TIMOTHY J. MURRAY

Restricted Generosity in the New Testament

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
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Preface

This monograph is a lightly revised version of my doctoral thesis, which was accepted by the University of Nottingham in 2017. I must first acknowledge the funding granted by the Arts and Humanities Research Council through the Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership that allowed me to complete this research, along with additional grants for trips to Israel and Pompeii.

Completing a doctorate is the culmination not just of three years full-time research, but, in many ways, of one's entire education. My first thanks, therefore, go to my parents, Lois and Bruce Murray, who were also my teachers throughout my childhood; I am grateful not only for their development of my mind but also for their attention to character, values and faith. I will be forever in the debt of my father's inclination to keep giving me good books to read! I would never have considered studying for a doctorate without the provocation of Professor Max Turner who was generous with his time and encouragement as he supervised my MA thesis. I am especially grateful, though, for my supervisor Professor Roland Deines. Having taken a chance on me, he set an extremely high standard for scholarly research, accuracy of thought and generosity of spirit. Benevolent with his time, money and interest, he modelled excellence in scholarship without failing to encourage me. Above all, I am grateful for his friendship. He fulfilled all the roles of a good Doktorvater; without him this monograph would not have appeared.

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My final thanks are reserved for my wife Joanna, who has been willing not only to shape a family life together that has allowed me to study, but to move beyond thinking about New Testament wealth ethics by trying to live them.

Soli Deo Gloria.

August 2018 Tim Murray

Table of Content

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations in this book follow the guidance of *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines* 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL, 2014). Abbreviations not found there are listed below.

AGRW	Richard S. Ascough, Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg. *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012.
AncSoc	*Ancient Society*
BICSSup	Bulletin for the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement
BNP	*Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World*, eds. H. Cancik, H. Schneider, C.F. Salazar, F.G. Gentry and D. Smart. 22 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2002–2011.
DSE	*The Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. J. Green. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
DSS	The Dead Sea Scrolls
EDEJ	*The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. J.J. Collins and D.C. Harlow. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
EDRL	Adolf Berger. "Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law," *TAPS* 43 (1953): 333–809.
FCCGRW	First Century Christians in the Greco-Roman World
GRA	*Greco-Roman Associations* (see bibliography).

HNTR	William Baird, *The History of New Testament Research*, 3 vols. Minneapolis: Fortress,1992–2013.
IJO	*Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis* (see bibliography).
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, ed. H. Dessau. Berlin, 1892–1912.
IVPNTCS	Inter-Varsity Press New Testament Commentary Series
JJMJS	*The Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting*
KNNE	Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
SCI	*Scripta Classica Israelica*
TRENT	David Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004–.
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

Chapter 1

Introduction: Restricted Generosity in the New Testament in its Academic Context

This book is concerned with when, how and why the first Christians restricted their material generosity, according to the evidence of the New Testament texts. The question is both interesting and important because the teaching of Jesus, which these same churches preserved in the gospels, contains radical statements about wealth which seem to espouse a limitless generosity.[1] The study is divided into two parts: the first discusses other first-century CE social structures to provide an informative context against which to understand the ethics and ethos captured in the New Testament;[2] the second turns to the New Testament itself.

Our study is, therefore, historical, and best located within the field of New Testament ethics or, more specifically, New Testament wealth ethics. The first task of this introduction is to position this work in relation to the field and results to date. Studies exclusively devoted to New Testament wealth ethics have only appeared in the last fifty years; however, I will reach further back and provide a concise summary of how wealth ethics has been approached by those writing on New Testament ethics more broadly since the beginning of the twentieth century. Methodologically, as 'New Testament ethics' encompasses a variety of academic endeavours, any study connected to this field must be precisely defined; the need for clarity is acute in relation to the most basic of presuppositions.[3] This will be the second task: to clarify my approach and

[1] E.g., Mark 10.17–31 par. Matt 19.16–26, Luke 18.18–27; Luke 6.30, 10.25–37, 12.33.

[2] Jan G. van der Watt, "Preface," in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), v–ix, distinguishes between ethos and ethics as follows: *Ethics* is related to the "rules/principles/basic exhortations/ethical pointers" (7) of a given text. It is concerned with moral reflection and motivation. *Ethos* however "is a behavioural category… it deals with the way in which believers concretized their ethical convictions into actions in the totality of their life experience" (7). Ethos can thus be the expression of ethics, but the real *ethos* of a community may contradict their *ethical* ambition. Hence, van der Watt helpfully differentiates between real and idealized ethos.

[3] See the comments of Richard B. Hays, "Mapping the Field: Approaches to New Testament Ethics," in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos*, ed. van der Watt, 3–22, where concerning a major conference on NT ethics he remarks "we found it impossible to agree on either the

suggest how it relates to current controversies. The main lines of argument and significant conclusions of the book are summarised at the end of this chapter.

1.1. The development of New Testament ethics

"Only in the past 150 years or so has 'New Testament ethics' been a subject distinct from theology or separate from the task of giving practical instruction to the church."[4] Although the church has articulated Christian morality in relation to the books of the New Testament throughout its history, the development of New Testament ethics as a distinct discipline, which conceptually separated the *study* (or *descriptive* task) of ethics and morality in the New Testament from its *application* (or *prescriptive* task), was fairly late. Charles Cosgrove has suggested that this development derives from the influence of J.P. Gabler's inaugural address to the University of Altdorf in 1787,[5] in which he separated the task of "conveying what the holy writers felt about divine matters"[6] from the investigation of "which opinions have to do with the unchanging testament of Christian doctrine, and therefore pertain directly to us."[7] For Gabler, the latter could then be used by dogmatic theologians to address contemporary Christian practice. This 'biblical theology' movement shaped academic study thenceforth;[8] the separation of New Testament ethics from applied moral teaching seems predictable in retrospect.

Such separation is immediately evident in the preface of the earliest relevant English-language work known to this author – George Matheson's *Landmarks of New Testament Morality* (1888)[9] – in which he is careful to distinguish his work from dogmatic theology, instead claiming to sum up "the distinctive and salient principles of New Testament Morality" (*preface*). Nonetheless, this did not prevent him from concluding that the primary impression gained from his reconstruction was the continuous relevance and "permanent character" (263) of such morality. Although Matheson compared the morality he found in the

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appropriate subject matter or the appropriate method… we found ourselves talking at cross purposes and ending in confusion and frustration" (1).

[4] Charles H. Cosgrove, "New Testament Ethics," *DSE*, 548.

[5] Ibid., 549.

[6] Trans. John Sandys-Wunch and Laurence Eldredge, "J.P. Gabler and the Distinction Between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality," *SJT* 33 (1980): 133–58, 137.

[7] Ibid., 142.

[8] So, e.g., Christine Helmer, "Biblical Theology: Bridge Over Many Waters," *CurBR* 3 (2005): 169–96, 169–73; Marcus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocussing New Testament Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 104–5.

[9] London: Nisbet.

New Testament to "pre-Christian" and Jewish morality, he explicitly stated that his work was not historical, in that it made no attempt to place New Testament texts in a historical context or understand them by such means.

By contrast, Hermann Jacoby's *Neutestamentliche Ethik*[10] was much more engaged with the historical-critical methods increasingly prevelant in general New Testament theology. He too clearly conceived of his work within Gabler's paradigms: "So lange Dogmatik und Ethik zu einem Ganzen verschmolzen wurden, kam die Ethik nicht zu ihrem Recht. Dies ist ihr erst zu teil geworden, seitdem Dogmatik und Ethik als zwei selbständige Wissenschaften bearbeitet werden" (v). Having worked exegetically through the New Testament documents Jacoby concludes: "Betrachten wir die neutestamentliche Ethik als ein einheitliches Ganzes" (470). In answer to the question as to whether New Testament ethics have lost their relevance, he replies: "Keineswegs! Sie bleiben in voller Geltung" (472). These volumes mark the point from which studies exclusively devoted to New Testament ethics began to be published with some regularity,[11] although the overall number of studies was still fairly low.

The early twentieth century saw some significant theses in broader New Testament scholarship that would prove to have an impact on New Testament ethics. Most notable are Albert Schweitzer's "interim ethic,"[12] with reference to Jesus, and Rudolf Bultmann's development of the "Indikativ-Imperativ" paradigm with reference to Paul.[13] However, in the early twentieth century, volumes on New Testament ethics tended to adopt a methodology and approach similar to that of Jacoby and Matheson. In contrast to the modest output of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the growth of the subject in the

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[10] Könisburg: Thomas & Oppermann, 1899.

[11] Jacoby cited only one former study, the essay entitled 'Geschichte der christlichen Sittenlehre in der Zeit des neuen Testaments' by Albrecht Thoma (1879). However David Horrell notes a very early study by I. Berger, entitled *Versuch einer moralischen Einleitung in das Neue Testament für Religionslehrer und denkende Christen* (1797). Horrell owes this reference to V.P. Furnish who in turn learned of it from Baur. See David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 7.

[12] As described in, e.g., Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion*, trans. W. Lowrie (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1914), 97–100. See its later manifestation in Jack T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament: Change and Development* (London: SCM, 1975).

[13] Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of Ethics in Paul," in *Understanding Paul's Ethics: Twentieth Century Approaches*, ed. B.S. Rosner, trans. C.W. Stenschke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 195–216. Willi Marxsen, writing in 1989 considered this still to be a common approach to Pauline and New Testament ethics: *New Testament Foundations for Christian Ethics*, trans. O.C. Dean Jr. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993 [German org. 1989]), 180.

last fifty years has been exponential and exhibited a much wider diversity of methodological approaches.[14]

1.2. Wealth ethics in New Testament ethics

Volumes on New Testament ethics in the early-mid twentieth century[15] principally discussed wealth ethics in relation to Jesus's teaching, in particular the 'impossibility' or 'inadvisability' of his commands, e.g., to "sell all that you have" (Mark 10:21) or to "give to the one who begs from you" (Matthew 5:42). Scholars noted that the problem is compounded by the apparent inconsistency of Jesus; not all were presented with the radical commands, and differing practices are commended. On the whole, research in this era offered three solutions: the first was to distinguish between 'commandments' for all disciples and 'counsels' which were not universal;[16] the second was to adopt some form of Schweitzer's interim ethic; the third was to seek the principle behind the instruction, whilst taking the particular command as a forceful illustration of the principle.[17] The principle was always less demanding than the command. Other

[14] Horrell, *Solidarity*, suggests that this growth is part of a societal shift that is increasingly focussed on orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy, together with the "prominence of many specific ethical issues in the public domain" and, perhaps more significantly, "the collapse of a shared moral tradition" (10). Admittedly, "two and a half decades of word-processing technology" and an "all-encompassing output culture" may also have contributed: Bockmuehl, *Word*, 33.

[15] The first of several studies in English with a similar methodology was Ernest F. Scott, *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus* (London: Macmillan, 1924). Following: C.A. Anderson Scott, *New Testament Ethics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: CUP, 1930); L.H. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1966); Sydney Cave, *The Christian Way: A Study of the New Testament Ethics in Relation to Present Problems* (London: Nisbet, 1955); William Lillie, *Studies in New Testament Ethics* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1961); Robert N. Flew, *Jesus and His Way: A Study of the Ethics of the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1963).

[16] Scott, *Ethics*, 18; Marshall, *Ethics*, 101; Cave, *Ethics*, 58–59. Taken up in later scholarship by, amongst others, Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament*, trans. J. Holland-Smith and W.J. O'Hara, rev. 2nd (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 48–49; J. Leslie Houlden, *Ethics and the New Testament* (Oxford: Mowbrays, 1975), 91; Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, trans. D.E. Green (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 49.

[17] Scott, *Ethics*, 57–58; Marshall, *Ethics*, 35; Cave, *Ethics*, 57. Later followed by Schnackenburg, *Moral Teaching*, 125; Thomas W. Manson, *Ethics and the Gospel* (London: SCM, 1960), 56. Dissenting was Lillie, *Ethics*, 100. All these 'solutions' were forcefully critiqued by John Knox, *The Ethic of Jesus in the Teaching of the Church* (London: Epworth, 1961). Although not specifically dealing with wealth ethics, and thus not discussed at length here, he commented that "to conclude that Jesus did not mean his 'absolutes' absolutely

than Jesus's teaching, there was little detailed consideration of wealth ethics in the rest of the New Testament, aside from different attempts to explain the 'community of goods' described in Acts 2:42–47, 4:32–37. Some considered it to be a "voluntary communism,"[18] others an "inter-group generosity,"[19] and still others inclined towards a more official structural communism.[20] More or less all assumed that this 'experiment' was historically true, but that it did not continue beyond this initial expression; in some works there is an evident polemic against political communism which no doubt influenced exegetical conclusions. Overall, despite the lack of significant attention to wealth ethics these early volumes raised important questions as to how best to understand Jesus's actions and teaching that relate to money and possessions. The suggestion that there were principles that lay behind specific imperatives remains influential, as is the suggestion that different individuals may be given different instructions, even if the details of the exegetical solutions offered in this era are rejected.[21]

The treatment of wealth ethics in New Testament ethics was heavily influenced by liberation theology, which "emerged within the wider context of Catholic social teaching and, in particular, the significant development of Roman Catholic theology based on the Second Vatican Council."[22] In general terms, the late 1960s saw the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America attempt to bring the Bible to bear on the devastating socio-economic situation of much of the population.[23] The manner in which they pursued this aim was in enor-

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would involve ascribing to him a lack of responsibility and seriousness which no student of his teaching and life as a whole would find credible" (40). Although he accepts Jesus' expectation of a fast-approaching eschatological consummation, Knox rejects the interim solution partly because the Kingdom of God is present as well as future, and partly because: "the question, however, is whether his ethical teaching would have been less absolute in its demands" (47) without such an eschatological horizon, a proposition Knox rejects.

[18] E.g., Lillie, *Ethics*, 103.

[19] E.g., Cave, *Ethics*, 103. Later: Schnackenburg, *Moral Teaching*, 210; Martin Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 32–34.

[20] E.g., Manson, *Ethics and the Gospel*, 78–79, 82–86.

[21] For a summary and assessment of how these solutions have fared through the contemporary era in relation to wealth ethics see Christopher M. Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, WUNT 2.275 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 2–19.

[22] Christopher Rowland, "Introduction: The Theology of Liberation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. C. Rowland, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 1–16, 5.

[23] See the brief history in Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 11–24.

mous contrast to the Western theological tradition surveyed thus far: "Liberation theology is above all a new way of *doing* theology rather than being itself a new theology."[24] For Gustavo Gutiérrez , whose *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* is considered the foundational publication for liberation theology:

> The theology of liberation attempts to reflect on the experience and meaning of the faith based on the commitment to abolish injustice and to build a new society; this theology must be verified by the practice of that commitment, by active, effective participation in the struggle which the exploited social classes have undertaken against their oppressors.[25]

This entailed a new approach to the relationship between the Bible and ethics and, although different authors have articulated different hermeneutical approaches, the central focus is upon the so-called 'preferential option for the poor,' whereby it is claimed that the God represented in the biblical texts is demonstrably primarily concerned with the materially poor,[26] and a methodological shift whereby "the emphasis is not placed on the text's meaning in itself but rather on the meaning the text has for the people reading it."[27] The combination of these two factors is found in the claim that "the most adequate 'pertinency' for rereading the kerygma of the Bible, is with the poor."[28] The life situations of the poor make them those to whom the texts are primarily addressed and for whom they have the most meaning. The descriptive and prescriptive tasks are thrust aside by the immediate apprehension and embodiment of biblical narratives and statements in the contemporary Christian community. A full description and evaluation of the many nuances of liberation theology is superfluous here;[29] what is important to note is that this movement has had a significant impact on New Testament study in recent decades.[30] This can be seen partly in numerous forms of liberation theology addressing Western issues

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[24] Rowland, "Liberation," 3, emphasis his.

[25] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, trans. C. Inda and J. Eagleson (London: SCM, 1974 [Spanish org. 1971]), 307.

[26] Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner, *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies* (New York: Orbis, 1983), 42.

[27] Carlos Mesters, "Use of the Bible," in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*, ed. N.K. Gottwald (New York: Orbis, 1983), 119–33, 122.

[28] J. Severino Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics: Towards a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning* (New York: Orbis, 1987), 63.

[29] For this, see, e.g., Christopher Rowland, ed., *Companion to Liberation Theology*; Smith, *Liberation Theology*; Paul E. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution* (New York: OUP, 1990).

[30] Cf. Christopher Rowland, "Epilogue: The Future of Liberation Theology," in Rowland, *Companion to Liberation Theology*, 304–7.

of perceived oppression and injustice;[31] more particularly, work on New Testament Ethics from the 1970s onward has tended to consider whether there was more to say about money and possessions than earlier works had articulated.[32]

One notable scholar evidencing this shift was Wolfgang Schrage.[33] In contrast to earlier treatments Schrage emphasised that for *all* disciples, *all* possessions are subject to the command of Jesus. Identifying principles cannot mean the erasure of the more concrete instructions: "the primacy of love did not prevent Jesus from uttering specific binding instructions paradigmatically" (80). Thus, Schrage argues that it is not merely *heart attitude* (as earlier scholars tended to emphasise) but the *concrete reality* of what one does with their possessions that is the concern of Jesus's teaching. This is what is striking in his account: the emphasis on the ethical condemnation of earthly riches in and of themselves, argued on exegetical grounds. Alan Verhey also gave more substantial attention to wealth ethics in his work on New Testament ethics,[34] although he is less combative than Schrage and his work contains more continuity with the earlier volumes surveyed above. Among the most recent volumes in New Testament ethics, Russell Pregeant also deserves mention here, not so much for quantity of comment on wealth ethics, but for how clear the contrast is between his work and early-mid twentieth century treatments of Jesus's sayings about wealth, most clearly seen as he exegetes Jesus's encounter with the rich young man:

> Far from a one-time counsel to a particular person, it says something indispensable about discipleship. Although it may take on a metaphorical value, it is evident throughout the conversation that the reader is asked to take the literal level seriously. Apart from such an assumption, neither the disciples' reaction in [Mark 10] v. 26 nor their claims regarding their own economic sacrifices in v. 28 make sense.[35]

As with Schrage, the willingness to defend an exegesis of the text that does not explain away the literal force of Jesus's commands is a clear development from earlier work. Pregeant also makes mention of "Paul's sense of community solidarity" which "demands sharing within the assemblies" (357). These conclusions owe much to liberation theology (with which Pregeant also shares a more postmodern hermeneutical methodology); it is no surprise to see him explicitly

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[31] See, e.g., A.F. Botta and P.R. Andiňach, eds., *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation* (Atlanta: SBL, 2009).

[32] It is surely no coincidence that the plethora of studies on wealth ethics in Luke-Acts originates in the same decade that liberation theology became widely read.

[33] Schrage, *Ethics*.

[34] *The Great Reversal: Ethics and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984). Schrage and Verhey discuss wealth ethics at least twice as much as any other volume on New Testament ethics of a similar length in this era.

[35] Russel Pregeant, *Knowing Truth, Doing Good: Engaging New Testament Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 159.

reference the "preferential option for the poor" (357). Of course, not all have moved in the same direction.[36] Overall, though, post-1970 volumes on New Testament ethics have tended to pay more attention to wealth and property,[37] and many have sought to assert that there was something more demanding in the texts than earlier scholars seemed to allow. The suggestion that wealth was not just an issue of the heart, but a problem in and of itself, is a notable development, as is the increasing attention paid to the communal dimension of wealth ethics.

1.3. New Testament wealth ethics

The increased attention given to wealth ethics in volumes on New Testament ethics is not as noticeable as the significant growth of studies focussed exclusively on New Testament wealth ethics itself.[38] These may be divided into studies that examine a specific biblical author or corpus and those that attempt to deal with the whole of the New Testament.[39] Due to the character of such studies an attempted summary or survey of key insights would be futile as most of

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[36] E.g., Houlden, *Ethics*; Marxsen, *Ethics*, who repeat the substance of earlier treatments.

[37] Although some remain brief: Daniel J. Harrington and James F. Keenan, *Jesus and Virtue Ethics* (Lanham: Sheed & Ward, 2002), 130–31; Ben Witherington III, *The Indelible Image*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009–10); Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996). Witherington devotes 17 pages to discussions of wealth ethics, but out of a combined 1600 pages across both volumes the topic still seems under-developed. Hays claims that one of the four primary moral concerns of the New Testament is the sharing of possessions, but only spares the theme five pages in his conclusion (464–8). Similarly, although earlier, it is astounding that there is no treatment of any area of wealth ethics in Barth's massive *Church Dogmatics*.

[38] Over the same period there has been a prolific growth of popular level treatments of biblical or Christian wealth ethics. For recent bibliography on this see Craig L. Blomberg, *Christians in an Age of Wealth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

[39] For the former, the work devoted to Luke-Acts far exceeds that given to any other text or author, for the entirely understandable reason that it contains the greatest quantity of material. For a summary see Thomas E. Phillips, "Reading Recent Readings of Issues of Wealth and Poverty in Luke and Acts," *CurBR* 1 (2003): 231–69. The most significant recent study, including an extensive bibliography, is that of Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*. On the Jesus tradition see, e.g., David L. Mealand, *Poverty and Expectation in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1980); Roland Deines, "God or Mammon: The Danger of Wealth in the Jesus Tradition and in the Epistle of James," in *Anthropologie und Ethik im Frühjudentum und im Neuen Testament*, ed. M. Konradt and E. Schläpfer, WUNT 322 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 327–86. The most significant monograph on Paul is Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). On James, in addition to Deines, see Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987). For Revelation see Mark D. Matthews, *Riches, Poverty and the*

the valuable research is in relation to specific texts, and thus is better engaged as and when such texts become our concern. What must be addressed here, though, are the methodological developments that have also emerged over the last 40 years.

The current diversity in New Testament ethics mirrors the breakdown of common ground in all areas of New Testament study.[40] Fortunately, in recent years Richard Hays and Richard Burridge have published helpful and exhaustive surveys that demarcate the variety of current approaches and some of the primary issues that are at stake.[41] Hays' survey categorizes work on NT ethics into six groups:

1. Historical Description of the Ethical Teaching of the New Testament Writings
2. Ethnographic Description of the Social World of the Early Christians
3. Extraction of Ideals or Principles
4. Cultural Critique of Ideologies in the New Testament
5. Character Formation and 'the Ethics of Reading'
6. Metaphorical Embodiment of Narrative Paradigms

Broadly speaking, the first two groups are focussed on the *descriptive task* of understanding either the New Testament documents themselves, their context, or the Christian community from which they emerged. The third and fourth groups seek to move from exegesis to contemporary moral discourse (with the associated hermeneutical issues) but from very different perspectives. The fifth and sixth group both emphasise the embodiment of the texts in Christian communities but have contrasting approaches.[42] As Hays rightly notes, the majority of publications in the field have been located in the first group,[43] most of which make no significant attempt to move from description to application. Such a phenomenon is of course the logical derivation of Gabler's distinction between biblical and dogmatic theology, the context in which New Testament ethics

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Faithful: Perspectives on Wealth in the Second Temple Period and the Apocalypse of John, SNTSMS 154 (Cambridge: CUP, 2013).

For the latter see to varying degrees, e.g., Hengel, *Property and Riches*; Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions* (Nottingham: IVP, 1999); Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sharing Possessions: What Faith Demands*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011); Sondra Ely Wheeler, *Wealth as Peril and Obligation: The New Testament on Possessions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Gary A. Anderson, *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition* (New Haven: YUP, 2013); the collection of essays in B.W. Longenecker and K.D. Liebengood, eds., *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

[40] This is primarily what Marcus Bockmuehl referred to with his chapter title 'The Troubled Fortunes of New Testament Scholarship' in Bockmuehl, *Word.*

[41] Hays, "Mapping the Field"; Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), see esp. Chap. 1: "Being 'Biblical': Contexts and Starting Points," 1–32.

[42] Hays, "Mapping the Field," 18.

[43] Ibid., 4.

arose. This study stands with a foot in each of the first two categories, thus also contributing to the descriptive task. Although this saves us from having to wade into hermeneutical debates about the relevance and application of New Testament ethics, it does not determine all methodological decisions. The key questions are: 1) can we discuss a wealth ethic of the New Testament or only different wealth *ethics* of the different New Testament books/authors? 2) what is the appropriate object of study? The ethics of the texts or the ethos of the community? Having addressed these questions, I will introduce the recent methodological work of Ruben Zimmermann which is influential on the exegetical sections of this study.

1.3.1. 'Ethic' or 'ethics' of the New Testament

Most volumes on New Testament ethics published in the mid-twentieth century were content to work through the New Testament (or at least Jesus and Paul), mining it for ethically relevant material which was compiled into an essentially unified 'New Testament ethics,' where the plurality of ethics referred to different ethical topics rather than different ethical perspectives.[44] However, a different emphasis became apparent in the 1960s in the work of Thomas Manson[45] and the second edition of Rudolf Schnackenburg's volume on New Testament ethics.[46] For Schnackenburg: "although wholly loyal to the Lord's words, the early Church, nevertheless, permitted its own viewpoint and interpretation to show through what it handed on" (14). This does not undermine an essential unity of ethical teaching, but allows for different emphases and the development of ethical material in the New Testament documents. For Manson, however, the gospel writers were not "wholly loyal" but appropriated Jesus's teaching and placed it in different contexts to those in which it was originally given; eschatological instructions conditioned by an imminent parousia were transformed into general ethical instructions.[47] Instead of a unified New Testament ethic, then, Manson argued for a *Christian* ethic that is modelled on Jesus's self-sacrificial love.[48] This trajectory reached a defining moment in 1973 when Leslie Houlden published a short volume on New Testament ethics which emphasised the diversity of the texts:

> There is, strictly, no such thing as 'the x of the NT'… it is only at the cost of ignoring the individuality of each [text], in thought and expression, that the unified account can emerge…

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[44] See the bibliography above in note 15.

[45] *Ethics and the Gospel.*

[46] *Moral Teaching.* Similarly, Knox, *Ethic of Jesus.*

[47] Manson, *Ethics and the Gospel*, 94–101.

[48] Ibid., 66. There are parallels between Manson's scheme and many expositions of situation ethics, which was gaining momentum around this time. See C. Fitzhugh Spragins, "Is T.W. Manson Also Among the Situationists," *ExpTim* 81 (1970): 244–47.

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