

LINDSEY M. TROZZO

Exploring Johannine Ethics

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
449*

Mohr Siebeck

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A Rhetorical Approach to Moral Efficacy
in the Fourth Gospel Narrative

Mohr Siebeck

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To Scott

*Brother and friend since Day One,
thank you for making God's love more complete in my life.*

θεὸν οὐδεὶς πώποτε τεθέαται·
ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει
καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν τετελειωμένη ἐστίν.

1 John 4:12

No one has seen God at any time.
If we love one another, God abides in us,
and God's love is made complete among us.

Preface

This book is my first, flowing from my doctoral dissertation. There are many people to thank. To my *doktormutter*, Lidija Novakovic, thank you for your thorough attention to this project at every stage. Thank you for constantly sharpening my ideas with your keen eye and for setting the bar high. My work is vastly improved because of your dedicated feedback, and I am grateful. Thanks as well to my committee. Bruce Longenecker, thank you for the contagious enthusiasm about your work in the field and for your eager support of students' ideas. Thank you for your thoughtful response to this project, which builds on your own work. Mikeal Parsons, thank you for introducing me to rhetoric and for your constant support in navigating academic life. Thank you for being such an involved reader of this project, which would not exist if it weren't for your influence. To Paul Martens and Darin Davis, thank you for your interest in my subject and for your helpful insights regarding ethics and philosophy. I would also like to thank other dedicated members of the Baylor New Testament Department past and present: Charles Talbert, Kelly Iverson, and Beverly Gaventa.

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As an extrovert in the field of academics, I am keenly aware that I share this accomplishment with my family – both given and chosen. Thank you, family, and thank you, my fellow Baylor New Testament doctoral students and your

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When friendship attends us, it brings pleasure and delight to our prosperity
no less than it takes away the griefs and the feeling of helplessness from adversity.

– Plutarch, referencing Euripides

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List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
AmJT	<i>American Journal of Theology</i>
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
AThR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BT	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BTZ	<i>Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CTJ	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
CurBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i> (formerly <i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>)
CurBS	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
CV	<i>Communio Viatorum</i>
EBib	<i>Etudes bibliques</i>
ECL	Early Christianity and Its Literature
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
EvT	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship

<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HThKNTSup2	Supplements to Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Series 2
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
<i>LTP</i>	<i>Laval théologique et philosophique</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTL	New Testament Library
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Modern Language Association</i>
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Rethinking the Ethics of John: "Implicit Ethics" in the Johannine Writings</i> , ed. Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann, WUNT 291 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012)
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SymS	Symposium Series
TENTS	Texts and Editions for New Testament Study
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>TRu</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VE	<i>Vox Evangelica</i>

WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZEE	<i>Zeitschrift für evangelische Ethik</i>
ZNT	<i>Zeitschrift für Neues Testament</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

Introduction

Setting the Stage

When we explore the story of the Fourth Gospel, we find many treasured images for understanding the figure of Jesus and the life of faith. In John we meet the Word who became flesh (John 1:14), the Bread of Life (6:35, 41, 48–51), the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14), and the vine (15:1, 5). We listen in on extended conversations with a leader of Israel who misunderstands Jesus’s message and a Samaritan outcast who gets it. We encounter Jesus relieving worry at a wedding as he changes water to wine and wiping away his own tears at a funeral before raising a beloved brother from the dead. We watch as this nobody from Nazareth performs signs and claims “I AM,” as this respected rabbi washes his disciples’ dirty feet and bids his friends farewell before facing his final hour. Some of the most long-standing Christian teachings and sayings come from this Gospel: “For God so loved the world” (3:16)¹ and “Love one another as I have loved you” (15:12; cf. 13:34).²

Famously described as “a book in which a child can wade and an elephant can swim,” the Fourth Gospel is at the same time considered one of the most approachable gospels for those interested in the story of Jesus and one of the most perplexing presentations for those embarking on critical study.³ One chal-

¹ Although I work directly with the Greek text throughout, in many places where the Greek is straightforward or simple, I default to the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), particularly when drawing upon conventional phrasing (e.g., “For God so loved the world”).

² For a thoughtful guide through the narrative of the Fourth Gospel with attention to its social, literary, and rhetorical background, I highly recommend Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John, Paideia* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). For a spiritual journey through John, take the trusty hand of Jaime Clark-Soules, *Reading John for Dear Life: A Spiritual Walk with the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016). For a classic introduction, reach for Raymond Brown’s *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Francis J. Moloney, SDB (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003). For an approachable companion in navigating some key issues in the study of John, see Christopher W. Skinner, *Reading John* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015).

³ I first stumbled upon this famous line in Robert Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975), 6. The earliest application to the Fourth Gospel appears to be in Paul F. Barackman, “The Gos-

lenge that has haunted scholarship for decades is the pursuit of Johannine ethics. Despite the assertion that the Fourth Evangelist is “perhaps the greatest theologian in the history of the church,” scholars for decades have generally agreed that “the Fourth Gospel contains no ethics.”⁴ This project revisits the scholarly verdict, exploring Johannine ethics via rhetorical analysis and facilitating a fresh approach to this long-standing “problem” in the history of Johannine scholarship.

Ethics, formally speaking, is the philosophical study of “morality as a universal ideal.”⁵ It is a branch of philosophy that reflects on what constitutes good pursuits (in contrast to bad) and what constitutes right behavior (as opposed to wrong). It asks what actions a person should do and what they should not do, and it considers the reasons that guide these practical decisions.⁶ An ethical theory suggests a set of standards that make up a universal moral ideal and offers a defense for these standards.⁷ Overlapping with morality in general, ethics moves beyond the descriptive sciences of anthropology and sociology, since it not only describes how a group behaves but also prescribes how a group *should* behave.⁸ Ethics can be defined as “a discipline that focuses on behavior,

pel according to John,” *Int* 6 (1952): 63. Kysar calls it an anonymous statement, and Barackman simply mentions “someone” who describes the Fourth Gospel this way. Paul Anderson (*The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011], 1n1) cites a similar phrase attributed to Pope Gregory the Great and Augustine before him, that has been used to describe Scripture as “a stream in which the elephant may swim and the lamb may wade.”

⁴ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (New York: Macmillan, 1955). Barrett amended his strong statement with the phrase “after Paul” in the second edition. Clement of Alexandria is credited with calling John “the spiritual Gospel,” a sign of its theological leanings. Medieval theologians referred to the Fourth Evangelist as “the theologian” or even “the divine.” For a thorough summary of the history of research on the pursuit of Johannine ethics, see Ruben Zimmermann, “Is There Ethics in the Gospel of John? Challenging an Outdated Consensus,” in *REJ*, 44–80 (quote on page 44). See also the history of research below.

⁵ John Deigh, *An Introduction to Ethics*, Cambridge Introductions to Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8.

⁶ For this understanding of ethics as a philosophical pursuit, see *ibid.*, especially the first chapter (1–24), “What Is Ethics?”

⁷ Suggestions for the moral ideal vary from egoism’s happiness (e.g., Epicurus, Benedict de Spinoza), to eudaimonism’s well being/flourishing (Plato’s rationalism, Aristotle’s naturalism), to utilitarianism’s impartiality (Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Henry Sidgwick), to the deontological appeals to natural law (Cicero, Thomas Hobbes), divine command (like Mosaic law), or practical reason (Kant). Although an ethical theory could be used to defend a society’s conventional morality, particular ethical theories often go against conventional morality, since they are guided by an external ideal rather than by common practice.

⁸ At times “ethics” is used broadly (almost synonymously with morality), but at other times it is used quite narrowly to indicate an explicit articulation of a moral system or explicit

virtues, values, judgments, structures, and so on, in an effort to understand their nature and function as it seeks to guide human beings to a well-formed, good life.”⁹ Thus ethics is often used to reference the moral system of a particular group (e.g., “Christian ethics”).¹⁰

In pursuing the ethics of the Fourth Gospel, we narrow our conception further. The Fourth Gospel is not a philosophical treatise, so it does not invite discussion of ethics as a codified moral system. Thus, we join scholars such as Jan van der Watt and Jörg Frey who consider ethics as it is “implicitly transmitted or explicitly reflected in communal texts.”¹¹ Our task is exploring what

reflection on the rightness or wrongness of specific practices and thoughts. Nineteenth-century German scholarship restricted ethics to the social sphere, leaving morality to the personal sphere, but this distinction has largely fallen away with time. We are using the term ethics in its broadest sense, almost synonymous with morality; however, we include the implicit understanding that moral or ethical conduct includes a social component.

⁹ Harry J. Huebner, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: History, Movements, People* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 25.

¹⁰ “Biblical ethics” seeks to describe the character of ethics represented in the Christian canon (or in a part of the canon). Some approaches to biblical ethics seek to present a monolithic ethic, while others identify a variegated ethic consisting of the many ethical presentations from various parts of the canon. Some iterations of biblical ethics overlap with “Christian ethics,” asking how Christians should relate to the ethic(s) presented in the Bible. “Christian ethics” describes and prescribes the actions that should flow from what the Bible says about humanity, the world, and God (ibid., 4). Though I am quite interested in this facet of ethics, the current project will not include “Christian ethics” in terms of asking how Christians today might relate to the ethic(s) (re)presented in the Bible. “Christian ethics” usually describes the pursuit of ethics from a Protestant perspective (e.g., Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983]), while “moral theology” describes the pursuit of ethics within the framework of Catholic theology (James F. Keenan, *History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences* (London: Continuum, 2010)). See this distinction in Christopher W. Skinner, “(How) Can We Talk About Johannine Ethics: Looking Back and Moving Forward,” in *Johannine Ethics: The Moral World of the Gospel and Epistles of John*, ed. Sherri Brown and Christopher W. Skinner (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

¹¹ These scholars have chosen the term *ethos* and focus on the aspects of ethics as reflected in a group’s behavior. For more on *ethos*, see Ruben Zimmermann, “Moral Language in the New Testament: An Introduction,” in *Moral Language in the New Testament: The Interrelatedness of Language and Ethics in Early Christian Writings*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann and Jan G. van der Watt, vol. 2, WUNT 296 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 1–16; Jan G. van der Watt, ed., *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, trans. F. S. Malan, BZNW 141 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), vii. See also Michael Wolter, “‘Let No One Seek His Own, but Each One the Other’s’ (1 Corinthians 10:24): Pauline Ethics According to 1 Corinthians,” in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt, BZNW 141 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 199–217; Michael Wolter, “Ethos und Identität in paulinischen Gemeinden,” *NTS* 43 (1997): 430–44; L. E. Keck, “On the Ethos of Early Christians,” *JAAR* 42 (1974): 435–52.

we might say about the Fourth Gospel as “an instrument of moral formation.”¹² To this end, our study adopts the term “moral efficacy” to refer to the way an encounter with a narrative influences the thoughts and behaviors of audience members. Focusing on the person as a moral agent, “moral efficacy” is used in the field of psychology¹³ to refer to “one’s belief (confidence) in his or her capabilities to organize and mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, means and courses of action needed to attain moral performance, within a given moral domain, while persisting in the face of moral adversity.”¹⁴ Other times “moral efficacy” is used more broadly as synonymous with “moral causality” or “morality making,” referring to the “moral change realized in and by the agent.”¹⁵ In this context, moral efficacy includes two elements of moral change: the action that causes the moral change and the moral agent that realizes this change.¹⁶

In this project, we use “moral efficacy” as a reference to the moral change that has the potential to be realized in the audience’s encounter with the Johannine narrative. Here the action that causes the moral change is not an event witnessed or experienced directly by the moral agent but a representation of such an event (i.e., Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection) that is accessible to the audience only through the text – the Johannine narrative. Rather than focusing exclusively on the mind of the audience-member, we turn instead to the com-

¹² 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), 317. Meeks adds that it is also impossible to assess the moral character of the Fourth Evangelist, since the author is unknown and we lack information about his public life.

¹³ In this context, moral efficacy is one element of moral potency, or “an individual’s ethical psychological resources.” Moral potency also includes the components of moral ownership (the concept that it is one’s place to act) and moral courage (perseverance to bring the actions to resolution). Thus, psychology views moral efficacy as one step in the bridge between moral thought and moral action. Sean T. Hannah and Bruce J. Avolio, “Moral Potency: Building the Capacity for Character-Based Leadership,” *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* (themed issue on “Defining and Measuring Character in Leadership”) 62 (2010): 291–93.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 297. “This definition recognizes that moral efficacy is dependent on both external sources of means efficacy (Eden, 2001) as well as internal aspects of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).” See D. Eden, “Means Efficacy: External Sources of General and Specific Subjective Efficacy,” in *Work Motivation in the Context of a Globalizing Economy* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2001), 65–77; Albert Bandura, *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (New York: Freeman, 1997).

¹⁵ John Haldane, “Gravitas, Moral Efficacy and Social Causes,” *Analysis* 68, no. 297 (2008): 38. The change can be direct or derivative – i.e., the act in question may immediately produce a result or it may create a series of reactions that lead to a final result.

¹⁶ Haldane, “Gravitas, Moral Efficacy and Social Causes.”

municative space in the encounter between the audience-member and the narrative. Thus, our rhetorical approach explores the ways of thinking and living that the experience of the Fourth Gospel narrative would likely engender. To this end, we assess rhetorical clues or cues that would guide the audience toward the desired moral effect. We explore Johannine ethics by attending to the following rhetorical elements of the Fourth Gospel: (1) participation in genre, (2) incorporation of encomiastic topics, (3) metaleptic extension of the topics to address the audience situation, and (4) the appropriation of structural devices as guides to the rhetorical trajectory of the narrative. In so doing, this project offers a framework for interpretation, setting appropriate expectations for the pursuit of Johannine ethics and directing attention to the encounter between the audience and the text.¹⁷

This introduction reviews the literature relevant to the topic, examines the reasons behind the current consensus, outlines the methodology, and provides an overview of the project. We begin with the scholarly context, presenting conclusions from past pursuits of Johannine ethics, articulating the current state of the question, and situating this project among exciting advances in more recent scholarship.

Johannine Ethics in the History of Scholarship

Broadly speaking, both New Testament and Johannine scholarship have neglected significant treatment of ethics in the Fourth Gospel.¹⁸ New Testament scholars routinely give only sparse attention to the Fourth Gospel in their discussions of New Testament ethics,¹⁹ preferring the more explicit hortatory material in Paul's epistles or the Synoptic sermons to what Heinz-Dietrich

¹⁷ Later discussion will add more precision to important terms (ethics, rhetoric, and audience).

¹⁸ This observation is true when viewing the history of scholarship generally, although the tide has changed in Johannine studies in recent years. See the literature review below, especially Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann, "Preface," in *REJ*, ix–xi. Theological approaches to ethics provide some key exceptions. Natural law ethics builds on the Johannine prologue (e.g., Aquinas's understanding of the natural law as the expression of the eternal law in creation). The Alexandrians also utilized the logic of the *logos* in similar ways. The Fourth Gospel's dualistic language (light/dark, etc.) indirectly influenced the "two ways" language of both early (e.g., *Didache*) and later catechetical and ethical texts. The nineteenth- and twentieth-century Protestant fixation on *agape* is indebted to the Fourth Gospel's flexible presentation of ethics (e.g., Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros*, and Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian realism).

¹⁹ Heinz-Dietrich Wendland, *Ethik des Neuen Testaments: Eine Einführung*, 3rd ed., NTD 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978); Willi Marxsen, "Christliche" und christliche Ethik im Neuen Testament (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1989); Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996). Richard B. Hays (*The Moral Vision of the New Testament* [San Francisco:

Wendland called “an enormous reduction of ethical questions and statements” in the Fourth Gospel.²⁰ Those who look to the Fourth Gospel for ethical content often limit their discussions to “the love command” and turn their attention to christological, soteriological, and ecclesial implications, neglecting the topic of ethics in its own right.²¹ James Houlden, for example, claims that “even when he speaks of the command to love . . . John’s *real* concern is not primarily ethical at all.”²² Some wonder whether the Fourth Gospel even deserves inclusion in a study on New Testament ethics, suggesting that its contribution might lie exclusively in the field of New Testament theology.²³ Until the end of the twentieth century, the vast majority of Johannine scholarship either neglected the topic of Johannine ethics (assuming the Fourth Gospel had little to contribute in this area) or found it to be problematic.²⁴ These scholars reduced Johannine ethics to the “new commandment” and deemed it a sectarian or docetic

HarperSanFrancisco, 1996], 138–57) offers promising insights but discusses the Gospel and letters of John together in fewer than twenty pages.

²⁰ Wendland, *Ethik des Neuen Testaments*, 109. Cf. Zimmermann, “Is There Ethics in the Gospel of John?,” 61–62.

²¹ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament* (New York: Seabury, 1973), 148–92; Eduard Lohse, *Theological Ethics of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 166–70; Georg Strecker, *Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Horn and M. Eugene Boring (New York: Westminster John Knox, 2000); Russell Pregeant, *Knowing Truth, Doing Good: Engaging New Testament Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008). E.g., J. L. Houlden (*Ethics and the New Testament* [London: T&T Clark, 2004], 35–40) suggests that the Fourth Gospel’s contribution is solely christological, and Wolfgang Schrage (*The Ethics of the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988], 297) suggests that it belongs only to NT theology.

²² Houlden, *Ethics and the New Testament*, 37 (emphasis mine).

²³ Schrage, *Ethics of the New Testament*, 297.

²⁴ See Klaus Scholtissek, “Johannine Studies: A Survey of Recent Research with Special Regard to German Contributions,” trans. K. Backhaus, *CurBS* 6 (1998): 227–59, and Klaus Scholtissek, “Johannine Studies: A Survey of Recent Research with Special Regard to German Contributions II,” trans. Anne Gordon Keidel, *CurBS* 9 (2001): 277–305, which survey German commentaries including Schenke, Wilckens, and Schnelle and suggest that recent scholarship has focused on the relationship to the Synoptics, Christology, and eschatology. Aside from one reference to the foot washing, this extensive survey does not mention Johannine ethics. Zimmermann (“Is There Ethics in the Gospel of John?,” 45) examines recent commentaries – Wengst, Dietzfelbinger, Thyen, Theobald, Carson, Moloney, Keener, Köstenberger, and Lincoln – for which the subject of ethics is “of practically no importance.” See also Udo Schnelle, “Ein neuer Blick: Tendenzen der gegenwärtigen Johanneforschung,” *BTZ* 16 (1999): 29–40; Paul N. Anderson, “Beyond the Shade of the Oak Tree: The Recent Growth of Johannine Studies,” *ExpTim* 119 (2008): 365–73; Francis J. Moloney, “Recent Johannine Studies: Part One: Commentaries,” *ExpTim* 123 (2012): 313–22; Francis J. Moloney, “Recent Johannine Studies: Part Two: Monographs,” *ExpTim* 123 (2012): 417–28.

restriction of the Synoptic command to love one's neighbor.²⁵ Ruben Zimmermann recently offered a similar assessment of the history of scholarship. Despite the controversy typical in the field, he says, "New Testament scholarship appears to find consensus on one subject – there is general agreement that the Fourth Gospel contains no ethics."²⁶

Against this current, a number of scholars have recently taken up the task of articulating a Johannine ethic, calling for new methods and creative approaches to the issue.²⁷ Recognizing that the Fourth Gospel is "laden with ethical implications," scholars like Johannes Nissen and D. Moody Smith began to broaden earlier limitations on what could constitute ethics in the Gospel.²⁸ Jan van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann have attended to the images and metaphors of the Gospel as vehicles for Johannine ethics.²⁹ Others considered more specific

²⁵ Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, trans. Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Jack T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament: Change and Development* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); Jürgen Becker, "Feindesliebe–Nächstenliebe–Bruderliebe: Exegetische Beobachtungen als Anfrage an ein ethisches Problemfeld," *ZEE* 25 (1981): 5–17; Meeks, "Ethics of the Fourth Evangelist." For a survey of this topic, see Hartwig Thyen, *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum*, WUNT 214 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 623–30; Michael Labahn, "'It's Only Love' – Is That All?," in *REJ*, 22–24.

²⁶ Zimmermann, "Is There Ethics in the Gospel of John?," 44. See also the following reports: Walter Rebell, "Neutestamentliche Ethik – Anmerkungen zum gegenwärtigen Diskussionsstand," *ZEE* 32 (1988): 143–51; Petr Pokorný, "Neutestamentliche Ethik und die Probleme ihrer Darstellungen," *EvT* 50 (1990): 357–71; Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, "Ethik des Neuen Testaments 1982–1992," *TRu* 60 (1995): 32–86; Werner Zager, "Neutestamentliche Ethik im Spiegel der Forschung," *ZNT* 11 (2003): 3–13; Richard B. Hays, "Mapping the Field: Approaches to New Testament Ethics," in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt, BZNW 141 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 3–19.

²⁷ Even in this resurgence, there are currently no English monographs dedicated to the ethics of the Fourth Gospel. The first to dedicate a monograph to this topic was Karl Weyer-Menkhooff, *Die Ethik des Johannesevangeliums im sprachlichen Feld des Handelns*, Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik, WUNT 359 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

²⁸ E.g., Johannes Nissen ("Community and Ethics in the Gospel of John," in *New Readings in John: Literary and Theological Perspectives; Essays from the Scandinavian Conference on the Fourth Gospel in Aarhus 1997*, ed. Johannes Nissen and Sigfred Pedersen, JSNTSup 182 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 199, 210) focuses on "mission"; D. Moody Smith ("Ethics and the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel," in *Word, Theology, and Community in John*, ed. John Painter, R. Alan Culpepper, and Fernando F. Segovia [St. Louis: Chalice, 2002], 109–22) focuses on the theme of faith in its connection with action. See also an article ahead of its time: Mary E. Clarkson, "Ethics of the Fourth Gospel," *ATHR* 31 (1949): 112–15.

²⁹ Jan G. van der Watt, *Family of the King: Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel According to John*, BibInt 47 (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Jan G. van der Watt, "Ethics Alive in Imagery," in *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language*, ed. Jörg Frey, Jan G. van der Watt, and Ruben Zimmermann, WUNT 200 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 421–48; Ruben Zimmermann, "Metaphoric Networks as

elements like the Law, the Johannine opponents, divine love, or mission to interpret the internal focus and sharp dualisms present in the Gospel.³⁰ With this broader focus, the negative perception of the lack of ethics in the Fourth Gospel has turned to a positive identification of the various qualities of the Gospel's

Hermeneutic Keys in the Gospel of John," in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, ed. Gilbert van Belle, Michael Labahn, and P. Maritz, BETL 223 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 381–402; Jan G. van der Watt, "Ethics through the Power of Language: Some Explorations in the Gospel according to John," in *Moral Language in the New Testament: The Interrelatedness of Language and Ethics in Early Christian Writings*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann and Jan G. van der Watt, vol. 2, WUNT 296 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 139–67; Jan G. van der Watt, "The Gospel of John's Perception of Ethical Behaviour," In *die Skriflig* 45 (2011): 431–47. In *Family of the King*, van der Watt explores the importance of family ties and how those would affect behavior in the ancient world. In "Ethics Alive" he considers how these images are networked together for the overall rhetorical effect of the text. Several images are found to be "pregnant vehicles for ethical arguments" (447). The filial imagery in chapter 8 shows the link between identity and deeds. The proverbial imagery in chapter 12 reveals that self-denial is the center of ethical behavior toward others. The imagery of light illustrates the positive quality of ethical behavior, and the image of the vine expresses the importance of the intimate relation between Jesus and his followers for ethics. The function of these images is to communicate the essence of ethical behavior as defined by the Gospel.

³⁰ Jan G. van der Watt, "Radical Social Redefinition and Radical Love: Ethics and Ethos in the Gospel according to John," in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, BZNW 141 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 107–33; Jey J. Kanagaraj, "The Implied Ethics of the Fourth Gospel: A Reinterpretation of the Decalogue," *TynBul* 52 (2001): 33–60; Jan G. van der Watt, "Ethics Of/and the Opponents of Jesus in John's Gospel," in *REJ*, 175–91; Willard M. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Piece in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); Stephen C. Barton, "Johannine Dualism and Contemporary Pluralism," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 3–18; Miroslav Volf, "Johannine Dualism and Contemporary Pluralism," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 19–50. Zimmermann ("Is There Ethics in the Gospel of John?," 45) claims that the Bauckham and Mosser volume does not contain a single article on ethics. Barton and Volf, however, address the challenge of Johannine ethics as it relates specifically to the convergence of Johannine dualism with contemporary pluralism. They argue for a fundamental difference in Johannine dualism, in that the narrative also offers a solution to the problem. See also Kobus Kok, "As the Father Has Sent Me, I Send You: Towards a Missional-Incarnational Ethos in John 4," in *Moral Language in the New Testament: The Interrelatedness of Language and Ethics in Early Christian Writings*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann and Jan G. van der Watt, WUNT 296 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 168–93. Love remains central in these discussions, but instead of limiting the Gospel's ethics to one command or embracing a narrow view of Johannine love as sectarian or docetic, love is seen as the catalyst for ethical creativity and the relational foundation for ethical action. Labahn ("It's Only Love," 27) suggests that Johannine love is "a basic and valuable ethical principle that . . . cannot be reduced simply to the very few direct statements regarding love and the actions that proceed from it."

“implicit” ethics.³¹ Richard Hays, Richard Burridge, and Christos Karakolis have articulated the ethics of the Fourth Gospel in terms of imitation,³² while Rudolf Schnackenberg, Rainer Hirsch-Luipold, Hermut Löhr, Udo Schnelle, and Karl Weyer-Menkhoff approach Johannine ethics in theological terms.³³ These new and creative approaches represent some promising advances in articulating Johannine ethics.

Challenges in the Pursuit of Johannine Ethics

The inattention to Johannine ethics for such a long period of scholarly history likely resulted from the narrative form of the Gospel and its clear christological agenda. While various kinds of narratives have the ability to carry moral efficacy, they most often do so in specific ways.³⁴ First, narratives can include

³¹ See also Mira Stare, “Ethics of Life in the Gospel of John,” in *REJ*, 213–28; William Loader, “The Law and Ethics in John’s Gospel,” in *REJ*, 143–58. J. Bolyki (“Ethics in the Gospel of John,” *CV* 45 [2003]: 198–208) examines Johannine ethics through the lens of ancient drama, comparing the conflict of the Fourth Gospel to the ethical conflicts of ancient tragedies, arguing that the Fourth Gospel provides a moral story of origin in the classical Greek sense.

³² Hays, *Moral Vision*; Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Richard A. Burridge, “Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to the Ethics of the Historical Jesus and John’s Gospel,” in *John, Jesus, and History*, ed. Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher, ECL (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 281–90; Christos Karakolis, “Semeia Conveying Ethics in the Gospel according to John,” in *REJ*, 192–212.

³³ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Die sittliche Botschaft des Neuen Testaments: Die urchristlichen Verkündiger*, vol. 2, HThKNTSup 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1988); Rainer Hirsch-Luipold, “Prinzipiell-theologische Ethik in der johanneischen Literatur,” in *Jenseits von Indikativ und Imperativ*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Horn and Ruben Zimmermann, WUNT 238 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 289–307; Hermut Löhr, “Ἐργον as an Element of Moral Language in John,” in *REJ*, 229–49. In his recent commentary on the Johannine epistles, Schnelle speaks of an “ethical theology” developed by the Johannine community (Udo Schnelle, *Die Johannesbriefe*, THKNT 17 [Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2010]). In the unique monograph-length treatment of Johannine ethics, Weyer-Menkhoff suggests that the narrative roots its implicit ethic in the words and deeds of God. See Karl Weyer-Menkhoff, *Die Ethik des Johannesevangeliums im sprachlichen Feld des Handelns, Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik*, WUNT 359 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). See also Sherri Brown and Christopher W. Skinner, eds., *Johannine Ethics: The Moral World of the Gospel and Epistles of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

³⁴ For the implicit moral component in the pedagogy of composition, see Craig A. Gibson, “Better Living Through Prose Composition? Moral and Compositional Pedagogy in Ancient Greek and Roman Progymnasmata,” *Rhetorica* 32 (2014): 1–30; Donald Lemen Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 209; Todd Penner, “Reconfiguring the Rhetorical Study of Acts: Reflections on the Method in and Learning of Progymnastic Poetics,” *PRSt* 30 (2003): 425–39; James Jerome Murphy, “The Key Role of Habit in Roman Writing Instruction,” in *A Short History of Writing Instruction:*

explicit ethical content of various kinds (rules, maxims, paraenetic sections) within the story itself. This explicit ethical content sometimes reveals the ethics of the author. For example, Plutarch presents his moral views concerning personal and political virtue in *Cato Minor* (9.5; 44.7–8; 53.2).³⁵ The story can also include extended paraenetic sections (like Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount [Matt 5–7]) or present shorter teachings and maxims (like didactic statements made by the Markan Jesus [Mark 7:14–23]).³⁶ Lucian’s *Demonax* includes significant amounts of didactic and philosophical material as well.³⁷ Narratives can also present certain characters as models of virtue or vice that suggest behaviors for the audience to appropriate or avoid.³⁸ Examples of narratives that overtly invite imitation of the main character include Xenophon’s *Agesilaus* (10.2), Isocrates’s *Evagoras* (73–81), Lucian’s *Demonax* (2), and many of Plutarch’s *Lives* (*Cato Minor* 24.1; 37.5, *Pericles* 1, *Aemilius Paulus* 1).³⁹ Further, narratives can include direct commentary that reflects on the value of certain virtues and the danger of certain vices. This ethical commentary can be articulated by the author (in inserted comments), by the narrator, or by characters in the story. For example, Plutarch often offers a *syncrisis* (or formal comparison) at the conclusion of a pair of *Lives* to guide the audience in recognizing and engaging the moral efficacy of the narrative.⁴⁰

From Ancient Greece to Modern America, ed. James Jerome Murphy, 2nd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2001), 35–78. The fact that the pedagogical exercises “implicitly convey moral and cultural values” to the students suggests also that these students would expect their writings to convey moral values to their audiences; M. Kraus, “Exercises for Text Composition (Exercitationes, Progymnasmata),” in *Rhetoric and Stylistics: An International Handbook of Historical and Systematic Research*, ed. U. Fix, A. Gardt, and J. Knappe, 2 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 2:1396–1405.

³⁵ Burrige, *Imitating Jesus*, 28–29.

³⁶ A narrative can also affirm, refute, or otherwise comment on preexisting rules or laws (like the Synoptic stories of Jesus’s actions on the Sabbath [Luke 6:1–10; Matt 12:1–14; Mark 2:22–3:6]). The Johannine Jesus does comment on the Law of Moses (e.g., John 7:23). As Hays points out, however, the Law of Moses does not seem to be a part of John’s moral vision; rather, it prefigures Jesus, and “its meaning is seemingly absorbed into his person” (Hays, *Moral Vision*, 138; cf. John 9:15–16, 32, where discussions about Jesus observing the Sabbath center on christological questions).

³⁷ Burrige, *Imitating Jesus*, 29.

³⁸ Burrige (*ibid.*, 62–79) suggests that it is the imitative invitation of the Gospels that constitutes their ethical presentation. Jesus (as well as the disciples and other characters) functions this way in all four Gospels to an extent. We will discuss both the promise and the problems with imitation of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel in chapter 1 below.

³⁹ These references were found in Burrige’s introductory chapter; *ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁰ We will further engage Plutarch’s *Lives* in the next chapter. Plutarch at times slips into his own direct commentary as he tells the story (e.g., *Cato Minor* 44.7–8 mentioned above). At other times, more subtle rhetoric is used, and narrative tensions lead the audience toward ethical reflection.

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