

# Divine and Human Love in Jewish and Christian Antiquity

Edited by  
KYLIE CRABBE and  
DAVID LINCICUM

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament

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*David Lincicum*, born 1979; 2009 D.Phil. from the University of Oxford; 2009–2011 Departmental Lecturer; 2011–2012 Leverhulme Early Career Fellow; 2012–2015 Associate Professor at the University of Oxford; Associate Professor at the University of Notre Dame.  
orcid.org/0000-0002-4250-9783

*Kylie Crabbe*, born 1977; 2017 D.Phil. from the University of Oxford; 2015–2017 Lecturer in Theology, Trinity College Oxford; 2016 Instructor in New Testament Greek, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford; Associate Professor in Biblical and Early Christian Studies at Australian Catholic University.  
orcid.org/0000-0002-5223-4138

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For Markus Bockmuehl

*Amor enim, ex quo amicitia nominata est, princeps est ad  
benevolentiam coniungendam (Cicero, De amicitia 26)*



## Preface

Most of the essays in this volume were presented at a conference held in honour of Markus N.A. Bockmuehl, Dean Ireland's Professor of the Exegesis of Holy Scripture, University of Oxford, and Professorial Fellow of Keble College, Oxford, on 19–20 July, 2022 at St. George's House, Windsor Castle. The event marked a celebration of Markus by colleagues, friends, and former students. We owe our deep thanks to Rev. Canon Dr. Hueston Finlay, Warden of St George's House, who generously subsidized much of the cost of our gathering, and to Catherine Morgan, Patricia Birdseye, Fiona McNeile, Gary McKeone, and the other members of staff at St. George's House for kindly facilitating this event. We offer our warm thanks to Celia Bockmuehl for her conspiratorial role in helping us to honour Markus, and to Nathan Eubank for his initial encouragement in formulating our plan. We are grateful to our fellow participants in the conference and the volume for their common purpose and excellent work and give our sincere thanks also to Austin Steen for his conscientious work in compiling the indexes. The University of Notre Dame also supplied partial funding in support of the conference. We thank Jörg Frey and the editorial board of WUNT for kindly accepting this volume into the series, and to Matthias Spitzner and his colleagues at Mohr Siebeck for their excellent editorial support.

As the editors weighed the choice of topic for the event, it seemed fitting for us to settle on "love." There are various intellectual reasons why this theme makes sense for such a gathering, as the papers more than bear out (and admittedly, we took a perverse pleasure in imagining that Markus might initially worry about woolliness in the choice of theme, though we hope the rigour of these essays is enough to put any such worries to rest), but it is also the case that Markus has simply exhibited the virtue of love in his career over and over again, through countless acts of generosity, advocacy, feedback, intentionality, and support. These essays should be read as inadequate but sincere attempts to acknowledge and return that capaciousness.

Kylie Crabbe  
Melbourne

May 2024

David Lincicum  
Notre Dame, Indiana





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## Introduction

KYLIE CRABBE and DAVID LINCICUM

The centrality and significance of love for much of ancient Judaism and Christianity are clear. The apostle Paul ranks love high among what will become the theological virtues: “Now faith, hope, and love remain, these three, and the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13). And 1 John summarily states, “God is love” (4:8). But if there is a broad, even if not universal, agreement on the importance of love, the singularity of the term “love” covers over a multitude of differences in how love is conceived and mapped onto the conceptual landscape of antiquity. Is love an emotion or passion, an action, a trait, a disposition, or a virtue? What significance is there in the lexical choice and variations used to describe and denote love? Who or what is the proper object of love: God, internal community, external world, strangers, enemies? Does love presuppose or create a kind of reciprocity, or is it in some sense disinterested? What other concepts does it relate to constellationally – mercy, justice, compassion, charity, and so forth – and how are those relationships precisely configured? How might love relate to feeling, to intention, to action, or to obedience? What are the effects and rewards of love – can it effect salvation, for oneself or another? And just how central is love in a given author’s moral universe?

The evidence from early Jewish and Christian texts is not sufficient to answer each of those questions exhaustively in every case, but patient, careful attention can disclose further insight into the role love plays in these ancient forms of discourse. The essays in this volume take up the challenge of paying that careful attention, and thematize the concept of love from the minor prophets to Methodius of Olympus, with a central focus on the texts that came to make up the New Testament.

Three recent strands of research have paved the way for this study. Across historical studies, including the study of antiquity, a keen interest has emerged in the history of emotions. As it intersects with work in ancient medicine, gender, and the senses, this work has highlighted material often overlooked by earlier modes of historical-critical analysis, and uncovers new dynamics that impact significantly on the interpretation of texts and their contexts.<sup>1</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Katie Barclay, “State of the Field: The History of Emotions,” *History* 106 (2021): 456–66; David Lemmings and Ann Brooks, “The Emotional Turn in the Humanities and Social Sciences,” in *Emotions and Social Change: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, ed.

interdisciplinary research has sought to bring together insights from fields such as psychology, sociology, politics, and philosophy, to consider the nature of humans and their flourishing; more recently, historical and theological disciplines have sought to intervene in this discussion.<sup>2</sup> Love, human and divine, holds a unique place in discussion of what it means to flourish, and insights from the theological and historical study of biblical texts may contribute to, and to nuance, this broader scholarly interest. Finally, the failures of Christian, and particularly Protestant, biblical interpretation that has caricatured Jewish traditions within Christian interpretation have been a central concern of post-war biblical scholarship.<sup>3</sup> While this has focused on important questions of Torah practice, identity, and so on, the importance of claims about divine and human love (or its absence) in these caricatures of both Christian and Jewish biblical traditions provides an additional imperative for further rigour in the study of these themes.

Responding to each of these positive scholarly developments, the essays in this volume set the study of love in biblical texts and among their later readers within their literary, historical, and theological contexts. The material spans Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Jewish sources, with a fitting central focus – in light of the honoree, Markus Bockmuehl, and his corpus of work – on New Testament texts, through to studies of later readers of those texts. Across the essays, the volume considers individual biblical books, non-canonical sources, and trends across the New Testament, drawing in insights from Graeco-Roman sources, virtue ethics, history of emotions, reception history, and more. We were honoured to work with the esteemed colleagues whose work is collected in these

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David Lemmings and Ann Brooks (London: Routledge, 2014), 3–18; Naama Cohen-Hanegbi, *Caring for the Living Soul: Emotions, Medicine and Penance in the Late Medieval Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); George Kazantzidis and Natalia Tsoumpra, “Morbid Laughter: Exploring the Comic Dimensions of Disease in Classical Antiquity,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 43.2 (2018): 273–97; David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Y. Haskell, M. Champion, J. Ruys and R. Garrod, “But Were They Talking About Emotions? Affectus, Affectio, and the History of Emotions,” *Rivista Storica Italiana* 2 (2016): 521–43; David Konstan, *In the Orbit of Love: Affection in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> T. J. VanderWeele, “Activities for Flourishing: An Evidence-Based Guide,” *Journal of Positive Psychology and Wellbeing* 4 (2020): 79–91; Matthew T. Lee, Laura D. Kubzansky, and Tyler J. VanderWeele, eds., *Measuring Well-Being: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from the Social Sciences and the Humanities* (New York: Oxford, 2021); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Martha C. Nussbaum, “Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism,” *Political Theory* 20.2 (1992): 202–46; Christopher A. Beeley, “Christ and Human Flourishing in Patristic Theology,” *ProEccl* 25.2 (2016): 126–53.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Arjen F. Bakker, René Bloch, Yael Fisch, Paula Fredriksen, and Hindy Najman, eds., *Protestant Bible Scholarship: Antisemitism, Philosemitism and Anti-Judaism*, JSJSup 200 (Leiden: Brill, 2022); Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann*, Studies in Jewish History and Culture 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

pages, and delighted at the rich discussion this has produced. We are confident that together, as the following descriptions demonstrate, the essays contribute a nuanced and timely study.

In “No Mercy without Justice, No Justice without Mercy,” Gary Anderson revisits the story of Jonah. While many readers have been quick to dismiss Jonah as wrong-headed in complaining about the wideness in God’s mercy (which Anderson takes to be effectively synonymous with love) that would lead the Ninevites to repent, Anderson lingers with the theme of mercy long enough to hear Jonah out. A God who is only merciful would abandon the imperative of justice. Attending to Tobit, Nahum, and their testimony to the fate of the Ninevites, together with Jewish tradition on the necessity of justice and mercy going hand in hand, Anderson points to the place of Jonah in the book of the twelve minor prophets, where Nahum follows directly on from Jonah. He suggests this probably reflects historical memory of the eventual downfall of Nineveh, which offers some validation to Jonah’s worries about the effectiveness of the Ninevites’ repentance, and underscores the necessity of both God’s justice and God’s mercy.

In his contribution, “A Contest of Desires: *Eros*, Self-Love, and Love of God in Philo of Alexandria,” David Lincicum charts Philo’s complex negotiation of love-related concepts. Although Philo can use the biblical idiom of *ἀγαπάω/ἀγάπη*, he tends to reserve such language for instances in which he is interpreting the biblical text. When speaking of affection, affinity, and love, Philo prefers two sets of terms: *φίλος/φιλία* and *ἔρωσ*. We find throughout the Philonic corpus a basic duality between those who are lovers of self (*φιλαυτία/φιλαυτοσ*) and those who are lovers of God (*φιλόθεοσ*) and in turn loved by God (*θεοφιλήσ*). Cain is the paradigmatic instance of the former, one who imagines himself to be the cause of his own being. The pious lover of God, by contrast, ascribes causality entirely to God, and Moses above all is the parade example of the one who loves and is loved by God (cf. Exod 33:11a). Particularly striking, Lincicum notes, is Philo’s use of *ἔρωσ* terminology. Although this language is largely absent from pre-Philonic Jewish tradition, Philo harnesses its power to indicate strong desire. Although this can be desire for lesser goods or forbidden objects, more often in Philo it is a longing for some noble quality that leads one on to God. God, by contrast, does not desire, since this would imply a lack, but responds to humanity with *φιλανθρωπία*.

Courtney Friesen analyses the Alcestis myth and its relevance to early Christian literature in his essay, “Friendship and Other Mortal Dangers between Greek Tragedy and Ancient Christianity.” The myth turns on Admetus, a mythological king, who asks for someone to die in his place. Even his parents decline, but his faithful wife, Alcestis, agrees to die in his stead. Heracles, moved by her hospitality, visits the underworld to retrieve her and restore her alive again to her husband. Taking his cue from funerary contexts that bring Alcestis together

with the raising of Lazarus in the Fourth Gospel, Friesen suggests that the kind of *φιλία* demonstrated by Alcestis served as an important source of reflection for early Christian authors. Proceeding by way of closely attending to Euripides' play *Alcestis* and its afterlife, Friesen demonstrates that Alcestis becomes a classic example of *φιλία* for her act of self-sacrifice. In fact, it may well be an Alcestis-like tradition that lies behind Paul's statement in Romans that, "For even while we were weak, yet at the right moment Christ died for the impious [...] God proved his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (5:6, 8; cf. also Eph 5:2, 25). Friesen goes on to draw a suggestive comparison between the *Alcestis* and the episode of Jesus raising Lazarus, whom he loved, from the dead.

Turning attention next to the Synoptic Gospels, Mary Marshall digs down into an enigmatic use of *ἀγαπάω* in her essay, "The Look of Love: Interpreting Human and Divine Love in Mark 10:21." Noting that this is the one instance in the Synoptics in which Jesus is said to love an individual, and the only episode in Mark in which a character rejects Jesus' direct invitation to "follow me," Marshall sets out to re-examine the "look of love" Jesus gives the man who ultimately departs in shock and grief at the prospect of giving up his possessions. She finds in Jesus' response to the man the hallmarks of both divine and human associations of love. In love, Jesus exhibits divine insight about the one thing the man lacked (despite his lifelong, faithful commitment to the commandments) and authoritative instruction that leads to judgement. She argues also for the presence of very human elements of *ἀγάπη* in Jesus' look, as well as observing that Mark's own treatment of Jesus' compassion as *σπλαγγνίζω* resonates with other texts. A final section on the role of emotions in Mark's portrait of Jesus draws attention to affective elements of the pericope, noting that both Matthew and Luke remove the "look of love" in their renditions of this episode. For all the layers of Jesus' loving look, Marshall highlights that the inadequacy of the man's response demonstrates the human frailty of the recipient. Nonetheless, recognizing both the authoritative portrait of judgement against and the possibility of some unnarrated change of heart for the man, Marshall balances both the human and divine power of the Markan Jesus' love, while observing that the "near-ubiquitous failure of discipleship in Mark does not, however, render it hopeless."

Taking up further questions about the nature of love, Kylie Crabbe considers reciprocity and affect in two key passages of Luke's Gospel in "Who Will Love More? Loving Rightly as Discipleship Response in Luke." After a brief introduction to recent treatments of love in the history of emotions, Crabbe considers the episode with Simon and the "sinful" woman in Luke 7:36–50 before turning to Luke's version of the sayings about love of enemies in 6:27–35. In relation to the scene in Simon's house, questions of affect, gender, and appropriate response to Jesus lead to a detailed study of the relationship between love,

debt, and gratitude, with particular attention to Seneca's *On Benefits* alongside Luke's text. The focus on reciprocity continues in analysis of the exhortation to love enemies and related sayings. Here Crabbe notes that, although the sayings in many ways anticipate an asymmetrical interaction between humans (such as the disciples and their enemies), temporal elements ensure that expectations of reward and reciprocity remain – but the repayment is expected through another, eschatological means. She argues that Luke participates in a continuing and contested discourse on reciprocity, benefit, love, and gratitude. And, as Luke's Gospel demonstrates reciprocity is not antithetical to concepts of love, it offers a challenge embodied in characters like Simon, whose narrative ends before he makes his ultimate choice, to love rightly as discipleship response.

The next two essays address in different ways questions of the portrait of love in the Gospel of John. Taking as her point of departure that John's is the only canonical gospel in which God is the subject, not object, of the verb to love, Marianne Meye Thompson takes us straight into tensions at the heart of scholarship on John 3:16 with her essay "God so Loved the World." Thompson counters Ernst Käsemann's claim that the focus on God's love for the *world* in John 3:16 is anomalous for a gospel that is elsewhere concerned with divine love for *God's own*, and sets out evidence for seeing this verse as central to Johannine theology and its stance towards the world. Thompson identifies a threefold dynamic of love in John 3:16 – God's love for the world (despite its rejection); God's sending the Son for all (through love); God's self-giving love leading to God's glory (demonstrated through its witnesses). She goes on to map these dynamics onto the portrait of love across John's Gospel, with attention to the narrative context of John 3:16, the Father's Love for the Son, the embodiment of the Good Shepherd's self-giving love seen also in Jesus' love for Lazarus, and the commissioning of the apostles as witnesses to such love, particularly in Peter's encounter with the risen Jesus in John 21. These themes come together for Thompson in her concluding discussion of God's glory and life-giving love.

Focusing her approach to love later in John's narrative, in her essay, "Fear Thrice Denied, Love Thrice Confessed': Love and Vocation in John 21:15–19," Jane Heath turns her attention to Peter's threefold confession of love at the end of the Fourth Gospel. She notes that the passage has often been read as relating to the nature of Christian vocation, and points out that while the exchange centres on the question of love, it is not clear that the narrative portrays Jesus as particularly loving during this episode. Finding the commentarial tradition on this pericope both divided and unreflective regarding Christian theologies of love, Heath approaches the text first with a "darker" entry point: what if Jesus is simply aloof, and perhaps even frightening? Attending to this more unsettling possibility allows the reader to sit with the text and give careful attention to its wording, canonical resonance, and theological elaboration within the tradition – a threefold task the essay goes on to undertake. Heath's reading does



not remain in the darkness of its first movement, but emerges as a meditation on the vocation to an I-Thou relationship that Peter receives and that becomes a type for subsequent tradition.

Teresa Morgan's discussion of "Living and Loving in the 'Present Evil Age'" begins a series of essays focused on New Testament epistolary works. Highlighting that πίστις language in Paul is almost entirely reserved for describing relationships between God (or God's representatives) and the faithful, in this essay Morgan builds on her suggestion that it is rather ἀγάπη that characterizes for Paul the horizontal relationships between believers. However, she suggests, if Paul is concerned with πίστις as a vertical and not horizontal category, the inverse is not the case for ἀγάπη: this love is shown as the appropriate stance both between humans and between humans and the divine. Love among the community is itself enabled by the "cascading" effect of divine involvement into the world, intersecting with further elements such as the experience of knowledge. Traversing key passages particularly across Romans, 1 Thessalonians, and the Corinthian correspondence, Morgan highlights not only the importance of divine love as the starting point for ἀγάπη in Paul, but as a signal that the God of the Christ believers "is indeed the God of Israel," likewise ensuring a continuity in God's people, "though redefined." In the context of an argument that love between God, Christ, and humanity plays a more central role in Paul's undisputed letters than commonly assumed, Morgan nonetheless draws out indications that believers' love may yet be perfected, with Paul's ethical imperatives for the "present evil age" extending to the exhortation to love and loving action.

In "Measuring the Unmeasurable: Reframing the Language of Mystery, Knowledge, and Love in Ephesians 3–4," Grant Macaskill offers an extended methodological reflection on the ways in which New Testament scholarship might be more sophisticated in its treatment of comparative material. Macaskill draws on his substantial scholarship on the reception of Enochic tradition from the Second Temple Period, and points out the complexities of accounting for that reception. In his words, "this work seeks to shift the discussion of the Enochic literature away from its typical preoccupation with bounded groups, generally considered to be engaged in polemical activity, and onto matters of shared cultural influence." Particularly in light of intransigent problems associated with standard accounts of genealogical influence of one group, text, or author on another, Macaskill turns to the "rhizomatic model" developed by the philosophers Deleuze and Guattari. This allows for more complex accounts of culture and the non-linear connections between groups or networks. In this light, the essay turns to consider the Parables of Enoch and 2 Enoch as products of the "literate liminal," that is, educated groups that cannot be neatly pigeon-holed in any single community or religious identity (Jews, Christians, pagans, etc.). Macaskill then offers an analogous interpretation of Ephesians 3–4 on the question of love, interrogating a tradition in scholarship that reads these chapters

as *either* evincing Graeco-Roman influence *or* Jewish influence. In contrast to this binary, Macaskill urges us to consider Ephesians in dialogue with both traditions of Jewish mysticism and Platonic traditions, though marked radically by the centrality of love.

In his essay, “The Human, Priestly Compassion of the Divine Son in the Letter to the Hebrews,” Nicholas J. Moore grapples with scholarly assumptions about an apparent absence of love, or ethical instruction in general, in Hebrews. After initially observing, however, that the constellation of ἀγάπη– terms does appear in Hebrews, he goes on to present evidence for a “christological foundation” for love in the text. Moore sets out what he describes as Christ’s High Priestly compassion in Hebrews through a study of divine compassion and priestly compassion in the Old Testament and Second Temple texts from Maccabean literature, Philo, and Josephus to Joseph and Aseneth, arguing that elements of the Son’s compassion in Hebrews derives from his human experience (including suffering) and priesthood. From this position, he explores the faith-hope-love triad in Hebrews, illuminating how, just as Christ’s faith and hope are a model for believers, his compassion undergirds their love, with potential even to draw believers into love beyond the community.

C. Kavin Rowe tackles core issues related to the nature of love, using the letter of James as his focus, in his essay, “Love is a Work: The Contribution of James to a Theology of Love.” Rowe begins by engaging in what he describes as “conceptual housecleaning” about the interconnection between action and love. Inspired by Ilham Dilman’s articulation of a necessary separateness (but not necessarily isolation) between people which obscures our insight into human relationships, illustrated in particular through a claim that thinking which gives rise to speaking cannot be understood in any way detached from the speech itself, Rowe suggests that “love” is not a phenomenon of secret inner workings (such as of the heart) lying behind human actions, but is rather the actions themselves. Here, he argues, love is to be understood in the lived contexts in which it actually “shows up,” allowing some communication of love across the necessary “separateness” between people, without this distance becoming an unbridgeable “separation” of unknown inner lives. Having set out this phenomenology of love, Rowe turns to James. Contending that James’s emphasis on love of neighbour, far from reflecting disinterest in love of God, derives from firm belief in the inseparability of these paired imperatives in Christian life, as also in the Torah, Rowe provides examples as illustrative of the dynamic he finds throughout James: 1:22–25, 27; 2:8, 14–26; and 4:8. Rather than pitting works against faith, these passages confirm, he suggests, that Christians actually become Christians precisely when they “show up in the world as what they believe,” and, indeed, in this sense, underline that “love is a work and without love faith is dead.”

Turning our attention to 1 Peter, Jennifer Strawbridge prosecutes the letter’s inherent connections between love, ethics, and christology, in her essay “Love

without Christ is Dead: The Saving Power of Love in 1 Peter.” Strawbridge frames her initial discussion around the four types of love Oda Wischmeyer identifies in the New Testament, revealing that human love for Jesus and for fellow believers infuses the letter. She also notes through this analysis, however, that divine love appears not to feature explicitly and Jesus himself seems absent. She then turns her attention to a series of questions arising from these observations about Jesus’ absence, drawing on Markus Bockmuehl’s work about the presence and absence of Jesus, while grappling with Wischmeyer’s claim that love is always theological. Here she considers whether, for 1 Peter, human love occupies a more central position given Christ’s absence, and whether such human love itself is a means through which Christ becomes present. Exploring key passages across the letter, Strawbridge expands on inherent connections between Christ and the believers’ love. And as she concludes that the believers’ love is grounded in the experience of suffering and focuses on Christ as exemplar, she also notes that their love is itself grounded in their relationship with Christ. In this love, she suggests, the believers make Christ present in this time of absence, within the context of their future hope.

In his essay, “Love, the Law, and Eternal Life,” Nathan Eubank submits to critical analysis the tenacious idea that in the New Testament love is fundamentally “unconditional, selfless, or disinterested,” a concept that is regularly bolstered through appeal to the nature of ἀγάπη. In response to this persistent characterization, Eubank presents a careful consideration of the Synoptic Gospels, Paul’s letter to the Galatians, and the Gospel of John with reference to their teaching on love. He points to the centrality of the double love command (Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18) in synoptic tradition, and notes that this love of God and neighbour is expressed through concrete keeping of commandments and motivated by eternal life – which is to say, such love is not “unmotivated” but is oriented toward a return. In contrast to Anders Nygren’s reading of Galatians as the source of a Christian conception of love necessitating that it be spontaneous and disinterested, Eubank demonstrates that Paul agrees with synoptic tradition in characterizing love as human behaviour that fulfils the law and obtains eternal life, even if Paul adds the novum that love is a gift from God. Finally, he argues that the Johannine literature, despite some well-known ambiguities regarding its concept of love, similarly sees love as a human action that is expressed through obedience and leads to eternal life. All of this compelling analysis renders the popular consensus about ἀγάπη-love defective as a reading of the New Testament.

When Richard Hays published his now-classic book, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* in 1996, he startled some readers by denying that love could serve as a unifying focal image for New Testament ethics. In his paper for this volume, “Is Love All You Need? A Reconsideration of the Role of Love in New Testament Ethics,” Hays revisits that decision

with the benefit of hindsight. In the book, Hays had argued that “(1) Any proposed focal image should find a textual basis in *all* of the New Testament documents; (2) Any proposed focal image should highlight *central and substantial ethical concerns of the text in which it appears.*” Love features only marginally in Mark, Hebrews, Revelation, and Acts and so fails to meet the first criterion. Moreover, the concept of love is too indeterminate to capture concretely the ethical concerns of the New Testament, since love can be turned toward any number of objects – something Hays demonstrates the authors of the New Testament already know – and so fails to meet the second criterion. This is not, however, to say that Hays views love as unimportant in the New Testament. It is presented as the summation of the Torah and as the attitude that holds ecclesial communities together. And the grammar of God’s self-giving love creates in its human recipients the desire to share that love with one another. In short, Hays stands by his original judgement that love cannot function as a unifying focal image for New Testament ethics, but nevertheless plays a crucial role in the New Testament’s moral vision, particularly when practiced with patient discernment.

Christopher M. Hays’s essay, “How Justice and Mercy Became Charity: The Emergence of Love as a Motivation for Care for the Needy,” offers a compelling story about how love moved from the margins to the centre of care for the poor. Hays notes that the Hebrew Bible largely frames giving to the poor as a matter of justice and mercy rather than love. This pattern continues to hold in the Second Temple Period and into Rabbinic Judaism. In the New Testament, however, we witness something of a swerve. Jesus’ elevation of the command to love God and neighbour in the Synoptic Gospels is paired with his commandments to care for the poor (e.g., Matt 19:19–21). While in Romans and Galatians the link between love and charity may be in the background, it becomes explicit in 2 Corinthians 8. James’s appeal to Lev 19:18 is linked with the practice of practical mercy (James 2:15–16), and 1 John 3:16–17 argues that the absence of sharing worldly goods is proof of the absence of love. Why do we see this swerve? Hays admits that certainty is impossible, but reasonably surmises that the historical Jesus might be responsible for the elevation of Lev 19:18 as an organizing ethical principle. Hays concludes his paper with a broad survey of the early Christian tradition from the Apostolic Fathers to the medieval period in which he demonstrates the conceptual and linguistic ascendancy of love and charity as the means of expressing care for the poor.

Benjamin A. Edsall turns to two early Valentinian gospels in his essay, “Love Lifts Us Up Where We Belong’: The Role of Love in the Gospels of Truth and Philip.” He points out that “love” has not been thematized in these gospels, but an analysis of love turns out to shed important light on both texts. Edsall conducts a close reading of each text. He concludes that in the Gospel of Truth, love is oriented around the Father, who is presented as the source and recipient of love, while the text notably does not depict the “children” as loving one

another. Love motivates the Father's actions, and remains a trait or disposition of the divine, rather than a quasi-independent hypostasis as it will become in other Valentinian texts. In the enigmatic Gospel of Philip, love is a principle of attraction, and the adage "like loves like" undergirds much of its discussion of love, even if the gospel also knows of a condescending love that stoops to reach those below them. As in Truth, so also for Philip love is not primarily connected to practical care for another. Together, these texts offer us a picture of love in Valentinian thought.

In the final essay in the volume, "Origen, Methodius, and Love's Freedom," Mark W. Elliott considers the *Symposium* by Methodius of Olympus, which, like its Platonic namesake, takes up a question about the nature of love. Elliott argues that Methodius is negotiating with Origen throughout the entire treatise. Methodius places much more emphasis on the body as "a means or a place for spiritual exercise," even tracing the theme of chastity and its revelation throughout history as a precursor to his own ascetic practices. He identifies ἔρωσ with Jesus, and Jesus takes over the mediating function that ἔρωσ plays in Plato's *Symposium*. A real difference between Origen and Methodius emerges, Elliott argues, in the question of freedom, autonomy, and the human capacity to love. While Origen stresses divine enablement and mystical participation, Methodius lays stress on the ethical imperatives of love.

So what is love? Rather than a singular or simple answer to the question, the ancient texts studied in these essays chart a polyphonic conversation. At the same time, none of these authors would have been content to simply speak about love; each, in their own way, conceived of love as a particular form of life, something to be practiced and experienced, not merely theorized and debated. But for now, we leave the readers to grapple with the analytic approaches to these ancient discussions presented in this volume.

It is our hope, in offering the discussions presented in this volume, that readers find new and valuable approaches to grappling with the diversity of ways these ancient authors take up such challenges.

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