous verse. The external objective in loving one another is that those outside the community will see the community as disciples of Jesus and resembles the emphasis on making disciples in the Matthean great commission (Matt 28:19-20). John's love command functions to *create* a community, and not simply to manage it.[68] Commentators readily note that *baptizing* and *teaching* are subordinate participles to the main imperative verb in Matthew's commission, which is to "make disciples."[69] In Matthew, Jesus commands that the disciples teach all that he commanded, and the Johannine community is the living obedience of all that Jesus taught when they fulfill the Levitical command to love your neighbor as yourself. R. T. France observes that baptism precedes teaching in the Matthean commission and suggests that "baptism is the point of enrollment into a process of learning which is never complete."[70] France's observation resembles what we have proposed thus far, that the command to love one another is the introduction to a fuller understanding of a love ethic in which all the law is summed up in a single word (Gal 5:14; Rom 13:9), but which also suggests an ongoing journey of moral progress.

Once again, this thesis is not suggesting a 1:1 correlation between John 13:35 and Matthew's great commission but does suggest the Gospel of John colors the love command with a "missional utilitarianism." If there is a practicable goal to be gained in following the love command, it is to put the gospel on display and let "all [the world] know that you are my disciples."[71] This missional utilitarianism also sets a limit on attempts to instantiate particular visions of justice. The deontic command is to love, and the utilitarian objective is to display that love. There is no room here for a "dirty hands" utilitarianism.

---

[68] Matt 28:19–20a, πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς ... 20 διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν·

[69] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1115.

[70] France, *Matthew*, 1116.

[71] John 13:35, γνώσονται πάντες ὅτι ἐμοὶ μαθηταί ἐστε.

In his book *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor observes a shift in the priorities of modern ethical theories and states, "moral philosophy has tended to focus on what it is right to do rather than on what it is good to be, on defining the content of obligation rather than the nature of the good life."[72] Mimesis is not its own ethical theory, but operates within the realm of virtue ethics as a logical application of its theory. As previously discussed, virtue ethics, in contrast to deontology or utilitarianism, is focused not so much on *doing* the right thing as on *becoming* the right person. The distinction between *to do* and *to be* is not always easy to grasp, but there seems to be a goal that defines what we should eventually become. With this in mind, the final section of this chapter will explore the goal of moral progress. By way of concluding this section and anticipating the next, we may cite Cornelis Bennema: "Concerning the footwashing, imitating Jesus the δοῦλος–κύριος ('slave–Lord'; 13:14-16) by simply performing acts of sacrificial service (behaviour) would fall short of what is intended; the disciples must also become δοῦλοί to one another (identity)."[73]

3.4 The Love Command as Moral Transformation

Underlying any discussion of ethics is the notion that life is somehow better for us and for others when navigated with a moral compass. There is presumably a certain benefit to living ethically. This section will consider *why* ethics and the ethical life are important. Modern readers may be familiar with Abraham Maslow's ubiquitous theory that we are all motivated by a hierarchy of basic human needs, at the top which is "self-actualization": "what a man *can* be he *must* be."[74] As we continue this discussion of ethics, we should recall that we are discussing the nature of the self as a moral being.[75] To live ethically is at least a part of what it means to actualize our fullest potential and capacity. Such was Aristotle's claim that virtue was a necessary condition for one's εὐδαιμονία (flourishing).[76] And so also

[72] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 3.
[73] Bennema, "Johannine Ethics," 444.
[74] A. H. Maslow, "A Dynamic Theory of Human Motivation," in *Understanding Human Motivation* (eds. C. L. Stacey and M. DeMartino; Cleveland: World Publishing, 1965), 84–105; Maslow later clarifies: "a healthy man is primarily motivated by his needs to develop and actualize his fullest potentialities and capacities." Maslow, "Human motivation," 46.
[75] Everett et al., "The Moral Self," 938.
[76] Sarah Broadie, "Aristotle and Contemporary Ethics," in *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (ed. R. Kraut; Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 343–4.

Bennema argues that John's divine life offers a corollary to Aristotle as the Gospel's ethical τέλος (goal).[77]

Here we may also recall that to this point we have been arguing that our moral development progresses over time, and that the Gospel of John describes its ethics in terms of moral progress. This finds support in the study of Sookgoo Shin, who observes a correlation between the Gospel's narrative progress and its use of terms associated with mimesis. In chapters 1-12, Jesus interacts with crowds that are often hostile to his teachings; beginning in chapter 13, καθώς (imitation) language functions within the framework of Jesus's interaction with his disciples: "this shows that imitating Jesus is expected only of those who have already made significant progress in their journey of faith."[78] If Shin is correct, then there is a progression of maturity from obeying Jesus's commands to following his example. Nonetheless, while Jesus's final discourse may have been directed to the most mature of his disciples, as Peter's later betrayal would clearly indicate, even the best of them had a long way to go.

In this final section we attend to what Jesus's love command in the Farewell Discourse says regarding ongoing moral transformation and the goal of the ethical life. What follows are three perspectives in which the divine life is realized through *theosis*. The first is a narratological blending of the many themes of this thesis in which the divine life is present in the believing community, which functions as *axis mundi*. Next, we will consider the work of Andrew Byers's "ecclesial theosis" where the identity of the church is characterized by *corporate* participation in the interrelation between father and Son.[79] And we will conclude with Michael Gorman's "missional theosis" which depicts the church as participating in the divine love and life, and therefore in the life-giving *mission* of God.[80]

3.4.1 *Narrative Christology and the Vine: The Community as* Axis Mundi

In this thesis we have noted that John's Gospel describes Jesus with a confluence of imagery. Jesus is the *logos*, the incarnation of Wisdom, and as *axis mundi*, he is the bridge between heaven and earth where one meets God.[81] Jesus dwells among us *as* an earthly

---

[77] Bennema, "Johannine ethics," 437.
[78] Shin, "Ethics," 156.
[79] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, i.
[80] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 14.
[81] My preference to see Jesus's role as *axis mundi* is in his self–designation as an *axis mundi* not limited to temple/tabernacle imagery. Compare John 1:52 "you will see the angels of God ascending and descending on

tabernacle, intimating a role akin to the temple.[82] Indeed, as Keener notes, "and in the Fourth Gospel, the eschatological temple is clearly in Jesus himself."[83] The temple imagery is significant as the temple is not only the center of worship, but is also a place of religious instruction. Access to God is also access to Wisdom. I am arguing that these are not casual allusions to substantiate passing arguments. The Gospel author gradually associates these narrative elements with Jesus's identity *throughout* the Gospel. The footwashing sets the tone for the Farewell Discourse and all that follows. These forms assume an ontological significance as Jesus's "inverse" transfiguration embodies the divine attributes in the form of a servant who washes the disciples' feet.

Given that Jesus as Wisdom entails both the Christological (his divine identity) and the ethical (a wise way of life in the world), not surprisingly the Gospel conveys its ethical content in the form of its narrative christology/theology.[84] Trozzo, for example, observes Jesus's miraculous feeding in John 6 is not merely motivated by compassion for the needy, but functions to, "establish elevated Christology and elicit belief in Jesus … John presents belief as the fundamental ethical action: 'This is the work of God, that you would believe in the one whom he sent' (6:29). This episode demonstrates that Christology is essential for Johannine ethics."[85] Trozzo continues, "While many of Jesus's words and deeds in the Fourth Gospel are not imitable for believers, one central action invites imitation: the way Jesus responds to the Father."[86] Trozzo concludes, "Rather than articulating specific ethical principles, the Fourth Gospel invites the audience to share in the unity that Jesus shares with the Father. This new identity and mission determine how the audience should act in the world."[87]

Paralleling Trozzo's work, van der Watt considers what he calls "formulas of immanence" which express the unity of the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the believers. Among these is the analogy of the vine (John 15:1-11) "where the intimate relationship between Jesus and his followers that directly influences the ethical behaviour of the followers

---

the Son of Man," with John 14:6 "I am the way and the truth and the life, no comes to the Father except through me."

[82] The oft cited John 1:14 Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν.

[83] Keener, *John*, 936.

[84] Ruth Edwards, *Discovering John: Content, Interpretation, Reception* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2015), 59.

[85] Trozzo, *Johannine ethics*, 179.

[86] Trozzo, *Johannine ethics*, 179.

[87] Trozzo, *Johannine ethics*, 180.

is metaphorically expressed."[88] In this analogy the disciples "abide" in Jesus and Jesus "abides" in his disciples; notably, it is Jesus who bears the fruit "with and in his followers."[89] In the analogy of the vine, Jesus repeats the love command (cf. John 13:34 and 15:10-12), linking the vine discourse to the mimetic example of John 13. For whom is the fruit offered? The fruit stands in apposition to John 13:35, "By this all will know that you are my disciples, that you have love for one another." Gorman notes, "A hidden assumption in 13:35 is that the community of mutually loving disciples will also be a community of hospitality, a community of gathering others into its presence."[90] And this was earlier directly implicated in the footwashing, which is a hospitality gesture that exemplifies the guest-host relationship. The fruit we bear is love, and it is offered to all the world.[91]

Paul Hartog introduced the concept of "desiderative mimesis" which he describes as a call to imitate Jesus's compassionate disposition, so that we desire what he desires.[92] But there is another way to understand desiderative mimesis. René Girard wrote extensively on the subject, and he proposes: "To say that our desires are imitative or mimetic is to root them neither in their objects nor in ourselves but in a third party, the *model* or *mediator*, whose desire we imitate in the hope of resembling him or her."[93] When Girard points to a model or mediator, his notion of mimetic desire falls in line with what we have already stated about mimesis, namely that it requires a specific exemplar. Consider Jesus's words in John 13:35: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, that you have love for one another." From a Girardian perspective, it is the experience of communal love that is witnessed, and people are drawn to the gospel by a desire to experience that love. This form of mimesis is *missional*, and in the words of Gorman, "centrifugal," or outward oriented.[94] Moreover, as van der Watt

---

[88] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 211–220.
[89] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 217.
[90] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 94.
[91] In both rabbinic and kabbalistic Judaism there exist traditions in which the tzaddik is envisioned as an *axis mundi*. Jonathan Z. Smith, ed., "tzaddik," *HCDR,* 1103.
[92] Hartog, "Desiderative Mimesis," 13.
[93] Chris Flemming, *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 10; citing René Girard, *Resurrection from the Underground: Feodor Dostoevsky* (trans. James G. Williams; New York: Crossroad, 1997), 144. I am not claiming a 1:1 correlation with Girard's mimetics of desire, but as a point of comparison it synchronizes well with the missional utilitarianism of John 13:35.
[94] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 105.

notes "the behaviour of believers makes the Father and the Son visible to the world, branding the ethical behaviour of believers as revelatory."[95]

Returning to the vine analogy, van der Watt observes that when the unity between the Son and believers is described in terms of a vine and branches, this oneness in relationship is both functional and spatial. He then adds that this "Oneness in function is stated while the separate identities of Jesus and his followers are maintained (15:16-17)."[96] What van der Watt describes as "oneness of function" is called *theosis* by Michael Gorman. It is the process by which the believer becomes conformed to the image of God. When the world around us sees the love we share, all of creation gains access to God as it partakes of the fruit be bear. We become the sacred space and "central point" where heaven and earth meet. As we become like Jesus, we become that sacred temple. The community of believers becomes the *axis mundi*. With this in view, we may develop this discussion by arguing that one way to describe moral transformation as the goal of ethics is in terms of theosis. The community as *axis mundi* is here presented as an exploratory suggestion, but the work of Byers and Gorman suggests that the virtue ethics of the Gospel of John has a distinctly theotic character, and something akin to theosis was certainly contemplated in the minds of the earliest Christians.

Excursus: The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for εὐδαιμονία *and* ζωή

Since ethics is partly about "actualizing our fullest potential," Cornelis Bennema compares Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* with the Gospel of John's ethics, addressing the ethical goals of each. Aristotle and John employ unique terms to designate their ethical objectives. Aristotle's own ethical goal is "εὐδαιμονία," which is literally rendered as "good spirit" and often translated as "happiness" or "flourishing."[97] In John's Gospel divine life (ζωή) is the ethical objective or "τέλος." Both Aristotle and John make the same claim: our moral identity is at the heart of who we are. Yet, as Cui et al. note in their research, the eudaimonic benefits are tied to the strength of our identity commitment.[98] This thesis has embraced the ethical turn by making ethics a focus of biblical studies. If the claims of Maslow, Aristotle, Cui et al. are true, such a reorientation toward ethics is key to living a meaningful and fulfilling life. And if Bennema is correct in associating Aristotle's εὐδαιμονία

[95] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 216.
[96] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 217–8.
[97] Bennema, "Johannine Ethics," 437.
[98] Cui, *Moral Identity*, 3.

with John's ζωή, we are not simply formulating moral theories, but exploring some of the *necessary conditions* for experiencing the abundant life (John 10:10). Here, with respect to what is on offer in John, we consider further theosis. Our aim in the quote that introduced this section is to highlight that theosis is not so different in form, function, or spontaneity, from the love of a child who shows delight in sharing treats with a puppet friend, or who yearns to reciprocate the love they received.

Theosis may be compared to virtue ethics in that both are concerned not just with the performance of moral *acts*, but also with the cultivation of moral *agents.* With *theosis*, we explore virtue ethics in distinctly Christian categories. Necessary and sufficient conditions are a frequent topic in Stoic and Aristotelian debates. For Aristotle, virtue is *necessary*, but not sufficient for achieving εὐδαιμονία. For the Stoics, virtue was both necessary *and* sufficient.[99] In a moral progress paradigm, I suggest the virtues, experienced theotically, are necessary to all for the experience of ζωή, and sufficient *for the mature believer*.[100] For John and its Christian readers, one's identity as a moral agent is defined not so much through the cultivation of virtues, as by being conformed to the likeness of God. The divine life is manifested through us as we assume a divine identity.

This thesis has already discussed theosis in terms of the Christian community as *axis mundi*. In what follows we pursue this line of thought further in conjunction with Andrew Byers's ecclesial theosis and Michael Gorman's missional theosis. Michael Gorman is careful to note that "theosis, or deification, does not mean that the line between Creator and creature is blurred or crossed; humans do not become God in that sense; rather, they become *like* God by participating in the divine life."[101] This theme of *participation* is also used by Byers who endorses a participation that entails an ontological reconfiguration that ultimately includes a divine transformation.[102] Van der Watt objects to analogies with virtue ethics due to its anthropocentric emphasis that locate humans as moral agents. For Aristotle, virtuous

---

[99] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 21; compare with Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 2 (trans. R.D. Hicks; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 208.

[100] Compare 2 Cor 12:9 ἀρκεῖ σοι ἡ χάρις μου, and Phil 4:11 ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον ἐν οἷς εἰμι αὐτάρκης εἶναι, which together reflect the Stoic ideal of the sufficiency of virtue, and which, especially in 2 Cor 12:7–9, also reflect Paul's moral progress.

[101] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 16.

[102] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 159, 206 and *passim*.

acts bring glory to those who have spent their lives cultivating their moral character.[103] From the standpoint of theosis, *God* is the moral agent, and as we participate in his divine life, we bring glory to God as we do the works of God; as Jesus says, "for apart from Me you can do nothing."[104]

3.4.2 *Theosis in the Life of the Community: The Ecclesial Theosis of Andrew Byers*

Byers's exploration of theosis begins with his identification of filial terms in John's prologue where the offering of the incarnation is an invitation to participation in a divine family. The words θεός, λόγος, and ἄνθρωποι are eventually denoted respectively as 'Father,' the μονογενής (only begotten), and the 'children of God,' thereby expressing an ecclesiology characterized "through the dynamics of family membership."[105] Importantly, Jesus's identification as "only begotten," expresses affiliation with God yet also distinction from God.[106] By applying distinct terms to the Father, Jesus, and humanity, a corporate and divine shared identity is expressed that does not sacrifice the distinctiveness of its members. Byers's communal identity is a definitive characteristic of the church, in what he calls *ecclesial theosis*: "For John, there is no churchless Christ, nor Christless church."[107]

Byers goes on to observe that mimesis and theosis are not restricted to idioms of family membership. He observes how certain characters in John's Gospel are described by means of what he calls *inclusive parallels*: that is, the use of terminology specific to Jesus's divine identity that is also applied to his followers. For example, the "I Am" statement uttered on the lips of the man born blind (John 9:9), is the only use of the exact phrase on the lips of a character other than Jesus.[108] The Beloved Disciple rests in Jesus's bosom just as Jesus rests in the Father's bosom (John 1:18 cf. John 13:23).[109] And Peter is not only given the role of shepherd, but is told he will suffer sacrificial death which glorifies God.[110] Interestingly, these inclusive parallels function similarly to Walton's use of metonymy and

[103] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 326.
[104] John 15:5, ὅτι χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν
[105] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 239.
[106] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 35.
[107] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 28.
[108] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 207–8.
[109] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 205.
[110] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 221–3.

Trozzo's metalepsis, further supporting John's use of imagery to denote ontological properties.

A significant contribution of Byers's work is that his concept of theosis "is grounded within a Jewish religious framework."[111] He argues that John is methodically developing a oneness motif "through creative exegesis of his primary oneness texts from Israel's Scriptures, most importantly Deuteronomy 6:4 and Ezekiel 34 and 37."[112] Byers goes on to demonstrate the use of the Deuteronomy and Ezekiel texts in John 17, Jesus's prayer that concludes the Farewell Discourse. With this Byers's concept of theosis is also primarily *ecclesial*, in that it expansively encompasses the entire community of believers. He states:

> The prayer for ecclesial oneness in John 17 is not simply a call to doctrinal unanimity or internal social harmony; Jesus's request is an articulation of Jewish-Christian group identity … In addition to associating believers with the God of Israel, the language of ecclesial oneness also suggests their deification. To be "one" with this one God means more than correspondence or association.[113]

This line of thought is also evident in Byers discussion of John 8, where he identifies a connection between the oneness of Jesus with the Father and the oneness of the community with God. A community united with God has the capacity to recognize and love what comes from God. He notes that there is some debate as to whether the rejection of Jesus is here a rejection of the command to love God (Deut 6:4), or if it is a rejection of the command to love one's neighbor (Lev 19:18).[114] In either circumstance, the basis of Jesus's accusation that they are neither sons of Abraham nor sons of God is that they do not have the capacity to love. And so, Byers's approach to theosis points back to the love command articulated by Jesus in John 13:34 and 15:12, albeit through an alternative appeal to the same Hebrew Scriptures.

In summary, Byers's ecclesial theosis depicts the members of the church community as participating in many of the divine attributes unique to Jesus, such as his role as shepherd, divine association with the I Am, and loving union at the Father's side. The close association of these roles with Jesus's ministry portray the church community as divinely filiated into the family of God. But most importantly, Byers's theosis is *communal* and he describe the

---

[111] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 240.
[112] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 130.
[113] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 240.
[114] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 132.

function of the divine community in terms of a unified *identity* that is not simply correspondence, association, or agreement. In John 8, this identity is defined by its capacity to love. Additionally, Byers's community is one in which John 13:34 is a present reality. Those outside the community see the love, and through this love know its members are disciples of Jesus. Ecclesial theosis, if taken seriously, offers a litmus test for the vibrancy and commitment of the church. Do those outside the faith see the community as an example of Jesus's sacrificial love?

3.4.3 *Theosis as* Missio Dei*: The Missional Theosis of Michael Gorman*

Both Byers and Gorman reference Irenaeus' early expression of theosis, in which he links the believer's likeness to Christ with the incarnation; Jesus "became what we are so that we could become what he is."[115] Believers do not only imitate Jesus, but are, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the continuation of his presence and ministry. For Byers this presence is embodied in the life of the community. Michael Gorman builds on Byers's idea of community and describes his own concept of theosis as a transformative participation in God's ongoing mission to the world. He uses the phrase *missional theosis* in his book *Abide and Go*, and states that his contribution is "something of a marriage" of the work of Bennema and Byers.[116]

Gorman unites mimesis and community to his own missional theosis in the following quote from David Rensberger:

> Johannine spirituality fundamentally consists in the *mutual indwelling* of the Triune God (Father, Son, and Spirit) and Jesus's disciples such that disciples *participate* in the divine love and life, and therefore in the life-giving mission of God, thereby both *demonstrating their likeness to God as God's children* and *becoming more and more like God as they become like his Son by the work of the Spirit*. This spirituality can be summarized in the phrase "abide and go," based on John 15.[117]

For Gorman, the divine life has a distinctly *missional* character rooted in the Triune God's mission for all creation which he calls the *missio Dei*. Gorman states, "This gracious desire, or purpose, was begun in the creation of the world through Jesus the Word; expressed in the covenantal relationship with Israel; maintained in spite of human hostility; promised through

---

[115] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 13; also Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 67.
[116] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 109.
[117] David Rensberger, "Spirituality and Christology in Johannine Sectarianism," in *Word, Theology, and Community in John*, eds. R. Alan Culpepper and Fernando F. Segovia (St. Louis: Chalice, 2002), 173–88, 184. As cited in Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 8.

the prophets to be renewed, deepened, and expanded in the eschatological age; and fulfilled in the incarnation, ministry, and death/resurrection (exaltation) of the Son."[118]

We noted that John's divine life is one of abundance, and Gorman's missional theosis describes a life abounding to such an extent that believers cannot help but spill God's grace into the world: believers, "have been infused with [the] Spirit to bear faithful witness to Jesus, extending his shalom, forgiveness, and life to the world, to all."[119] Indeed, Gorman prefers to call John 13-17 the *missional* discourse and draws attention to the use of the word *apostolos* (sent one) in 13:16, which implies that the disciples are to be *sent* to replicate the example of the footwashing.[120] This theme is immediately revisited in 13:20 where, although using a different word, Jesus says that whoever receives the one He has sent (*pemps*) also receives the One who sent (*ton pempsanta*) Him, then followed by 13:35 "By this all will know you are my disciples." This sending and receiving motif concludes the discourse in Jesus's closing prayer, where the witness of the disciples serves to convince the world "that You have sent (*apesteilas*) Me."[121] A key mimetic focus of the missional discourse is that believers become like Jesus's in sharing his mission to the world.

Gorman's missional focus and use of the word *shalom* draw attention to some unique characteristics of the Gospel's ethics that are absent from the naturalistic and non-theistic philosophies of the Greeks and modern science. Namely, that the *missio Dei* encompasses the *whole of creation* and infuses it with a sense of teleological significance. Gorman's expansive missional theosis imbues the believing community with a "centrifugal" or outward focus where it participates in the *missio Dei*, as divine agents working to realize God's own teleological objectives for creation. Though Gorman references *shalom* sparingly in his writing, one cannot neglect what is implied by extending the *shalom* of Jesus. The *missio Dei* is not exclusively concerned with a "spiritual" or "eschatological" fulfillment but promotes the abundant flourishing of creation in the here and now.

Gorman and Byers both place strong emphasis on the *filial* nature of the Gospel's theosis; it is a distinctly *relational* concept. As such, in divine relationship with God, believers replicate that relationship through the creation of divine communities. Gorman

---

[118] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 182.
[119] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 183.
[120] Here and throughout this portion of the discussion I use Gorman's transliterations rather than the Greek text.
[121] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 92–96.

appropriately concludes his final chapter with what he calls "Examples of Contemporary Missional Theosis," which are communities of believers working together, and sometimes living together, to imitate Christ, extend his shalom, and transform the neighborhoods and cities in which they dwell.[122]

3.5 *Conclusion*

An important aim of this thesis is to argue that the Gospel's narrative theology offers an explicit ethics. As part of this argument, we discussed the justiciable nature of law, and demonstrated that "explicit commands" are not inherently ethical. In this chapter we observed that the Gospel's love command lacks the justiciable features of "law." Akima therefore treats the love command as a "Wisdom-Law" or ethical principle. A focus of Chapter 1 was to emphasize the inherent difficulty of making ethical claims. Hays's summation that the Bible contains a variety of ethical injunctions from a variety of perspectives complicates matters. Moreover, modern human subject research demonstrates that people employ a variety of ethical theories, each with its own ethical objectives. The "love command" explicated in Jewish and Christian traditions was already recognized as the summation of the law and the prophets, and therefore offers a unifying principle from which to develop a coherent system of ethics. I argue that the ability of children to understand and follow the command further demonstrates its viability as an ethical principle and that an ethical theory based on the love command must remain consistent with its child-like simplicity.

The previous chapter concluded with the suggestion that the footwashing is portrayed as an "inverse" transfiguration. The example of the footwashing mimics Moses's experience of receiving the second set of stone tablets and God's response to his two-fold request to see God's glory and to know God's ways. This correspondence to Exodus 34 positions the footwashing as both a visual expression of God's glory (God is "seen" in Jesus's example) and as instruction to know God's ways. In the context of Greco-Roman ethical theory, ethical instruction was conducted through mimesis, and the mimetic language used to describe the footwashing offers the reader a specific imitable example of the love command. The work of Sookgoo Shin, Margaret Hampson, and Andreas Vakirtzis all understand mimesis as

[122] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 179–201.

implying moral progress. The disciples of John's Gospel have clearly not attained perfection, and even the apostle Paul admits his own frequent faults.[123]

Our discussion on theosis offers both an ethical ideal to which the disciples strive, and an ethical "τέλος" which affords the moral agent with the benefit of experiencing the abundant "ζωή" found only in God. Theosis offers an account of human nature that provides equally for ethical objectives and for a relation to God. In John's Gospel, theosis is subjected to careful arrangement and organization in a way that can be likened to a kind of system that finds its climax in the footwashing and Farewell Discourse recorded in the Gospel.[124]

Throughout the discussion we have discussed elements of the 1st century cognitive environment and made the effort to avoid what van der Watt calls the "referential fallacy" which draws a straight line from what the text says to the reality outside the text.[125] Understood within its cognitive environment we have sought an ethic that unites form and function in a manner akin to virtue ethics. We have also prioritized the role of ethics in the life of the *community*, in opposition to modern theories that individuate ethical responsibilities. Moreover, an ethics of theosis lends itself to themes of *axis mundi*, especially as the divine presence is instantiated in the lives of believers and the ecclesia. A final element we addressed was theomachy and the Farewell Discourse as a pre-battle exhortation. From the perspective of theosis, Jesus's journey to the cross and his rebuke of Peter offer imitable examples of how the ecclesia is to fight its own moral battles. Briefly we linked theomachy to the Greek concepts of honor and glory as bestowed through victory in battle. If Christ's victory on the cross provides an example for us to follow, then we also achieve honor and display God's glory through imitation of his examples in the footwashing and beyond.[126] In all these he relinquished his ego and was supremely humble, even unto death on a cross.

---

[123] E.g., Phil 3:12, Οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον ἢ ἤδη τετελείωμαι, and Rom 7:15 οὐ γὰρ ὃ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω, ἀλλ' ὃ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ.

[124] Kirk, *Greek Myths*, 300; I have applied the wording of Kirk's description of Greek Mythology to John's Gospel.

[125] Van der Watt, *Grammar*, 98.

[126] Compare John 17:6, 12 and the honor received in battle which is exemplified through the acquisition of spoils that frequently include humans. Edwards, *Poet*, 89, 123, 150–3, 235.

Chapter 4: Bringing It All Back Home

Chapter 4 concludes this thesis and will be divided into two main parts. The first part will review the argument of the thesis, drawing attention to its main points and their implications in relation to a select range of themes and issues. The second part will apply our understanding of the love command to Christian engagement with two pressing concerns: religious violence and the pandemic. I believe that I have successfully argued the thesis statement, namely that the ethical content of John is not restricted to occasional commands but is robustly and explicitly evident throughout its narrative. Ethics has always been a matter of moral reasoning, not authoritarian commands, and ethics has always been a subject of the stories we tell. The Gospel of John is no different. At the conclusion of the previous chapter, I suggested that John's "ethical theory" was one of progressive moral development, one which begins as a simple command, grows through the imitation (mimesis) of Jesus's example, and culminates in theosis where we surrender ourselves to God who is the moral agent working through our lives. The following review indicates the main steps taken along the way to establishing this conclusion.

4.1 The Road Traveled

In the introduction we addressed the thesis problem. The term "ethics" has often been understood by Johannine scholars as delimitating moral injunctions and certain literary forms. And the Gospel's singular command to "love one another" has been regarded as insufficient to deem John as possessing much of an ethical focus. More recently, though, certain scholars have begun to view the Gospel as "implicitly" ethical by recognizing ethical intentions embedded within John's narrative theology. Yet the peculiar wording of the love command in the Gospel of John, distinct from its synoptic counterparts, has also led some scholars to suggest that John's command restricts "love" to community members. In the course of considering various introductory matters, I argued that John's Gospel was both familiar with early Christian traditions and also intended for the broader Christian community; thus, its love command and ethical interests are more wide-ranging in their nature and scope.

The first chapter began with an exploration of human nature referencing human subject research on aspects of the current moral landscape. It then defined and correlated

relevant terms, discussing the nature and purpose of laws, morality, and *ethics*. The main thrust of the argument has been that *ethics* is a *method* of *moral reasoning*. We are not thinking or acting *ethically* if we are not engaged in a conscious deliberation on the reasons for our actions and how those actions define our moral character. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the "ethical turn," a significant way of theorizing culture, society, and politics, as well as the arts and creative enterprise that re-positions ethics at the center of inquiry. In anthropology, for example, there is a growing consensus that ethical priorities across cultures reflect a "virtue ethic" approach, and in literature there is agreement that "All literary works embed practical aims, which are mainly about moral enlightenment and education."[1]

Chapter two was concerned to indicate that the literary expression of ethical content need not be limited to explicit moral injunctions or focused treatises but can be robustly explored through a variety of literary styles, not least the narratives and dialogue of the Gospel of John. Through a brief review of Plato's *Republic,* I argued that narrative is perfectly appropriate for ethical deliberation and is often the preferred method of moral inquiry. A notable feature of narrative is its setting within a robust *cognitive environment*. Narratives frequently draw from the assumed knowledge of their culture's traditions and draw inferences and conclusions without having to recount those traditions in detail. We specifically considered metaleptic devices (Walton's metonymy) to unite form and function, the divine presence of God (and foreign gods) through *axis mundi*, and the unique role of "religion" which cannot be conceptualized as *sui generis*. These aspects of the cognitive environment of the near east and Mediterranean cultures impact our understanding of the narratives surrounding the footwashing and Farewell Discourse. The chapter concluded with an interpretation of the footwashing episode of John 13 that incorporated the arguments made up to this point. It first contended that John is aware of and in conversation with early Christian literary traditions, specifically the transfiguration. Next it argued that John's narrative is written with specific ethical intent that reflects an approach akin to the virtue ethics that dominated moral discourse in the 1st century. And finally, it demonstrated that John's narrative incorporates elements of Greek and Jewish cognitive environments that add depth to the text's interpretation.

---

[1] Klenk, *Moral Philosophy*, 338–39; Zhenzhao, "Ethical Literary Criticism," 88.

In chapter three, taking account of the cognitive environments previously discussed, I provided a reading of the footwashing and Farewell Discourse, viewing and focusing on the Gospel of John's love command through the lens of moral progress. In its simplest form the command can be understood and obeyed by the youngest of children. Indeed, a child-like approach to the command is warranted here and elsewhere throughout the New Testament, where new and immature believers are addressed as little children (e.g., John 13:33). Moral progress and growth through imitation is a common theme in Greek philosophy, and the chapter then explored the command in the company of certain Johannine scholars who have compared John's use of mimetic language with the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition. Finally, we considered the command in relation to the doctrine of theosis, which has roots in early Christianity but is newly explored by authors outside the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. Theosis functions as the goal of moral progress, can be understood in a variety of ways, and is highly compatible with many of the cognitive environments introduced in the previous chapter. Here the love command, as exemplified in the footwashing and throughout the Farewell Discourse, envisages and entails the believer and community participating in God's life and mission in the world. As moral transformation, love is what love does, and theosis rejects "dirty hands" approaches to ethics. There is no room for violence if God's divine glory is revealed in the mimetic exemplar of the footwashing. Having reviewed the overall argument and steps taken, I will now reflect a little more closely at the nature and implications of some of the key elements, themes, and issues involved.

4.1.1 *The Human Condition*

The problem addressed in this thesis may be summarized as follows: The love command is simple, well understood in 1st century Judaism, and is a recuring theme in all four Gospels and throughout the New Testament corpus. Yet, as Jennifer Knust observes, too often it fails to function as a reliable prophylactic against hatred, violence, and disregard. Why? Chapter one identified several generalizable research findings that bear on this question. Because these findings can be applied to most people, I shall use "we" and "our" language when discussing them.

Most of us have an inflated sense of our own moral superiority.[2] We make moral decisions out of self-interest, and offer "moral reasons" for so doing after the fact.[3] We choose methods of moral reasoning that best suit our self-interests.[4] However, much of our moral decision making is governed not by moral reasoning, but by intuition, which is almost entirely inherited through upbringing.[5] Yet our moral identity and way of life remains important. Certainly, different cultures have different values, and individual experiences within cultures will have an impact on our view of the world and our concepts of justice.[6] Yet, through all this, the attributes we most commonly apply to ourselves as fundamentally indicative of our self-identity are our moral attributes.[7]

Aristotle and the Gospel of John agree that our eudaimonic well-being is tied to our moral identity.[8] Research on our moral self-image (MSI) demonstrates that we are preoccupied with persuading ourselves that we are moral, even when we fail to meet our own moral ideals.[9] The Christian church's failure to oppose the German Reich in WW2, and the "Good Samaritan" study conducted by Darley and Batson, were introduced to illustrate that as Christians, we are not especially exceptional in our moral behavior.[10] These state of affairs can lead us to agree with Luther that killing is an act of love and even reason that Putin's incursion into Ukraine is a form of loving sacrifice.[11] If the love command is to be understood as a deterrent against hatred, violence, and disregard, then we must offer an interpretation that cuts through this moral quagmire, and offers a clearer and more compelling way forward. This thesis argues the Gospel of John (and broadly, the rest of the New Testament) understands the love command as the foundational principle of moral reasoning. Whether as command, mimesis, or theosis, love always means love.

4.1.2 *Ethics as a Method*

The need for laws, systems of morality, and ethics would seem obvious considering the aforementioned human condition. In a world where people make moral decisions based

---

[2] Tappin, "Illusion," 624.
[3] DeScioli, "Equity or Equality," 5.
[4] Uhlmann et al., "Moral Principles," 489.
[5] Mackenzie, "Emotions," 244; Gini, *Hard to be Good,* 23–24.
[6] Hafer, et al., "Belief in a Just World," 438.
[7] Everett et al., "The Moral Self," 938.
[8] Cui, *Moral Identity*, 3.
[9] Jordan et al., *Moral Self–Image*, 14, citing Kernis and Goldman, "Stability and Variability."
[10] Darley and Batson, *Jerusalem*, 107.
[11] Luther, "Soldiers," 289–305; Anugrah Kumar, "Putin quotes," n.p.

on self-interest, and moral values vary according to one's upbringing and life experience, there needs to be a standard of conduct that we all agree on. In terms of their *function* to regulate behavior, standards do not need to be inherently moral, or even "good." They just need to be enforced. So, this thesis drew a distinction between *ethics*, *morality,* and *laws*.

Jarrett Zigon helpfully distinguishes *ethics* from the broader scope of what we call *morality*. *Ethics* is inherently reflective, whereas *morality* "is a kind of habitus or an unreflective and unreflexive disposition of everyday social life … is not thought out beforehand, nor is it noticed when it is performed. It is simply done. It is one's everyday embodied way of being in the world."[12] This is in accord with Haidt's views of moral reasoning and moral dumbfounding, as well as models of moral development. Having been habituated to an unreflective disposition, moral decisions are typically made on intuition, and in practice the most common modes of moral reasoning disregard ethical theories.

We also drew a distinction between the *descriptive* and the *normative*. Many of the values people consider to be *moral* are *descriptively* moral, that is, unique to their cultural milieu. This includes laws and specific moral injunctions. The descriptive nature of Old Testament laws is readily acknowledged by Jews and Christians alike who either reject them as culturally specific or adapt them to modern times. This is hermeneutically significant because our interpretation of discrete admonitions in the Scriptures must not be limited to "a set of laws or commands sanctioned by the promised punishments or rewards of God," but must also "give an account of human nature that provides equally for ethical objectives and for a relation to God."[13] In the terminology adopted by van der Watt, the *what* of the command is inseparable from the *why*. This applies equally to New Testament injunctions, and we cannot properly be said to be acting *ethically* when we do not know the *moral reasoning* for our actions. Moral reasoning is what allows us to adapt and apply discrete biblical injunctions to modern life. This discussion contributes to the broader discussion of John's ethics by defining *ethics* as a method, thereby distinguishing it from morality and law. This distinction allows us to assert clearer moral objectives.

---

[12] Zigon, *Morality*, 17.
[13] Williams, *Ethics*, 32–33.

4.1.3 *The Good*

In a discussion on ethics, we must at some point address ethics' most fundamental question, "What is 'the Good?'" All moral claims are made in reference to what is Good, and we addressed two ethical systems that attempted to define 'the Good.' In deontology, *good* is understood to lie within the act itself, and in alignment with Kant's categorical imperative, good acts can be applied universally.[14] In utilitarianism, the *goodness* of an act lies in the outcomes of the act. Moral philosophers such as Stephen De Wijze argue that the acts themselves can be morally ambiguous, and if the consequences of an act provide a sufficiently great good, even acts that cause harm can be determined *good* based on those outcomes.[15] Deontology and Utilitarianism offer competing definitions of *Good*, but to say that what is good is applied universally, or provides the greatest outcomes, does not leave us with a clear concept of what is good, except in reference to the application or outcome of ostensibly and purportedly moral acts.

G. E. Moore argues that "the Good" is incapable of definition.[16] Similarly, the often-used phrase "God is Good" fails to say much about God or "the Good" and is therefore something of a tautology. This tautology is the subject of Plato's *Euthyphro*. John's Gospel offers a moral universe in which Wisdom/*Logos* is a fundamental constituent of the universe. Wisdom can be generally apprehended through the experience of life (the theme of the Wisdom literature) but is most fully explained (ἐξηγήσατο) by Jesus (John 1:18). By reference to John's use of Exod 33-34 in the Gospel's prologue and in chapter 12, God reveals himself to Moses through his Name. Utterance of his divine attributes thus offer a touchstone where what is "Good" can be measured without resorting to tautology. Moreover, John's description of Jesus as the *exegesis* of the Father provides a mimetic exemplar of the divine attributes. I argued that John's Gospel associates the glory revealed to Moses on the mountain with Jesus's manifestation of the Father's glory through the footwashing, suffering, and glorification on the cross. John's Gospel concretizes God's "Good" attributes through the footwashing. We can begin to say, "God is Good" and have some sense of what Good is and how God's goodness is on display. In identifying a clear scriptural referent for "the Good",

[14] Kant, *The Moral Law*, 22.
[15] De Wijze, "Dirty Hands," 881.
[16] Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 9–10.

this thesis contributes toward further scholarly discussion towards establishing ethical objectives.

4.1.4 *Virtue Ethics and Theosis*

We noted that Greek philosophy and the Gospel of John were aware of deontic and utilitarian approaches to ethics.[17] But we also observed that in the first century virtue ethics dominated ethical discourse; and, within virtue ethics, neither the acts nor their consequences are inherently moral. This concept is a difficult stretch for western thinkers but is approximated by the following narrative reflecting an eastern environment:

> Once upon a time there was a Chinese farmer whose horse ran away, and all the neighbors came around to commiserate that evening. "So sorry to hear your horse has run away. This is most unfortunate." The farmer said, "Maybe." The next day the horse came back bringing seven wild horses with it, and everybody came back in the evening and said, "Oh, isn't that lucky. What a great turn of events, you now have eight horses!" And the farmer said, "Maybe." The next day his son tried to break one of the horses and ride it but he was thrown, and broke his leg, and they all said, "Oh dear, that's too bad, "and he said, "Maybe." The following day the conscription officers came around to conscript people into the army and they rejected his son because of his broken leg. Again, all the people came around and said, "Isn't that great!" and he said, "Maybe."[18]

In the story the events are assessed as either good or bad, both inherently and consequentially, by the Chinese farmer's neighbors. The assessments of each event change as the story progresses, and it is only the farmer himself who refrains from judging their moral value. This illustrates one of the key critiques of modern utilitarian ethics: we can never know the full range of consequences resulting from our actions.[19] However, as Jesus suggests in John's Farewell Discourse, we can know whether our actions accord with the vine into which we are grafted. In virtue ethics, the focus shifts from what it is right to do, to what it is good to be.[20]

Like virtue ethics, theosis also presupposes a unity of form and function, which we already noted is an emphasis of the "True Vine" discourse.[21] Theosis involves a form of *axis mundi*: God's presence is embodied in the life of the community who together participate in

---

[17] Seregin, "Deontology," 32–47; Hill and Blazejak, "Stoicism and Utilitarian Thought," 117; Winston, "Nomos," 85–105; Locke et al., "Biblical Ethics," 80–89.
[18] Alan Watts, *Eastern Wisdom, Modern Life: Collected Talks 1960–1969* (Novato: New World, 2006), 146.
[19] DeRoo and Lightbody, *Logic*, 12.
[20] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 3.
[21] "Good" fruit born by "good" trees is not a theme exclusive to John (e.g., Matt 7:17; Gal 5:22–23 etc.).

the divine life. We saw that Andrew Byers emphasized an ecclesial theosis, and Michael Gorman a missional theosis. Here theosis is markedly different from modern concepts of religion as *sui generis* and individuated: the Christian faith and ethic is embodied and enacted in communion, with God, the church, and society at large.

4.1.5 *Cognitive Environment and Narrative: Ancient and Contemporary*

An important element in the argument of this thesis is that it is preferable to situate the Gospel's ethics in the cognitive environment of its cultural context of origin rather than read modern deontic or consequentialist theories back into the text. This would be an example of van der Watt's "referential fallacy." A key feature of the cognitive environment of the ancient world is the use of narrative to reflect on the human condition and grapple with philosophical problems. A main point of this thesis has been to argue for the capacity of narrative to make ethical claims. G. S. Kirk observes that myth has always been used to communicate a wide variety of human experience that includes ethical truth, and the works of Homer and Hesiod had already reduced this material to a kind of system.[22] Our consideration of Plato's *Republic* further demonstrated this point, and it is the conclusion of many modern scholars within the ethical turn that, "All literary works embed practical aims, which are mainly about moral enlightenment and education … Therefore, moral teaching is the fundamental function of literature."[23]

Like the myths of the Mediterranean and Plato's *Republic*, John's Gospel "assumes" the reader's cognitive environment and evokes it through various often oblique references.[24] John's use of the Jewish Scriptures is characteristic of storytelling of neighboring cultures.[25] Unlike commands and treatises, these literary forms are designed to embrace traditions that extend well beyond the text of the written page. These evocations prompt ethical reflection through a reevaluation of existing paradigms, and in the sense of Zigon's definition, are truly ethical in a way that commands and treatises are not.[26] But more to the point, nearly every theological and ethical point in the Gospel is illustrated with a vivid narrative or analogy.

---

[22] Kirk, *Greek Myths*, 300.
[23] Zhenzhao, "Ethical literary criticism," 88.
[24] Kirk, *Greek Myths*, 14.
[25] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Baylor University Press: Kindle Edition, 2016), 284; Hays does not make the analogy, but his description of John resembles Kirk's assessment of Greek myth.
[26] Zigon, *Morality*, 18; people do the hard work of ethics only when confronted with a moral dilemma that, "leads to a person or persons ethically working to overcome this question or dilemma."

Consideration of certain contemporary cognitive environments which share common features with ancient antecedents may also be instructive here. Johnson Thomaskutty and John Dickson introduce aspects of the biblical cognitive environments that persist today in cultures largely unknown in the west. Dickson's volume *Humilitas* observes that the communal relationships of the 1st century Mediterranean world followed an honor-shame paradigm. Dickson points out that *humility* was normalized as a Christian virtue, though clashed with Greco-Roman notions of honor. Thomaskutty's volume notes that the honor-shame perspective dominates many eastern cultures. His volume is written from the perspective of scholars living in these cultures and can speak of these environments as if from a shared *Sitz im Leben*. The honor-shame dynamic certainly affects the ethical injunctions of the biblical texts, but also add significant cultural nuance to its narratives.[27]

In addition to concepts of honor-shame, eastern cultures have recent and visceral experiences of colonialism, and these scholars can speak to a reading of the text that incorporates the perspective of a people dominated by a foreign power and struggling to retain their identity. Further similarities to the biblical worldview shared by Asian cultures are the perspectives of rural communities with close familial ties, collectivism, a cycle of life marked by regular communal festivals, and relational hierarchies that may include dominant patriarchies.[28] Other similarities can be noted, and significantly, many of these perspectives are shared by cultures accessible to biblical scholars, but which are positioned outside our western paradigms.

4.1.6 *Theomachy*

Theomachy, in its strictest sense denotes a war *between* gods, and so is not specifically applicable to Israelite monotheism. But a spiritual war in a moral universe *is* a recurring theme, possibly implied in the first chapter of Genesis and elsewhere in the Old Testament, thematic in second temple Judaism, and evident from the first chapter of John's Gospel onwards. Moreover, in Greek mythology, notably Homer's Iliad, *glory* and *honor* figure prominently. They are bestowed through prowess in battle, and if intimated in the Farewell Discourse, the means of spiritual warfare is also prescribed by the love command

[27] Johnson Thomaskutty, "The Gospel of John," in *An Asian Introduction to the New Testament* (ed. Johnson Thomaskutty; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2022), 146, notes the significance of Jesus's miracle at Cana in terms of an honor–shame perspective.

[28] I use the term *Asian* here in deference to the title of Thomaskutty's book.

and exemplified in the footwashing. In other words, as a pre-battle speech the Farewell Discourse counsels battle tactics for the ensuing struggle. God's glory is specifically on display in the life of the believer and community when the example of the footwashing is emulated.

4.1.7 *The Holy Spirit*

Up to this point this thesis has refrained from any explicit discussion of the Holy Spirit. This is due to my reluctance to describe the role of the Spirit in vague amorphous terms. Still, certain things may be noted in brief. Beginning in 1:3-4, John's use of life (ζωή) that was the light of humanity probably assumes the role of the Spirit as an animating and empowering agent throughout the Gospel, as it is the Spirit of God that breathes life into Adam (Gen 2:7). Keener observes that the Spirit's functions in the Farewell Discourse parallel the activity of Jesus's ministry.[29] Tom Hatina also sees an insinuation of Gen 2:7 but locates the life-giving breath of the spirit in the insufflation of John 20:22.[30] If the Gospel author is familiar with the writings of Luke-Acts, this insufflation, often referred to as the "Johannine Pentecost," presents the reader with some very obvious incongruities.[31] Taken together, the work of Hatina and Keener may suggest a more prominent role for the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John. The Gospel, written decades after the resurrection, may function to concretize the ministry of the Spirit in the life of the next-generation disciples through a metaphorical analogue with Jesus's earthly mission. This suggestion is further supported in that it is Jesus's ministry that is extended by "Another Advocate" (14:16), who is operative in the life and mission of the believer and community in the world at large.

The Farewell Discourse is an extended exposition of the love command, which is itself a summary of the law and the prophets. The command is uttered by the incarnation of Wisdom, who is also the architect of the *kosmos*. The wide-ranging ministry of the Holy Spirit must be understood in context of the love command and claims of the Spirit's "leading" in the life of the believer must be measured against the litmus test of the love command exemplified in the footwashing. Moreover, Wisdom's role in the cosmic order implies that the love command, as located and explicated in the Farewell Discourse, is

[29] Keener, *John*, 964–5.
[30] Thomas Hatina, "John 20,22 in Its Eschatological Context: Promise or Fulfillment?" *Bib* 74.2 (1993): 196–219; Hatina bolsters his case with ample support from the Targums.
[31] Hatina clearly articulates the points of contention, "John 20,22," *passim*.

integral to God's grand design. In an ethic of theosis, the moral animus is empowered and sustained by the Holy Spirit embodied and enacted in the church and wider world.

4.1.8 *Summary*

I have argued that the Gospel of John's love command is an *ethical* injunction, to be understood within its wider narrative context and "in conversation" with its cognitive environment. Like the love command of the Synoptics Gospels, the Gospel of John's love command functions as a summary of the law and the prophets. It was already understood in a broad ethical context and not as a solitary command. Along with Gorman and Byers, I have also proposed an ethics of *theosis*. Theosis is similar to the *virtue ethics* of the 1st century, in that good acts are in accordance with virtue, eudaimonic well-being is in some way intimately contingent upon our moral behavior, and the goal of ethics is the transformation of the individual as a moral agent. The emphasis on cultivating the virtues of moral agents correlates with unity of form and function and contradicts any "dirty hands" ethics. On a theosis based understanding, loving outcomes are achieved by loving moral agents who together perform godly acts of love in the world (John 13:35). Moreover, however imperfectly, I have argued for an ethic that offers a non-tautological definition of "the good." Having delineated specific ethical conditions, the Gospel of John's love command can be discussed in *normative* terms, and if not accepted by all rational people, can at least be intelligibly debated.[32]

In chapters two and three I also argued that the footwashing of John 13 functions as an "inverse" transfiguration. From this perspective, the moral injunction to love one another *just as I loved you* (13:34) taken in reference to the transfigured footwashing Christ, could be construed as a call to radical moral transformation. From the perspective of moral development and our largely *inherited* moral identities, a transfigured moral identity is quite literally a new life requiring the birth of a new identity. This can be correlated with and lends nuance to Christian concepts of baptism, new birth, repentance, and the filial language used to describe the Christian community. Additionally, it gives further credence to ethical theories that prioritize moral agents (virtue ethics) over actions (deontology) and outcomes

[32] Nicolas Baumard and Pascal Boyer, "Explaining Moral Religions," *TiCS* 17.6 (2013): 272–280. Baumard and Boyer here note that some variation of the command to "do unto others" appears not only in all three Abrahamic religions, but also in Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism and Jainism.

(utilitarianism). John's ethics are concerned primarily with the identity of the believer within the family of God. To adopt a new ethic is to assume a new identity, and John's language of filial identity reflects this conversion. The second part of this chapter intends to contrast modern deontic and utilitarian ethics with the practice of virtue ethics in the early centuries of the common era.

4.2 *A Choice of Two Paths*

This thesis began with Knust's claim, "The love command was not, and is not now, a reliable prophylactic against hatred, violence, and disregard." I have contended that the command to love one another is unambiguous in its understanding of the word "love." I have also proposed an ethical theory of theosis which incorporates the love command and is consistent with a simple interpretation of "love" that could be understood by a child or someone who is naïve to Christian ethics. Yet I have also argued that the journey from "command" to "theosis" is an ongoing path of moral progress where we learn to be like Jesus through imitation of his example. I believe that the unambiguous command to love one another, when placed in the narrative context of Jesus's humble self-giving, is a deterrent against hatred, violence, and disregard *when people follow the command and imitate Jesus's example*.[33]

This final section will first address the proliferation of religious violence. This thesis argues that it is only with disregard to the love command, and in deference to forms of moral reasoning that allow for "dirty hands" scenarios, that violence in the name of God can be legitimated. Next, I will consider the work of sociologist Rodney Stark on the spread of Christianity in the pre-Constantinian era. Stark presents various hypotheses concerning what contributed to the spread of Christianity, many of which reflect a lived expression of the love command. One of the more pertinent examples offered by Stark for this study is the early Christian response to pandemics.

4.2.1 *Religious Trauma and Violence*

In a common refrain found among evangelical churches, the moral degradation of our once Christian societies is often lamented. Such laments may be overly concerned with the moral behavior of those outside the Christian faith. Michael Gorman offers an observation that should be thoughtfully contemplated, "For Christians in the West, it is crucial that they

[33] John Dickson, *Humilitas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 85–95.

recognize the collapse of Christendom as a positive development, and that they see the church appropriately and biblically as a distinctive subculture within a larger, non-Christian culture."[34] The collapse of Christian society should compel us to evaluate our ethical priorities. To what extent is the great commission's concern with making disciples fulfilled by the creation of secular societies that *appear* Christian?

Joshua Cockayne, David Efird, and Jack Warman observe, "Many people lose their faith in God, not because of some knock-down argument against it, but rather because they were knocked down themselves, whether literally or figuratively, by the seemingly faithful."[35] This thesis has proposed a normative Christian ethic rooted in the love command. This ethic asks believers to follow Christ's example with a view to transforming their moral character to be conformed to his image. Ideally, they will bear fruits of love as a testimony to others. The perpetration and toleration of religious violence would appear antithetical to this ethic. This is especially evident in the form of religious *trauma*, that is, the experience of trauma in specifically religious contexts. As Christian churches decry the collapse of traditional values in society, pastors and congregations may be unaware of how much harm is caused through attempts to instantiate those professed Christian values.

In their chapter on religious *deconversion* through spiritually violent trauma, Cockayne et al. describe religious trauma in terms of four causes. First, it is justified by some relevant authority on religious grounds. Second, it is inflicted for religious reasons. Third, it is the result of actions performed by (someone claiming) religious authority. Finally, it is framed as a putative action of the divine itself. Religious trauma can result in a shattered religious self that may in turn cause, depression, anxiety, or hypervigilance, sometimes but not necessarily triggered in religious contexts. It may also result in a shattered religious worldview that leads the victim to believe that all or a specific religion is mistaken or misguided; that religious communities or people are dangerous, cruel, or uncaring; or that the divine itself is dangerous, cruel, or uncaring.[36]

---

[34] Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers,* Third Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020), 172.
[35] Joshua Cockayne, David Efird, and Jack Warman, "Shattered Faith: The Social Epistemology of Deconversion by Spiritually Violent Religious Trauma," in *Voices from the Edge: Centring Marginalized Perspectives in Analytic Theology* (eds. Michelle Panchuk and Michael Rea; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 119.
[36] Cockayne et al., "Shattered Faith," 122.

It is unfortunate that vivid examples can easily be offered for each of these causes and impacts. For instance, an example of "trauma in response to [putative] actions of the divine" would be the claims of the Reverend Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson that the September 11 terror attacks were allowed by an angry God because the United States "had become a nation of abortion, homosexuality, secular schools and courts, and the American civil liberties union."[37] Our concern in this example is to note the inherent harm caused by such claims, but also to observe that from an *ethical* perspective, this claim implies a particular system of ethics. Ethical behavior has been reduced to what Williams calls "a set of laws or commands sanctioned by the promised punishments or rewards of God."[38] Ethical behavior no longer reflects moral reasoning whenever obedience is leveraged through fear.

Trauma can be caused by someone claiming religious authority with or without claims of divine sanction. A recent example of the abuse of authority is the Southern Baptist Convention's coverup of widespread sexual abuse among its leadership.[39] Like the scandals that struck Mars Hill and the ministry of Ravi Zacharias, the sexual abuse among the SBC leadership was hidden for fear it would negatively impact a large and profitable ministry. Again, this thesis stresses the point that a Christ-imitating love ethic, if practiced, would have minimized the harm caused by these Christian ministries. The motives for the cover-ups were utilitarian, and perhaps also construed as "for the greater good." In what appears to be a form of "dirty hands" reasoning, Christian "ministries" are expected to meet Christian moral objectives without patterning themselves after the example of Christ.

Sometimes religious trauma is not acknowledged as being traumatic, and it is inflicted with divine sanction. For example, many Christians have long disparaged homosexuality and LGBTQ+ lifestyles as unnatural violations of God's intended gender roles. Whether one agrees or disagrees with this position, should one's view of sexuality be the occasion for abuse? "Conversion Therapies" designed to cure LGBTQ+ persons of their sexual urges provide an example of abuse justified on religious grounds, inflicted for religious reasons, and causing objective harm. Jones, Power and Jones observe that, "Recent

---

[37] Laurie Goodstein, "Falwell: Blame Abortionists, Feminists and Gays," *New York Times*, September 19, 2001. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/19/september11.usa9 (accessed September 4, 2022).
[38] Williams, *Ethics*, 32.
[39] Terry Gross, "How the Southern Baptist Convention covered up its widespread sexual abuse scandal," *NPR*, June 2, 2022. https://www.npr.org/2022/06/02/1102621352/how-the-southern-baptist-convention-covered-up-its-widespread-sexual-abuse-scand (accessed October 3, 2022).

scholarship has begun to demonstrate the impact of LGBTQA+ conversion practices on people who experience them. Studies have shown heightened suicidality, increased drug and alcohol use, increased risk of homelessness, poor mental health and poor economic participation among people who have experienced conversion practices."[40] The effects of these "therapies" reflect the outcomes previously associated with childhood abuse.[41] These examples do not exhaust the scope or definition of religious/spiritual trauma. There is abundant scholarly research specific to the subject.[42] Additionally, Alyson M. Stone's article on treating religious trauma is indicative of the growing number of therapies specifically designed to address this problem.[43] If the ethical τέλος (goal) of John's virtue/theotic ethic is to experience the divine ζωή (life), the aforementioned approaches to morality seem unconcerned with John's Christianity.[44]

What this thesis seeks to avoid is equating objections to ethical practice with a rejection of ethical principles. One may agree with the early church witness that abortion, infanticide, and sexual promiscuity are sinful, yet vehemently oppose attempts to enforce these moralities with the arm of the State, especially when enforcement furthers societal misery. The early church's regard for all sex beyond marriage as sin marked the great divide between Christianity and the rest of the world.[45] But this new morality contrasted with the old morality that reinforced social hierarchies through prostitution, pederasty, and promiscuity.[46] Slaves had no boundaries or honor deserving of acknowledgement, and so were seen as sexual property.[47] The new morality was a liberating morality that regarded

---

[40] Timothy W. Jones, Jennifer Power, and Tiffany M. Jones, "Religious Trauma and Moral Injury from LGBTQA+ Conversion Practices," *Soc. Sci. Med.* (2022): 115040, 2.
[41] Merrick et al., "Adverse Childhood Experiences," 999–1005.
[42] The forthcoming literature review offers a bird's eye view of the research: Heidi M. Ellis, Joshua N. Hook, Sabrina Zuniga, Adam S. Hodge, Kristy M. Ford, Don E. Davis, and Daryl R. Van Tongeren, "Religious/Spiritual Abuse and Trauma: A Systematic Review of the Empirical Literature," *SCP* (2022). Online First Publication, August 18, 2022. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/scp0000301
[43] Alyson M. Stone, "Thou Shalt Not: Treating Religious Trauma and Spiritual Harm with Combined Therapy," *Group* 37.4 (2013): 323–337.
[44] John 17:3, αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωή, ἵνα γινώσκωσιν σὲ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.
[45] Kyle Harper, *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 85.
[46] Harper, *Shame to Sin*, 26 and *passim*. The subject matter of the book is the transformation of sexual ethics in late antiquity.
[47] Harper, *Shame to Sin*, 6.

people as equals, and not merely as objects of sexual gratification.[48] In truth though, the transition took some time.[49] Many Jews and Christians continued, for a while, to regard their slaves as sexual property.[50] And when finally the Roman Empire sought to codify this new morality, it was unfortunately enforced with brutality.[51] But our point here in recounting Rome's sexual revolution is to acknowledge that Christianity changed society through the influence of its character and message. Its status as a persecuted minority left no other option, but the exercise of power through positional authority was unnecessary.

4.2.2 *The Epidemic*

In his book *The Rise of Christianity,* Rodney Stark considers the reasons Christianity spread across the Roman Empire. Followers of "the Way" numbered only a few thousand in the 1st century, but by the time of Constantine, the Christian population was close to 10 percent of the Roman Empire. Though the growth of Christianity seems rapid, a conversion rate slightly less that the current growth rate of the Mormon Church in the United States would easily account for this progress.[52] Christian charity toward the poor drew people to the faith, and Stark notes that this charitable giving had created a miniature welfare state.[53] But one remarkable factor was the Church's response to epidemics:

> In 165, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, a devastating epidemic swept through the Roman Empire. Some medical historians suspect that it was the first appearance of smallpox in the West … But whatever the actual disease, it was lethal. During the fifteen-year duration of the epidemic, from a quarter to a third of the empire's population died from it, including Marcus Aurelius himself, in 180 in Vienna.[54]

It was considered entirely rational to flee from epidemics, and Rome's most famous physician, Galen, did just that.[55] But Galen also wrote of the Christian contempt for death as demonstrated by a willingness to nurse the sick during these plagues.[56] While the populace

---

[48] Harper, *Shame to Sin*, 14.
[49] Harper, *Shame to Sin*, 139.
[50] Jennifer A. Glancy, "The Sexual Use of Slaves: A Response to Kyle Harper on Jewish and Christian Porneia," *JBL* 134.1 (2015): 215–229.
[51] Harper, *Shame to Sin*, 157; here and elsewhere he discusses the mutilation of homosexuals sanctioned in purity laws.
[52] Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1996), 7.
[53] Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 84.
[54] Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 73.
[55] Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 85.
[56] Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 114.

fled, many Christians stayed, and nursed their own as well as at least some of those outside the Christian faith. Unskilled nursing was sufficient to significantly reduce mortality, and Stark speculates that this differential in mortality rates was another contributor toward Christianity's success. Not only did Christians survive sickness while others died, but those lucky enough to be cared for by Christians were inclined to convert.[57] The Christian gospel may be ultimately inclined toward eschatological rewards, but Stark observes that the fruits of faith were not limited to the spiritual realm, "because Christians were expected to aid the less fortunate, many of them received such aid, and all could feel greater security against bad times. Because they were asked to nurse the sick and dying, many of them received such nursing. Because they were asked to love others, they in turn were loved."[58]

Just as form follows function, the early Christian response to the Roman pandemics was one of exemplified virtue. The Christian faith was not confined to the confession of creeds but was lived out in community and society at large. It was a Christian witness of love that called others to desire what the Christian community possessed. As Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are my disciples," so the populace saw the risen Christ living in the community. Eternal life was on display and on offer for all who would accept it. This life was both literally present and eschatological. Literal in the sense that Christian hospitality resulted in improved prognosis for recovery.

At the time of this writing, the contemporary world is recovering from the COVID-19 global pandemic, which touched every continent and "officially" lasted over two years. The early Christian response to plagues in the Roman Empire allows us to reflect upon our response to this recent plague. John Dickson remarks in his book *Humilitas* that the virtue of humility that so typified the Christian ethic was established not by Jesus's teaching or persona, but by his followers' attempt to come to grips with his crucifixion, understood in the ancient world as the "ultimate punishment."[59] Humility was *not* a virtue in the Mediterranean, and the worship of a savior who died on a cross was unconscionable. In a reference that we have already noted parallels the footwashing, Dickson points to Phil 2, as the "first datable reference" to this new "ethical reasoning" that we are to be like Christ who

[57] Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 92–3.
[58] Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 188.
[59] Dickson, *Humilitas*, 105.

took on the form of a slave and humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross.[60] The example of these early Christians can prompt us to consider whether we have responded to the pandemic with the same humility. Did the world identify Christians through their acts of love, or because of their political beliefs?

It should be acknowledged that Dickson's study was concerned to demonstrate the value of humility in various facets of life, including leadership.[61] The power of humility through servant leadership is well-recognized as a form of "idealized influence" that relies on the example of the leader's actions rather than on positional authority.[62] Among Johannine scholars who acknowledge this as a prominent theme of the Gospel are Lauren Sierra, who directly addresses Jesus's condescension as a paradigm of leadership, and Paul Anderson, who suggests a familial and egalitarian approach to leadership.[63] The New Testament was written in the context of colonial Roman rule. However, the ethics of the Gospel of John are not written from a perspective that leverages political capital, but one which relies upon "leveraged influence" through exemplary behavior that demonstrates Christ's love.

The factors that led to Christian political power in the Constantinian era were not due to political lobbying or relentless protests of Roman indiscretions. The moral character of the empire was transformed as Christians imitated Christ in their own lives. Staying behind in plague ridden cities to care for their neighbors is just one example. I don't want to overstate the case, but the point is that virtue ethics and theosis are effective and transformative. Without explicit intent of overthrowing an empire, a factor that contributed towards Christianity's growth was its moral focus on living the example of Christ. By contrast, in our discussion of religious violence, we see religious trauma as stemming from a different paradigm of leadership, one that prioritizes moral outcomes over moral character, to the neglect of ethical humility and the call to imitate Jesus's example.

---

[60] Dickson, *Humilitas*, 108.
[61] Dickson, *Humilitas*, 31–48.
[62] Scroggins uses the phrase "leveraging influence." Clay Scroggins, *How to Lead When You're Not in Charge: Leveraging Influence When You Lack Authority* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018); the classic book on servant leadership is Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), first published in 1977.
[63] Sierra, "The God who Condescends"; Paul N. Anderson, "Discernment–Oriented Leadership in the Johannine Situation—Abiding in the Truth versus Lesser Alternatives," in *Rethinking the Ethics of John* (eds. Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 290–318.

4.3 Conclusion

The early Christian response to pandemics in Rome, and modern examples of religious violence, both demonstrate attempts to instantiate a particular view of morality. Deontic and utilitarian theories dominate modern discourse and locate ethical objectives in moral behaviors and outcomes. The proposal of an ethics of theosis offers a return to what I have argued are the proper ethical objectives of the New Testament and 1st century ethical discourse, that is the cultivation of virtues in the moral agent and community, and thereby society at large. In an ethics of theosis, form and function are inseparable. Means and ends are united, and the instantiation of a Christlike world is achieved through Christlike behavior.

Christians are often polarized by moral issues. Some forms of politics and economics are vilified as demonic. What this thesis proposes is a return to a biblical ethics that calls believers to emulate Jesus's example. The early Christians transformed the Roman Empire through their example of humility. I am concerned that many Christians have adopted "dirty hands" strategies to promote a moral vision that has separated means from ends to such an extent that their moral vision bears no resemblance to Jesus's moral example.

I conclude with the following quote by Adam Smith, considered by some to be the father of modern capitalism. In 1759 he wrote his own book on ethics entitled *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in which he challenges us to weigh the value of external moral objectives against the impact those decisions have on our moral character:

> The great source of both the misery and disorders of human life, seems to arise from over-rating the difference between one permanent situation and another … Some of those situations may, no doubt, deserve to be preferred to others: but none of them can deserve to be pursued with that passionate ardour which drives us to violate the rules either of prudence or of justice; or to corrupt the future tranquility of our minds, either by shame from the remembrance of our own folly, or by remorse from the horror of our own injustice.[64]

We may feel ethically compelled to take a stand on issues of inclusivity, abortion, or the welfare state. Whatever our opinion on these issues, this thesis has argued that in an ethics of theosis our actions will always reflect our participation together in Jesus's role as humble servant. A theotic ethic does not instigate violence and harm toward others, and historically,

[64] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (ed. Ryan Patrick Hanley; London: Penguin, 2009), 172.

it achieved society-wide moral objectives without doing so. We therefore agree with the Psalmist:

> Who may ascend onto the hill of the LORD?
> And who may stand in His holy place?
> One who has clean hands and a pure heart,
> Who has not lifted up his soul to deceit
> And has not sworn deceitfully.[65]

[65] Psalm 24:3–4 (NASB).

Appendix

On Some Remaining Questions of Dispute

A.1 Authorship

All the canonical Gospels lack explicit authorial self-attestation. Conservative commentators such as D. A. Carson, see no reason to question the external witness of Irenaeus and the early fathers, who attribute authorship of the Gospel to the apostle John, the son of Zebedee,[1] though this remains a minority position within scholarship on John. Internally, the Gospel seems to associate its authorship with the narrative's unnamed "Beloved Disciple." This association is sufficiently strong that Richard Bauckham refers to this disciple as the Gospel's unambiguous author.[2] Regarding this Beloved Disciple, Ruth Edwards remarks:

> Probably based on a real person, whose identity may have been known to at least some of John's readers, he is deliberately left anonymous. He is not the Gospel's author, but the person whom the author (or at least whoever wrote John 21) wants readers to see as a reliable authority lying behind the Gospel.[3]

Some commentators consider the Gospel as the composition of a community, or at least as an edited work. Other commentators see no conflict with identifying John as the Beloved Disciple and primary author of the Gospel while acknowledging a compositional history that included later editing from a Johannine community.[4] As a matter of convention and in deference to its historic title, this thesis addresses the Fourth Gospel as John, the Gospel of John, John's Gospel, or simply the Gospel.

A.2 Audience and Community

Adele Reinhartz notes that attempts to reconstruct a hypothetical "Johannine community" are based on three verses (9:22; 12:42; 16:2) that refer to *aposynagōgoi* and purportedly depict a community of Johannine followers who have been expelled from the synagogue on account of their faith in Christ.[5] The exegetical implications of treating the Gospel as a sectarian document written by a Johannine community with its own unique

---

[1] Carson, *John*, 68.
[2] Richard Bauckham, "For Whom Were Gospels Written?" *HTS* 55.4 (1999): 865–82.
[3] Edwards, *Discovering John*, 32.
[4] Thomaskutty, "The Gospel of John," 127–56.
[5] Adele Reinhartz, "John," in *The Gospels and Acts* (eds. Margaret Aymer, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and David A. Sánchez; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 265–308.

identity and theology have been noted above. Commentators such as Edward Lohse, Jack Sanders and Wayne Meeks see the Gospel as divorced from the larger Christian community and as having very little ethical content, or as in Sanders' estimation, an exclusive concern for ethics within the community.

Reinhartz concedes we cannot know whether there was in fact a Johannine community or how its members viewed themselves in relation to other Christ-followers.[6] She notes that the idea of a distinct Johannine community has been most persuasively challenged by Richard Bauckham, who argues that the Fourth Gospel, like the other Gospels, was written for the nascent Christian church writ large.[7] Bauckham observes that the debate is a recent one that has been assumed rather than proven.[8] Others such as E. W. Klink and Edwards observe that John's Gospel contains Jewish, Christian, and Hellenist elements, contributing to a growing consensus that John's Gospel is intended for a wide readership.[9]

A.3 Date and Text

Reinhartz notes, "While an occasional scholar has argued for a pre-70 composition date, most agree that the Gospel underwent a lengthy process of composition that concluded in the last decade or so of the first century, that is, approximately two decades after the temple's destruction."[10] Among the minority views is that of Mark Matson who accounts for the differences between John's Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels by insisting on John's priority, or at least its independence from the synoptic tradition.[11] Kari Syreeni observes that the Synoptics are often read as a single entity "against which the 'fourth' Gospel is interpreted," yet theorizes a compositional history that allows for the possibility that over the course of its arrangement the Gospel may have influenced the Synoptics *while* being

---

[6] Adele Reinhartz, "'Common Judaism', 'The Parting of the Ways', and 'The Johannine Community'," in *Orthodoxy, Liberalism, and Adaptation: Essays on Ways of Worldmaking in Times of Change from Biblical, Historical and Systematic Perspectives*. (ed. Bob Becking; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 69-87.
[7] Reinhartz, "Common Judaism," 70.
[8] Bauckham, *Gospels*, 868–9.
[9] Edwards, *Discovering John*, 49. Edwards cites E. W. Klink, *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origin of the Gospel of John*, SNTSMS 141 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 97 and *passim*.
[10] Reinhartz, "Johannine Community," 74.
[11] Mark A. Matson, "Reviving the Priority of John," in *Jesus and Christian Origins: Directions toward a New Paradigm* (ed. Ben Wiebe: Eugene: Cascade Books, 2019), 128–166.

influenced by them.[12] Syreeni offers an in-depth discussion of scholarship that has attempted to demonstrate dependance upon John for synoptic material, especially material from Luke.[13]

These discussions of John's relationship to the Synoptics lead us back to some assumptions of the early church. Namely, that John's omissions of Jesus's baptism, the Lord's table, transfiguration, etc. are not due to the ignorance of the Gospel writer, but that familiar with the synoptic witness, John chose to write a different narrative.[14] Keith Yoder, for example, demonstrates fifteen parallels between footwashing narratives in John 13 and Luke 7 that seem hardly coincidental.[15] Yoder's analysis places the two texts in conversation with each other, where similarities of forgiveness and love are contrasted with their differences to offer profound interpretive emphases.[16] Yoder's analysis leads this thesis to ask whether other aspects of the Farewell Discourse are in conversation with New Testament writings, especially the command to love one another which, as we have noted, has parallels in each of the Gospels and in the epistolary traditions. This thesis's discussion of the Gospel of John's command to love one another considers it in the context of such a conversation.

A.4 Text and Form

Rudolf Bultmann's seminal commentary divided the Gospel into at least two separate compositions which he termed the book of signs (chapters 1-11) and the book of glory (chapters 13-20). The two books were woven together with chapter 12 forming its seam. Since then, it has been common to also treat the prologue of 1:1-18 as a separate unit, and chapter 21 as an epilogue appended to the end of the completed work. Bultmann also divides the Gospel into many smaller units and in his commentary, he rearranges the text to match his theorized editorial redactions.[17] Similarly, Segovia's treatment of the Farewell Discourse assumes a complex history of redactions.[18] Nevertheless, regardless of the Gospel's complex

[12] Kari Syreeni, *Becoming John: The Making of a Passion Gospel* (London: T&T Clark, 2018), 6, 27. See also, Dwight Moody Smith, *John Among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth–Century Research* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). Syreeni argues John's Gospel should be read *with* the Synoptics, an assumption directly implied by Moody's title: John *among* the Gospels.
[13] Syreeni, *Becoming John*, 28–55.
[14] Thompson, *John*, 4–5.
[15] Keith L. Yoder, "Mimesis: Foot Washing from Luke to John," *ETL* 92.4 (2016): 655–70.
[16] Yoder, "Mimesis," 668–9.
[17] Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* Vol. 1 (ed. G. R. Beasley–Murray; trans. R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 461.
[18] Segovia, *Farewell*, passim.

compositional history there is an increased acceptance that it demonstrates a synchronic coherence that indicates "the extant text should be read as a whole."[19]

Ruth Edwards observes that John's dialogue and narrative cannot be readily disentangled.[20] Upon closer scrutiny, the unity of the text holds true for many of the alleged editorial seams proposed by commentators and Edwards notes even these are "best regarded as an integral part of the text."[21] One exception to this being the *Pericope de Adultera* of John 7:53-8:11, the woman taken in adultery. In this case there is manuscript evidence placing the story in various parts of the Gospel, placing it in the Gospel of Luke, or missing entirely from early manuscripts.[22]

A focus of this thesis is the Farewell Discourse of John 13-17, and while the integrity of this section has also been called into question, as with the rest of the Gospel there is widespread willingness to read it in its final form as a coherent unity. Francis Moloney treats the discourse as a cohesive unit and links it to the material that precedes and follows it as it furthers the plot of the entire Gospel narrative.[23] Segovia, though hypothesizing various redactions, conducts his exegesis of the discourse with respect to its present literary structure, and even includes the oft cited "editorial seam" in 14:31 as exegetically relevant.[24] L. Scott Kellum argues for the literary unity of the discourse and directly addressing 14:31 notes that "no one is able to explain why an aporia like our magnus reus could exist in an edited text."[25] As noted by Edwards, even the alleged "seams" are best regarded as integral to the text, and it is unlikely a community of authors/editors would have been so sloppy as to leave glaring edits in place that did not further the unified text.

A.5 hoi Ioudaioi

Adele Reinhartz' book *Cast Out of the Covenant* presents a distinct challenge to Johannine scholarship.[26] She concludes that the Gospel of John is "'thoroughly'—not

---

[19] Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis*, 30; Byers references Scholtissek, "The Johannine Gospel," 444–72.
[20] Edwards, *John*, 39.
[21] Edwards, *John*, 103.
[22] Edwards, *John*, 175.
[23] Francis Moloney, "The Gospel of John: Text and Context," (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 282.
[24] Segovia, *Farewell*, 48, 116.
[25] L. Scott. Kellum, *The Unity of the Farewell Discourse: The Literary Integrity of John 13.31–16.33*, JSNTSup 256 (London: T & T Clark International, 2004).
[26] Adele Reinhartz, *Cast Out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti–Judaism in the Gospel of John* (Lanham: Fortress Academic, 2018).

partially, not ostensibly, but thoroughly— 'anti-Jewish'."[27] A thorough assessment of the matter is beyond the scope of this thesis, but something could and must be stated on this matter. Considering the ground covered in the first chapter of this thesis, my response is most likely an unconscious and intuitive reaction to Reinhartz' argument. Moreover, the ensuing response should be understood as a post hoc rationalization designed to support my intuition, and not premeditated logic that informs my opinion. This is probably the best approach to take as Andrew Byers shares a similar sentiment in his own review of Reinhartz.[28] With that said, the following argument should still be assessed on its own merits.

Reinhartz leaves us wondering: how much of the Jewish Scriptures could also be characterized as anti-Jewish? From the opening chapters of Exodus to the story of the golden calf, and through the utterances of nearly every one of the prophets, it would be tedious and unproductive to list even a portion of the instances where the nation of Israel is depicted as a community engaged in rebellion against a God who is actively trying to redeem them. I suggest the Gospel's anti-Jewish character is best understood in comparison with the anti-Jewish character of the Tanakh. Moreover, anti-Jewishness, as typically observed, resembles the Just-World paradigms adopted by trauma survivors. To maintain a coherent world view and a concept of justice in the context of personal suffering, people often perceive the suffering of others as "deserved." In a discussion of ethics, these just-world paradigms reflect authoritarian or egoist perspectives, in contrast to this thesis' proposed virtue/theotic ethics. However, John's Gospel does seem to undermine the notion of deserved punishment through repeated endorsements of God's sovereignty such as found in John 6:44.[29] This leads to another aspect of John's Gospel, that all of humanity is suffering from a collective trauma in its alienation from God, and authoritarian/legalistic paradigms of ethics are a natural response. I argue that the matter of John's anti-Jewish character is better informed through an appeal to the cognitive environments of Jewish thought. Additionally, the perception of the Gospel's anti-Jewish character is certainly influenced by one's world view to include

[27] Andrew J. Byers, Review of *Cast Out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti–Judaism in the Gospel of John*, by Adele Reinhartz, *RBL* 22 (2020): 348–54.
[28] Byers, "Review of *Cast Out*," 352.
[29] John 6:44 (NASB), "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." Cf. also John 17:6–12 et al.

relevant ethical theories. I argue that from within the ethical turn there may be an alternative perspective to the problem of John's anti-Jewishness.

A.6. The Epistles of John

Consideration of the Johannine Epistles is common in treatments of the Gospel of John.[30] Much of the content of the Epistles reflects the Farewell Discourse directly, is focused of the command to love, and the well-known text 1 John 4:7-8 presents the love command with the same unity of form and function expressed by this thesis' ethics of theosis. Additionally, 1 John 4:18 challenges authoritarian/legalistic theories of ethics as obedience which is not motivated by fear.[31] Further analysis has been intentionally deferred as a thorough assessment could distract from the task at hand and extend the length of discussion beyond any practical utility. Tentatively, a closer reading of 1-3 John would further the goals of this thesis.

A.7 All About Love: Love in the Gospel of John

So much can be said about love in the Gospel of John that books have been written on the subject.[32] Of all the instances of the word "love" in the Gospel, whether cognates of *phileō* or *agapaō*, over half are found in John 13-17. One of the first instances of love is in John 3:16, For God so loved (ἠγάπησεν) the world (κόσμον). If we synchronize the works of Gorman and Hartog, to love and desire what Jesus loves and desires would entail a love for the whole *kosmos* and a striving for its shalom.[33] Once again, even a cursory survey of the relevant material in the Gospel and the corpus of secondary literature would require a treatment beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a point which has been made and is a focus of John's use of the word "love," is whether this love extends to those outside the community. The position of this thesis has been that even the most restrictive understanding of the love command leaves no quarter for interpretations of the word "love" that allow persons to extend hatred, violence, or disregard to their fellow humans.

---

[30] For instance, see Alicia Myers, *Reading John and 1, 2, 3 John*.

[31] Myers arranges 1 John 4:7–5:21 in a chiasm, the center point being that love casts out fear (1 John 4:16–18). Myers, *Reading John*, 267.

[32] For example, Francis J. Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); and Van der Merwe, Dirk G. Van der Merwe, "The Christian Spirituality of the Love of God: Conceptual and Experiential Perspectives Emanating from the Gospel of John," *Verbum Eccles.* 41.1 (2020): 1–10.

[33] Hartog, "Desiderative Mimesis," 13; Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 183.

Bibliography

Adorno, T. W., et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper and Row, 1950.

Akiyama, Kengo. "How Can Love be Commanded?: On Not Reading Lev 19, 17-18 as Law." *Bib* 98.1 (2017): 1-9.

Akiyama, Kengo. *The Love of Neighbour in Ancient Judaism: The Reception of Leviticus 19:18 in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, the Book of Jubilees, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the New Testament*. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

Aknin, Lara B., J. Kiley Hamlin, and Elizabeth W. Dunn. "Giving Leads to Happiness in Young Children." *PLoS one* 7.6 (2012): 1-4. Cited 6 June 2022. Online: https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0039211.

Aland, Barbara, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds. *The Greek New Testament*. Fourth Revised Edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1993.

Albeck, Ch. *Shishah Sidre Mishnah*, 6 vols. Jerusalem, 1952-58.

Anderson, Francis I. *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1976.

Anderson, Paul N. "Discernment-Oriented Leadership in the Johannine Situation—Abiding in the Truth Versus Lesser Alternatives." Pages 290-318 in *Rethinking the Ethics of John*. Edited by Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012.

Arendt, Hannah, and Jens Kroh. *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. New York: Viking Press, 1964.

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Martin Ostwald. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1982.

Ashton, John. *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991.

Athanassoulis, Nafsika. "The Milgram Experiment no one (in Philosophy) is Talking About." *JTPP* (2022): n.p. Cited 8 November 2022. Advance online publication. Online: https://www.academia.edu/68529426/The_Milgram_Experiment_No_One_in_philosophy_is_Talking_About.

Attridge, Harold, Warren Carter, and Jan G. van der Watt. "Quaestiones Disputatae: Are John's Ethics Apolitical?" *NTS* 62 (2016): 484–97.

Bakewell, Geoffrey. "'I Went Down to Piraeus Yesterday': Routes, Roads, and Plato's Republic." *Hesperia* 89.4 (2020): 725-755.

Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. “Christian Nationalism and the January 6, 2021 Insurrection.” (9 February 2022): 1-63. Cited 31 October 2022. Online: https://bjconline.org/jan6report/.

Barkan, Rachel, Shahar Ayal, Francesca Gino, and Dan Ariely. “The Pot Calling the Kettle Black: Distancing Response to Ethical Dissonance.” *J Exp Psychol Gen* 141.4 (2012): 757-773.

Bartholomew, Craig G. “Ecclesiastes.” Pages 179-85 in *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*. Edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Batson, C. Daniel, and Elizabeth R. Thompson. “Why Don't Moral People Act Morally? Motivational Considerations.” *Curr. Dir. Psychol. Sci.* 10.2 (2001): 54-57.

Bauckham, Richard J. “Did Jesus Wash His Disciples’ Feet?” Pages 411-30 in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*. Edited by Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

Bauckham, Richard J. “For Whom Were Gospels Written?” *HTS* 55.4 (1999): 865-882.

Baumard, Nicolas, and Pascal Boyer. “Explaining Moral Religions.” TiCS 17.6 (2013): 272-280.

Behm, J. “paráklētos.” Pages 782-4 in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated and Abridged by Geoffrey W. Bromily. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.

Bell, Martin, ed. *David Hume: Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. London: Penguin, 1990.

Benedict, Ruth. “Anthropology and the Abnormal.” Pages 9-20 in *Sourcebook in Abnormal Psychology*. Edited by L. Rabkin and J. Carr. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967.

Bennema, Cornelis. “A Model of Johannine Ethics.” *Stud Christ Ethics* 35 (2022): 433–56.

Bennema, Cornelis. “Moral Transformation Through Mimesis in the Johannine Tradition.” *TynBul* 69 (2018): 183– 203.

Berger, Kathleen Stassen. *Invitation to the Life Span*. 4th ed. New York: Macmillan, 2019.

Bergman, Roger. “Identity as Motivation: Toward a Theory of the Moral Self.” Pages 21-46 in *Moral Development, Self, and Identity*. Edited by Daniel Lapsley and Darcia Narvaez. Mahwah: LEA Pub, 2004.

Biffle, Christopher, ed. *A Guided tour of René Descartes' Meditations of First Philosophy.* 2nd ed. Translated by Ronald Rubin. Mountain View: Mayfield, 1996.

Bocian, Konrad, and Bogdan Wojciszke. "Self-interest Bias in Moral Judgments of Others' Actions." *Pers Soc Psychol Bull* 40.7 (2014): 898-909.

Boersma, Hans. "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John." *CTJ* 38 (2003): 103-119.

Boothroyd, Dave. "The Subject of the Ethical Turn." Pages 1-27 in *Ethical Subjects in Contemporary Culture*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Borradori, Giovanna. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Briggs, Richard. "Reading the Sotah Text (Numbers 5: 11-31): Holiness and a Hermeneutic Fit for Suspicion." *BibInt* 17.3 (2009): 288-319.

Brittain, Christopher Craig. "Racketeering in Religion: Adorno and Evangelical Support for Donald Trump." *CRR* 6.3 (2018): 269-288.

Broadie, Sarah. "Aristotle and Contemporary Ethics." Pages 342-361 in *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Edited by R. Kraut. Malden. London: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Brown, Raymond. *The Gospel According to John*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1970.

Brown, Sherri, and Christopher W. Skinner. *Johannine Ethics: The Moral World of the Gospel and Epistles of John*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017.

Brown, Stephen G. "The Woman as a Metaphorical and Epistemological Paradigm in Ecclesiastes 7:25-29." Paper presented to the Evangelical Theological Society. 1998.

Bultmann, Rudolf. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Vol. 1. Edited by G. R. Beasley-Murray. Translated by R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971.

Burnett, F. W., and C. Bennema. "Wisdom." Pages 995–1000 in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013.

Byers, Andrew J. *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John*. SNTSMS 166. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Byers, Andrew J. Review of *Cast Out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John*, by Adele Reinhartz. *Review of Biblical Literature* 22 (2020): 348-54.

Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

Chatman, S. B. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Chowdhury, Mohammad. "Emphasizing Morals, Values, Ethics, and Character Education in Science Education and Science Teaching." *MOJES* 4.2 (2018): 1-16.

Clark, Gordon H. *Thales to Dewey: A History of Philosophy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957.

Clines, David J. A. "The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible." Pages 9-25 in *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible.* JSOTSup 205. Edited by J. Cheryl Exum. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

Coloe, Mary L. *John 1–10*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2021.

Coloe, Mary L. "Welcome Into the Household of God: The Foot Washing in John 13." CBQ 66.3 (2004): 400-415.

Cui, Peng, Yanhui Mao, Yufan Shen, and Jianhong Ma. "Moral Identity and Subjective Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Identity Commitment Quality." *IJERPH* 18.18 (September 2021): 9795, 1-14. Cited 21 July 2022. Online: https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/18/9795.

Culpepper, R. Alan. *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1987.

Culpepper, R. Alan. *The Gospel and Letters of John*. Nashville: Abigdon, 1998.

Darley, John M., and C. Daniel Batson. "'From Jerusalem to Jericho': A study of Situational and Dispositional Variables in Helping Behavior." *J Pers Soc Psychol* 27.1 (1973): 100-108.

Day, Adam W. *Jesus, the Isaianic servant*. Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2018.

Dennis, J. A. "Glory." Pages 313-5 in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels.* Edited by Green, Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013.

DeRoo, Neal, and Brian Lightbody, eds. *The Logic of Incarnation: James K. A. Smith's Critique of Postmodern Religion.* Eugene: Pickwick, 2008.

DeScioli, Peter, Maxim Massenkoff, Alex Shaw, Michael Bang Petersen, and Robert Kurzban. "Equity or Equality? Moral Judgments Follow the Money." *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biol. Sci.*281.1797 (2014): 20142112. http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2014.2112

Devos, Timothy, ed. *Euthanasia: Searching for the Full Story*. Cham: Springer, 2021.

De Wijze, Stephen. "Punishing 'Dirty Hands'- Three Justifications." *Ethical Theory Moral Pract.* 16.4 (2013): 879-897.

Dickson, John. *Humilitas*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

Diogenes Laertius. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers.* Translated by R.D. Hicks. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972 (First published 1925).

Dodd, C. H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953.

Doukhan, Jacques. "Review of John H. Walton's *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*." *AUSS* 51.1 (2013): 83-8.

Dunning, David. "The Dunning–Kruger effect: On Being Ignorant of One's Own Ignorance." Pages 247-96 in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 44. Edited by James M. Olson and Mark P. Zanna. San Diego: Academic Press, 2011.

Dunning, David. "Self-Image Motives and Consumer Behavior: How Sacrosanct Self-Beliefs Sway Preferences in the Marketplace." *J. Consum. Psychol.* 17.4 (2007): 237-249.

Dworkin, Ronald. *Law's Empire*. London: Fontana, 1986.

Eagleton, Terry. *The Meaning of Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Edwards, Mark W. *Poet of the Iliad*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1987.

Edwards, Ruth B. *Discovering John: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. London: SPCK Publishing, 2015.

Eliade, Mircea. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Translated by Rosemary Sheed. New York: Meridian, 1958.

Ellis, Heidi M., Joshua N. Hook, Sabrina Zuniga, Adam S. Hodge, Kristy M. Ford, Don E. Davis, and Daryl R. Van Tongeren. "Religious/Spiritual Abuse and Trauma: A

Systematic Review of the Empirical Literature." *SCP* (2022). Online First Publication, August 18, 2022. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/scp0000301

Esposito, John L. ed. "Shariah." Pages 287-8 in *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Ethics Centre, The. "Ethics explainer: Ethics, Morality & Law." No pages. Cited 6 June 2022. Online: https://ethics.org.au/ethics-explainer-ethics-morality-law/.

Evans, Craig A. "Exodus in the New Testament: Patterns of Revelation and Redemption." Pages 440-64 in *The Book of Exodus: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*. Edited by Thomas B. Dozeman, Craig A. Evans, and Joel N. Lohr. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Evans, Craig A. "The Voice from Heaven: A Note on John 12: 28." *CBQ* 43.3 (1981): 405-408.

Everett, Jim A. C., Joshua August Skorburg, and Julian Savulescu. "The Moral Self and Moral Duties." *Philos. Psychol.* 33.7 (2020): 924-945.

Feník, Juraj, and Róbert Lapko. "Jesus's Inverse Transfiguration in John 13." *Neot* 55.2 (2021): 347–64.

Fitzmyer, Joseph. *A Christological Catechism: New Testament Answers* New. Mahwah: Paulist, 1991.

Flemming, Chris. *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.

Fortin, Jean-Pierre. "Lament of a Wounded Priest: The Spiritual Journey of Job." *Religions* 9.12 (2018): 1-14.

Fowler, Harold North. *Plato with an English Translation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943.

Fowler, Robert L. "Mythos and Logos." *JHS* 131 (2011): 45-66.

France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

Friedman, Hershey H. "'Let Justice Pierce the Mountain': Morality, Ethics, and Law in the Talmud." (June 2, 2015): 1-35. Cited 31 May 2022. Online: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2613759.

Gert, Bernard, and Joshua Gert. "The Definition of Morality." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Fall, 2020. No pages. Cited 31 May 2022. Online: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/morality-definition/.

Gini, Al. *Why It's Hard to be Good*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Girard, René. *Resurrection from the Underground: Feodor Dostoevsky*. Translated by James G. Williams. New York: Crossroad, 1997.

Glancy, Jennifer A. "The Sexual Use of Slaves: A Response to Kyle Harper on Jewish and Christian Porneia." *JBL* 134.1 (2015): 215-229.

Gonzales, Justo L. *A History of Christian Thought: From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1987.

Goodman, David M., and E. R. Severson. "Introduction: Ethics as First Psychology." Pages 1-18 in *The Ethical Turn: Otherness and Subjectivity in Contemporary Psychoanalysis*. Edited by D. Goodman and E. R. Severson. London: Routledge, 2016.

Goodstein, Laurie. "Falwell: Blame Abortionists, Feminists and Gays." *New York Times* (September 19, 2001): n.p. Cited September 4, 2022. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/19/september11.usa9.

Gorman, Michael J. *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018.

Gorman, Michael J. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers.* Third Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020.

Green, Joel B., Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013.

Green, Joel B., Jacqueline Lapsley, Rebekah Miles, and Allen Verhey, eds. *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011.

Greenfield, Bruce, and Gail M. Jensen. "Beyond a Code of Ethics: Phenomenological Ethics for Everyday Practice." *PRI* 15.2 (2010): 88-95.

Greenleaf, Robert. *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. New York: Paulist Press, 2002.

Gross, Terry. "How the Southern Baptist Convention covered up its widespread sexual abuse scandal." *NPR*, (June 2, 2022): n.p. Cited October 3, 2022. https://www.npr.org/2022/06/02/1102621352/how-the-southern-baptist-convention-covered-up-its-widespread-sexual-abuse-scand.

Hafer, Carolyn L., Laurent Bègue, Becky L. Choma, and Julie L. Dempsey. "Belief in a Just World and Commitment to Long-Term Deserved Outcomes." *Soc. Justice Res.* 18.4 (2005): 429-444.

Haidt, Jonathan. "The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment." *Psychol Rev* 108 (2001): 814 – 834.

Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Pantheon, 2012.

Hanhart, Robert. *Septuaginta*. Edited by Alfred Rahlfs. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979.

Hansen, Mogens Herman. "The Battle Exhortation in Ancient Historiography: Fact or Fiction?" *Hist.* 42.2 (1993): 161-80.

Harper, Kyle. *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Harris, R. L., G. L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody, 1980.

Hartog, Paul Anthony. "Johannine Ethics: An Exegetical-Theological Summary and a 'Desiderative' Extension of Mimesis." *Relig.* 13.6 (2022): 1-18.

Hatina, Thomas. "John 20,22 in Its Eschatological Context: Promise or Fulfillment?" *Bib* 74.2 (1993): 196-219.

Haxton, Brooks. *Fragments: The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus*. Edited and Translated by Haxton Brooks. New York: Penguin, 2001.

Hays, Richard B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Baylor University Press: Kindle Edition, 2016.

Hays, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation.* Harper Collins: San Francisco, 1996.

Hepach, Robert, Amrisha Vaish, Katharina Müller, and Michael Tomasello. "Toddlers' Intrinsic Motivation to Return Help to Their Benefactor." *J Exp Child Psychol* 188 (2019): 1-17.

Hiebert, Theodore. *The Yahwist's Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Hill, L., and Eden Blazejak. “Stoicism and Utilitarian Thought.” Pages 113-154 in *Stoicism and the Western Political Tradition*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

Houlden, J. L. *Ethics and the New Testament*. Middlesex: Penguin, 1973.

Humphreys, Sally. “The Athenian *Exegetai*.” Pages 85-96 in *Πλειών: Papers in Memory of Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood*. Edited by Athena Kavoulaki. Heraklion: University of Crete, 2018.

Jones, Timothy W., Jennifer Power, and Tiffany M. Jones. “Religious Trauma and Moral Injury from LGBTQA+ Conversion Practices.” *Soc. Sci. Med.* 305 (2022): 1-9.

Jordan, Jennifer, Marijke C. Leliveld, and Ann E. Tenbrunsel. “The Moral Self-Image Scale: Measuring and Understanding the Malleability of the Moral Self.” *Front. Psychol.* 6 (2015): 1878. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01878.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. New York: Hyperion, 1994.

Kant, Immanuel. *The Moral Law: Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*. Translated by H. J. Paton. London: Hutchinson, 1978.

Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary. 2 Volumes.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.

Kellum, L. Scott. “Farewell Discourse.” Pages 266–9 in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013.

Kellum, L. Scott. *The Unity of the Farewell Discourse: The Literary Integrity of John 13.31-16.33*. *JSNT* Sup 256. London: T & T Clark, 2004.

Kernis, M. H., and B. M. Goldman. “Stability and Variability in Self-Concept and Self-Esteem.” Pages 106-127 in *Handbook of Self and Identity*. Edited by M.R. Leary and J. P. Tangney. New York: Guilford Press, 2003.

Kirk, G. S. *The Nature of Greek Myths*. New York: Penguin, 1983.

Kittel, G., and G. Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.

Kittel, G., and G. Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*: Abridged in one Volume. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.

Klenk, Michael. “Moral Philosophy and the ‘Ethical Turn’ in Anthropology,” *ZEMO* 2.2 (2019): 331–353.

Klink, E. W. *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origin of the Gospel of John* SNTSMS 141. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Kötting, Bernhard, and D. Halama. “Fußwaschung,” Pages 743–777 in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum: Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der antiken Welt*. Edited by Theodor Klauser. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1972.

Kovacs, Judith L. “‘Now Shall the Ruler of This World Be Driven Out’: Jesus’ Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36.” *JBL* 114.2 (1995): 227-247.

Knust, Jennifer W. “Love’s Limits: Love of Neighbor in the First Three Christian Centuries.” *JEAC* 3 (2021): 52-77.

Krettenauer, Tobias. “Moral Identity as a Goal of Moral Action: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective.” *J Moral Educ* 49.3 (2020): 330-345.

Kumar, Anugrah. “Putin Quotes John 15:13 to Hail Ukraine Invasion at Moscow Rally: ‘The Words from the Bible’.” *The Christian Post* (19 March 2022): No pages. Cited 15 November 2022. Online: https://www.christianpost.com/news/putin-john-15-to-hail-ukraine-invasion.html.

Kysar, Robert. *John: The Maverick Gospel*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993.

Langdon, Robyn, and Catriona Mackenzie, eds. *Emotions, Imagination, and Moral Reasoning*. New York: Psychology Press, 2012.

Lebell, Sharon. *The Art of Living: The Classical Manual on Virtue, Happiness and Effectiveness*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995.

Le Poidevin, Robin. “Euthyphro and the Goodness of God Incarnate.” *Ratio* 24.2 (2011): 206-221.

Lieber, D. L., ed. *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2001.

Lincoln, Abraham. *Second Inaugural Address of the Late President Lincoln*. James Miller, New York, 1865. Pdf. Online: https://www.loc.gov/item/2020770559/.

Lincoln, Andrew T. *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2019.

Lioy, Daniel T. "The Garden of Eden as a Primordial Temple or Sacred Space for Humankind." *Conspec.* 10.1 (2010): 25-57.

Loader, William. "Wisdom and Logos Traditions in Judaism and John's Christology." Pages 303-334 in *Reading the Gospel of John's Christology as Jewish Messianism*. Edited by Benjamin Reynolds and Gabriele Boccaccini. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

Locke, Larry G., Taelyn Shelton, and Baylee Smith. "A Defense of Biblical Ethics in Business." *JBIB* 24.1 (2021): 80-89.

Lohse, Eduard. *Theological Ethics of the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Lohse, Wolfram. "Die Fußwaschung (13:1–20); Eine Geschichte ihrer Deutung," PhD diss., Friedrich–Alexander–Universitat zu Erlangen, 1967.

Longman, Tremper III. *The Book of Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Longman, Tremper III. *Proverbs*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.

Lorgunpai, S. "The Books of Ecclesiastes and Thai Buddhism." *AJT* 8 (1994): 155–162.

Luther, Martin. "Whether soldiers too can be saved." Pages 289-305 in *A Textbook of Christian Ethics*. Edited by Robin Gill. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995.

Maslow, A. H. "A Dynamic Theory of Human Motivation." Pages 84-105 in *Understanding Human Motivation*. Edited by C. L. Stacey and M. DeMartino. Cleveland: World Publishing, 1965.

Mastnjak, Nathan and Dennis Pardee. "Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology. By John H. Walton" (review of John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*). *JTS* 66.1 (2015): 283-287.

Mathew, Bincy. *The Johannine Footwashing as the Sign of Perfect Love*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018.

Matson, Mark A. "Reviving the Priority of John." Pages 128–166 in *Jesus and Christian Origins: Directions Toward a New Paradigm.* Edited by Ben Wiebe. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2019.

Mazar, Nina, On Amir, and Dan Ariely. "The Dishonesty of Honest People: A Theory of Self-Concept Maintenance." *J Mark Res* 45.6 (2008): 633-644.

McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin. "Ethics." No pages. Cited 6 June 2022. Online: https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/ethics.

McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin. “Moral Reasoning.” No pages. Cited 6 June 2022. Online: https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/moral-reasoning.

McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin. “Morals.” No pages. Cited 6 June 2022. Online: https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/morals.

McCutcheon, Russell T. *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Meeks, Wayne A. “The Ethics of the Fourth Evangelist.” Pages 317–26 in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*. Edited by R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996.

Meichenbaum, Donald. “Bolstering resilience: Benefiting from lessons learned.” Pages 172-180 in *The Evolution of Cognitive Behavior Therapy*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Merrick, M. T., D. C. Ford, K. A. Ports, et al. “*Vital Signs:* Estimated Proportion of Adult Health Problems Attributable to Adverse Childhood Experiences and Implications for Prevention — 25 States, 2015–2017.” *MMWR* 68.44 (November 2009): 999-1005. Cited 21 July 2022. Online: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6844e1.htm.

Milgram, S. *Obedience to Authority*. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

Mill, John Stuart. “Utilitarianism.” Pages 1-64 in *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, and Considerations on Representative Government*. Edited by H. B. Acton. London: Guernsey Press, 1983.

Mitchell, Stephen. *The Book of Job*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.

Moloney, Francis J. “The Function of John 13–17 within the Johannine Narrative.” Pages 260-83 in his *The Gospel of John: Text and Context*. BIS 72. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

Monin, Benoît, and Alexander H. Jordan. “The Dynamic Moral Self: A Social Psychological Perspective.” Pages 341-354 in *Personality, Identity, and Character: Explorations in Moral Psychology*. Edited by D. Narvaez and D. Lapsley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Moore, G. E. *Principia Ethica*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962.

Mullally, Sinéad L., and Eleanor A. Maguire. “Memory, Imagination, and Predicting the Future: A Common Brain Mechanism?” *Neuroscientist* 20.3 (2014): 220-234.

Murnighan, J. Keith, Jae Wook Kim, and A. Richard Metzger, "The Volunteer Dilemma." *ASQ* (1993): 515-538.

Myers, Alicia D. *Reading John and 1, 2, 3 John: A Literary and Theological Commentary*. Reading the New Testament, 2nd Series. Smyth & Helwys Publishing: Kindle Edition, 2019.

Nails, Debra. "The Dramatic Date of Plato's Republic." *CJ* 93.4 (1998): 383-396.

Noll, Kurt L. "Canaanite Religion." *Relig. Compass* 1.1 (2007): 61-92.

Onyango Okello, Joseph B. "Deontological Theories of Ethics." Pages 214-16 in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*. Edited by Joel B. Green, Jacqueline Lapsley, Rebekah Miles, and Allen Verhey. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011.

Osborne, Grant R., and Scot McKnight, eds. *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Pagels, Elaine. ''The Origin of Satan in the Christian Tradition.'' *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 20 (1997): 1-18.

Palmer, Donald. *Looking at Philosophy: The Unbearable Heaviness of Philosophy Made Lighter.* 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006.

Panchuk, Michelle, and Michael Rea, eds. *Voices from the Edge: Centring Marginalized Perspectives in Analytic Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Paeth, Scott. "Teleological Theories of Ethics." Pages 766–769 in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*. Edited by Joel B. Green, Jacqueline Lapsley, Rebekah Miles, and Allen Verhey. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011.

Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W. R. M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966.

Plato. *Platonis Opera*, ed. John Burnet. Oxford University Press. 1903.

Prideaux, Andrew R. "Jesus, Job, and the Suffering Image of God." Pages 202-28 in *Honoring the Wise: Wisdom in Scripture, Ministry, and Life: Celebrating Lindsay Wilson's Thirty Years at Ridley.* Australian College of Theology Monograph Series. Edited by Jill Firth and Paul A. Barker. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2022.

Reinhartz, Adele. *Cast Out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John*. Lanham: Fortress Academic, 2018.

Reinhartz, Adele. "'Common Judaism', 'The Parting of the Ways', and 'The Johannine Community.'" Pages 69-87 in *Orthodoxy, Liberalism, and Adaptation: Essays on Ways of Worldmaking in Times of Change from Biblical, Historical and Systematic Perspectives*. Edited by Bob Becking. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Reinhartz, Adele. "John." Pages 265–308 in *The Gospels and Acts*. Edited by Margaret Aymer, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and David A. Sánchez. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016.

Reynolds, B. E. "Logos." Pages 523-26 in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013.

Rhodes, Richard. *Why They Kill: The Discoveries of a Maverick Criminologist*. New York: Vintage, 2000.

Robertson, Geoffrey. *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice.* 3rd Ed. New York: The New Press, 2002.

Sanders, Jack T. *Ethics in the New Testament*. London: SCM Press, 1986.

Scanlon, T. M. "What Is Morality?" Pages 243-266 in *The Harvard Sampler*. Edited by Jennifer M. Shepherd, Stephen M. Kosslyn and Evelynn M. Hammonds. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Scholtissek, Klaus. "The Johannine Gospel in Recent Research." Pages 444–72 in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*. Edited by Grant R. Osborne and Scot McKnight. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Scroggins, Clay. *How to Lead When You're Not in Charge: Leveraging Influence When You Lack Authority*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018.

Sedikides, Constantine, and Aiden P. Gregg. "Self-Enhancement: Food for Thought." *Perspect Psychol Sci* 3, no. 2 (2008): 102-116.

Seglenieks, Christopher. "Faith and Narrative." *TynBul* 70 (2019): 23-40.

Segovia, F. *The Farewell of the Word: The Johannine Call to Abide*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.

Sen, Amartya. "Gender Inequality and Theories of Justice." Pages 259-73 in *Women, Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities*. Edited by Martha Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Seow, C. L. *Ecclesiastes*. New York: Doubleday, 1997.

Seregin, Andrei V. “Intentionalism and Deontology in the Early Stoic Ethics.” *Philol. Clas.* 17.1 (2022): 32-47.

Sierra, Lauren K. “The God who Condescends: Leadership in the Gospel of John.” *CEJ* 18.1 (2021): 58-73.

Shalvi, Shaul, Francesca Gino, Rachel Barkan, and Shahar Ayal. “Self-Serving Justifications: Doing Wrong and Feeling Moral.” *Curr. Dir. Psychol. Sci.* 24.2 (2015): 125-130.

Shin, Sookgoo. “Ethics in the Gospel of John: Discipleship as Moral Progress.” *TynBul* 68.1 (2017) 153-156.

Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter, ed. *Moral Psychology, Volume 2: The Cognitive Science of Morality: Intuition and Diversity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.

Skinner, Christopher W. “Ethics and the Gospel of John: Toward an Emerging New Consensus?” *CurBR* 18.3 (2020): 280-304.

Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments.* Edited by Ryan Patrick Hanley. London: Penguin, 2009.

Smith, Isaac H., and Maryam Kouchaki. “Moral Humility: In Life and at Work.” *Res Organ Behav* 38 (2018): 77-94.

Smith, Jonathan Z., William Scott Green, and Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley. *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion*. Harper: SanFrancisco, 1995.

Soanes, Catherine, Angus Stevenson, and Sara Hawker, eds. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Spicq, Ceslas. *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*. Translated and edited by James D. Ernest. 3 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.

Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History*. Princeton: Princeton University, 1996.

Steele, Claude M. “The Psychology of Self-Affirmation: Sustaining the Integrity of the Self.” Pages 261-302 in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 21. Edited by L. Berkowitz. San Diego: Academic Press, 1988.

Stone, Alyson M. “Thou shalt not: Treating Religious Trauma and Spiritual Harm with Combined Therapy.” *Group* 37.4 (2013): 323-337.

Syreeni, Kari. *Becoming John: The Making of a Passion Gospel*. London: T&T Clark, 2018.

Tappin, Ben M., and Ryan T. McKay. "The Illusion of Moral Superiority." *Soc Psychol Personal Sci* 8.6 (2017): 623-631.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Thomas, John Christopher. *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community.* 2nd ed. Cleveland: CPT Press, 2014.

Thomaskutty, Johnson, ed. *An Asian Introduction to the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2022.

Thompson, Marianne Meye. *John: A Commentary*. Westminster: John Knox Press, 2015.

Trozzo, Lindsey M. *Exploring Johannine Ethics: A Rhetorical Approach to Moral Efficacy in the Fourth Gospel Narrative*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.

Uhlmann, Eric L., David A. Pizarro, David Tannenbaum, and Peter H. Ditto. "The Motivated use of Moral Principles." *JDM* 4.6 (2009): 479-491.

United States Constitution. preamble.

Vakirtzis, Andreas. "Mimesis, Friendship, and Moral Development in Aristotle's Ethics." *Rhizomata* 3.2 (2015): 125-142.

Van der Watt, Jan G. "The Meaning of Jesus Washing the Feet of his Disciples (John 13)." *Neot* 51.1 (2017): 25-39.

Van der Watt, Jan G., and R. Zimmerman, eds. *Rethinking the Ethics of John: 'Implicit ethics' in the Johannine Writings* WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J., ed. *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Van Kooten, George. "The Last Days of Socrates and Christ: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, and Phaedo Read in Counterpoint with John's Gospel." Pages 219-43 in *Religio-Philosophical Discourses in the Mediterranean World*. Edited by Anders Klostergaard Peterson and George H Van Kooten. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

Van Velden, N. M. "When Gender Performance is Not Straightforward: Feet, Masculinity and Power in John 13: 1–11." *Neot* 53.2 (2019): 291-309.

Wallace, David Foster. "This Is Water." Kenyon College Commencement Address. Gambier, Ohio, May 21, 2005.

Waltke, Bruce K. *Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Walton, John H. *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011.

Watts, Alan. *Eastern Wisdom, Modern Life: Collected Talks 1960-1969*. Novato: New World, 2006.

Williams, Bernard. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Wilson, Timothy D., and Daniel T. Gilbert. "Affective Forecasting: Knowing What to Want." Curr. Dir. Psychol. Sci. 14.3 (2005): 131–134.

Wilson, Timothy D., and Daniel T. Gilbert. "The Impact Bias is Alive and Well." J Pers Soc Psychol. 105.5 (2013): 740-748.

Winston, B. E. "Nomos: Developing People from Rules to Love." Pages 85-105 in *Biblical Principles of Hiring and Developing Employees*. Cham: Macmillan, 2018.

Yoder, Keith L. "Mimesis: Foot Washing from Luke to John." *ETL* 92.4 (2016): 655-670.

Zimbardo, Philip. *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil*. London: Rider, 2007.

Zhenzhao, Nie. "Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism." *Arcadia* 50.1 (2015): 83-101.

Zigon, Jarrett. *Morality: An Anthropological Perspective*. Oxford: Berg, 2008.

Zoido, Juan Carlos Iglesias. "The battle exhortation in ancient rhetoric." *Rhet.* 25.2 (2007): 141-58.