

Biblical Ethics and Application

Edited by
RUBEN ZIMMERMANN
and STEPHAN JOUBERT

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*

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Mohr Siebeck

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zum Neuen Testament

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Biblical Ethics and Application

Purview, Validity, and Relevance of Biblical Texts
in Ethical Discourse

Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik/
Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics

Volume IX

Edited by

Ruben Zimmermann and
Stephan Joubert

Mohr Siebeck

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Jan G. van der Watt

On the occasion of his 65th birthday

Foreword

This publication on “Biblical Ethics and Application” is dedicated to a dear friend and esteemed colleague, Prof. Dr. Dr. Jan G. van der Watt, *Hoogleraar Exegese van het Nieuwe Testament en Bronteksten van het Christendom*, Radboud University, The Netherlands. His pioneering research on the Gospel of John and, in particular, his groundbreaking work on metaphors¹ as well as his rediscovery of the importance of ethics in Johannine writings,² when the analytical categories are broadened, are widely recognised and enthusiastically applied by colleagues and students across the globe.

A catalyst moment for working on ethics in John was a fruitful exchange between Jan van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann during the latter’s research visit at the University of Pretoria as a fellow of the Alexander-von-Humboldt-Foundation. During this period, Zimmermann started to explore a methodological grid to investigate the so-called “implicit ethics” of New Testament writings. This laid the foundation for the work on the eight different perspectives to approaching New Testament Ethics.³

In September 2008, Jan van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann organised a conference on “Moral language in the New Testament” in Pretoria, dealing with the first of these heuristically distinguished perspectives that seeks to understand, as precisely as possible, the language of New Testament ethical statements.⁴ Ethics, understood as reflection on behavioural conduct and life values, is always linked to language. There is no ethical communication without the medium of language and, ultimately, of a text. Thus, the interrelatedness of ethics with

¹ Jan G. van der Watt, *Family of the King: Dynamics of metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (Biblical Interpretation Series 47; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

² Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann, eds., *Rethinking the ethics of John: “Implicit ethics” in the Johannine writings* (WUNT 291; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

³ See the monograph exploring this idea: Ruben Zimmermann, *Die Logik der Liebe: Die ‘implizite Ethik’ der Paulusbriefe am Beispiel des 1. Korintherbriefs* (Biblich-theologische Studien 162; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2016); see also the English translation *The Logic of Love: The ‘Implicit Ethics’ in Pauline Writings with Special Focus on 1 Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018, chap. 2, forthcoming); see further a summary and discussion in Ruben Zimmermann, “How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically: The New Method of ‘Implicit Ethics’ in Dealing with Biblical Ethics,” in *New Approaches to Biblical Ethics: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (ed. V. Rabens, J. Grey, and M. Kamell Kovalishyn; BINS; Leiden: Brill, 2018, forthcoming).

⁴ See the corresponding publication Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann, eds., *Moral language in the New Testament: The interrelatedness of language and ethics in Early Christian writings* (Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics II; WUNT II/296; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

language can be viewed as the basis to be investigated when dealing with the ‘implicit ethics’ of New Testament writings.

After exploring several other dimensions such as norms, forms, and so on in some other volumes,⁵ the majority of these related to the “Mainz Moral Meeting” conferences conducted by the Research Center of Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity (*e/ac*). This present volume completes the circuit in dealing with “Biblical Ethics and Application”. Although the topic of this volume is closely interrelated with the method and work on ‘implicit ethics’, the contributions themselves address the issue on different levels, including texts from both the Old and the New Testament and a variety of methods. As editors, we did not want to limit this diversity, as it mirrors the complexity of the biblical text itself as well as the different situations and persons that highlight these ethical dimensions of the texts.

An introductory chapter explores how ‘application’ or the range of influence of the Bible in ethical debate can be understood.

The topic “Biblical Ethics and Application” also suits the person honoured by this volume. Jan G. van der Watt is an outstanding individual, not only in his scholarly work, but also in his authentic conduct of life. Jan has authored a number of monographs and served as editor of numerous influential academic publications. Only a few scholars in the field reflect brightness with humility, breaking new ground with modesty, purposefulness, with attentiveness towards others. In his native country South Africa, in particular, Jan van der Watt kept the Bible alive by means of preaching, translations, radio programmes and numerous Bible Schools, which he led in countless churches across South Africa. At the same time, several popular books came from his pen. A wide range of academic prizes have already been awarded to Jan in South Africa, including the Pieter van Drimmelen Medal for his contribution to theology and Bible translation, in 2000, for the Afrikaans Bible translation “Die Boodskap”, as well as the Andrew Murray Prize, in 2003, for the *Bible A-Z*, of which he is the editor. In 2006, he received the Totius Prize for his contribution to theology and Bible translation from the South African Academy for Science and Art and, in 2017, Jan won the prestigious Jan H. Marais Prize from the South African Academy for Science and Art, together with Prof. Jaap Steyn, for his outstanding contribution to Afrikaans as a language of science.

⁵ See Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, Ulrich Volp and Ruben Zimmermann, eds., *Normen frühchristlicher Ethik: Gut – Leben – Leib – Tugend*. (Contexts and Norms of New Testament ethics IV; WUNT 313; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, Ulrich Volp and Ruben Zimmermann, eds., *Metapher – Narratio – Mimesis – Doxologie: Begründungsformen frühchristlicher und antiker Ethik* (Contexts and Norms of New Testament ethics VII; WUNT 356; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

In other words: He has provided an extraordinary example of how the Bible can be applied to Christian life and modern society. As a scholar, teacher, academic supervisor for over 50 PhD-students, friend, family man and believer, he has made a lasting impression on so many people's lives. We deeply honour him and his work of life with this volume.

Mainz and Pretoria, May 2017

Ruben Zimmermann
and Stephan Joubert

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Biblical Ethics and Application

Introduction

Stephan Joubert and Ruben Zimmermann

I. Ethics and Application – Preliminary Remarks

The term ‘application’ in relation to biblical ethics might be misleading, because the texts of the Bible are not a manual for moral conduct that can be followed step-by-step. The texts cannot simply be ‘applied’ to different contexts in time and culture. In a broader sense, ‘application’ can be understood as the relevance and influence of biblical texts on moral behaviour and further ethical debate. As such, the quest for ‘application’ might be considered to be the final goal of investigating Old and New Testament ethics. If exegesis does not define itself as a retrospective task to explore historical facts or as a self-centred scholarly activity, the motivation for reading those ancient texts has something to do with current life and the search for truth and orientation. In other words, we enter a complex field of hermeneutics about the ongoing relevance and meaning of the Bible.

Does the Bible still play a role in a Christian’s daily life, in forming a moral character, in providing an orientation for the moral statements of Christian communities such as the churches, or even in social values and norms? Or can the biblical texts serve as a source of stimulation for forms of ethical thinking and reflection (e.g. narrative ethics; metaphorical ethics¹)? How can one refer to texts of the Bible in moral conduct and ethical debate? Where are the limits of such an application? It is obvious that a fundamentalistic transfer of the biblical norms or commands to the present is not feasible and, in the majority of instances in history, led to terrible consequences.² Anyone wishing to appeal to the Bible in

¹ See, for instance, Jan G. van der Watt, “Ethics Alive in Imagery”, in *Imagery in the Gospel of John* (ed. J. Frey, J. G. van der Watt and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 421–48.

² See the discussion of these issues in Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Scripture and Ethics: Twentieth-Century Portraits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), ch. VIII (“Apartheid: An Ethical and Generic Challenge to Reading the New Testament”).

terms of questions dealing with modern moral action must be prepared to grapple with complex hermeneutical issues.³

Application not only means engaging with biblical texts in current life and discourse, but also deals with questions as to how a text has been understood, read, used and misused, and in this way ‘applied’ over the centuries. This impact of the text started as part of a communication process e.g. between the author of the Fourth Gospel and its addressees or community. Therefore, the historical contexts and frameworks, e.g. life in Corinth, Stoic philosophy, or the Roman Empire, can be taken into account in order to consider probabilities of ethical applications in ancient contexts. What might have been the “ethos” of a Christian community in which a certain text was produced? Was a text built to shape the individual moral character and/or identity of a Christian community?⁴ Did early Christians even lay claim to influencing ancient society and politics?⁵ Although not knowing the ways of tradition in detail, it might be of interest to reflect on those postulated scenes of application heuristically, e.g. ‘reading John in Ephesus’. This process of ‘application’ spread as soon as a text was copied and read in new and different contexts and cultures. “Throughout the history of the church Christians have looked to the Bible for theological concepts by which to understand their moral obligations, commandments by which to live, values by which to order personal and social existence, patterns of life worthy of emulation, and insight into the dynamics of character formation.”⁶ Thus, the reception history of the Bible, with a special focus on ethical impacts, is also at stake.

In many instances, the quest for application and relevance reverts to the text itself and its implied claims for ethical validity. Is Paul, for instance, only interested in solving the particular problems of the Corinthians, or do formulations in the Corinthian correspondence reveal an interest in going beyond the narrow

³ See, for instance, Charles H. Cosgrove, *Appealing to Scripture in Moral Debate: Five Hermeneutical Rules* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), who explores “the Rule of Purpose”, “the Rule of Analogy”, “the Rule of Countercultural Witness”, “the Rule of Nonscientific Scope”, and “the Rule of Moral-Theological Adjudication”. See also Marco Hofheinz, Frank Mathwig and Matthias Zeindler, eds., *Wie kommt die Bibel in die Ethik? Beiträge zu einer Grundfrage theologischer Ethik* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2011); Volker Rabens, “The Bible and Ethics: Pathways for Dialogue”, *In die Skriflig* 51 (2017): 1–12 (<https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v51i3.2246>; 09/03/2017); on hermeneutics in general, see Susanne Luther and Ruben Zimmermann, “Bibelauslegung als Verstehenslehre: Geschichte der Hermeneutik im Horizont gegenwärtiger Debatten”, in *Studienbuch Hermeneutik: Portraits – Modelle – Quellentexte* (ed. S. Luther and R. Zimmermann; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 2014), 13–70.

⁴ On the interrelatedness of ethos and identity, see Jan G. van der Watt, “Again: Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament. A few tentative remarks”, in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament* (ed. J. G. van der Watt; BZNW 141; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 611–32.

⁵ See, for instance, Harold Attridge, Warren Carter and Jan G. van der Watt, “Are John’s Ethics Apolitical?” *New Testament Studies* 62 (2016): 484–97; more general Eckart Reinmuth, ed., *Politische Horizonte des Neuen Testaments* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010).

⁶ Charles H. Cosgrove, “Scripture in Ethics”, in *Dictionary of scripture and ethics* (ed. J. B. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 13.

confines of the issue in order to formulate ideas more fundamentally? Friedrich W. Horn recognizes the “extremely dominating manner”⁷ in which the apostle presents his concerns and even describes normative claims that are not restricted to certain situations for his congregations, but for early Christianity in general.⁸ What are the textual indicators for specific or more general ethical claims?

Within the *organon* of implicit ethics mentioned earlier, *textual indications* have been discussed that reveal particularity or supraindividualism on several levels (imperatives, genres, form of ethical reflection, addressee, and so on). Here again, the question is a text-based one and the query is whether and to what extent ethical reflection is designed, from the outset, for a broader context and wider horizon.⁹ The question concerning the textual claims is thus only part of a complex hermeneutical process of application and relevance of a text in contemporary ethical discourse. However, it is only when one understands as precisely as possible what the texts themselves offer that one can critically reflect on such hermeneutical processes.

If a text strives for an overindividualized or more general validity, does this lead directly to axiomatic or self-evident principles or even to a universal statement? Questions along these lines have often been posed in theology. For instance, M. Theobald refers to an “anthropological universalization”¹⁰ of Paul’s teaching on justification that can become the basis for a worldwide mission beyond the confines of Judaism. Can a similar “universalization” be found in ethics? Does the primacy of the good or love in New Testament ethics – as described by Söding based on Rom 12:17–21 – have a “clear universal orientation”?¹¹ What exactly does “universal” or “universalism” mean in those statements? In terms of the philosophical ethical discussion, we embark on the widely debated issue of the “universal-particular problem”.¹² Biblical ethics, however, is temporally

⁷ See Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, “Wollte Paulus ‘kanonisch’ wirken?,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion: Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart: Ein Handbuch* (ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012) 400–22, 401: “At the same time, we recognize canonical claims, i. e., statements seeking to establish norms, in the letters of Paul.” (transl. RZ).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 402.

⁹ See Ruben Zimmermann, *Die Logik der Liebe, Die ‘implizite Ethik’ der Paulusbriefe am Beispiel des 1. Korintherbriefs* (Biblich-theologische Studien 162; Neukirchen Vly: Neukirchener Verlag, 2016), 118–23.

¹⁰ See Michael Theobald, “Die anthropologische Universalisierung,” in *Paulus Handbuch* (ed. F. W. Horn; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 354–58, 357. Theobald views this as already anchored in early Judaism (1QH 4,30, and so on), but expanded and christologically based in Paul (cf. Rom 3:20; 5:18).

¹¹ Thomas Söding, *Nächstenliebe: Gottes Gebot als Verheißung und Anspruch* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2015), 282.

¹² See, e. g., in a rationalistic direction, Marcus G. Singer, *Generalization in Ethics: An Essay in the Logic of Ethics, with the Rudiments of a System of Moral Philosophy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), 61: “The generalization argument has the general form: ‘If everyone were to do x, the consequences would be disastrous (or undesirable); therefore no one ought to do x.’”

bound and limited, since reflection occurs in particular individuals, particular contexts and textual forms. Therefore, we can question the validity of a narrow understanding of ethics, according to which a judgement must prove itself to be a reason-based, universal law (e. g. Kant's so-called "categorical imperative") or, in the sense of objectivism, must be able to claim validity independent of the subject or context. Yet, even in those ethical systems that focus on the linguistic medium and the textual nature and uniqueness (e. g. in narrative ethics), reflection on conduct is drawn out of the realm of reference to particular situations and into the realm of a story, in which it begins a literary life. The ethics of literature, therefore, also create an artificial, atemporal perspective that allows for a transfer into other contexts. The story thus becomes – as Ricoeur rightly noted – the "first laboratory of moral judgment".¹³ Following this path, the narrative elements of a story have a direct influence in shaping the moral character of a reader and a reading community, and thus, bridging the gap of history. To mention one example, characters in the narrative could be viewed as role models for ethical behaviour, which stimulates processes of identification and alienation in the act of reading.¹⁴ In other words, the narrative, linguistic approach also leads to some form of 'application'.

Needless to say, the different fields addressed in the issue of "Biblical ethics and Application" can by no means be discussed in this brief introduction. Neither can or should they be integrated into a coherent system. Following the example of Jan van der Watt,¹⁵ we did not even want to limit the authors' perspectives and creativity on the issue of engaging with various texts. The contributors to this volume were invited to focus on the general issues from different perspectives.

1) They could opt for a text-immanent linguistic, narratival or rhetorical approach to describe the literary devices and signals whereby a text or document points to a particular situation, or expresses and formulates a somewhat more generalized perspective.

2) They could also address the socio-historical situation by using historical diachronic methods, or reconstruct the probable or intended impact of a text on the explicit readers, as well as early Christian or later discourses.

¹³ See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as another* (Chicago: University Press, 1992), 140.

¹⁴ See on these aspects *Character ethics and the New Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture* (ed. R.L. Brawley; Louisville: Westminster Knox, 2007); Fredrik Wagener, *Figuren als Handlungsmodelle. Simon Petrus, die samaritanische Frau, Judas und Thomas als Zugänge zu einer narrative Ethik des Johannesevangeliums* (Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics VI; WUNT II / 408; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

¹⁵ See, for instance, the articles in Van der Watt, *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos*, and his final remarks in Van der Watt, "Again: Identity, Ethics, and Ethos" 611: "Ethical conduct, as it is described in these texts, is determined by different situations and is not intended to offer a single 'objective ethical system'. ... Therefore, the multi-faceted levels of diversity, theological and linguistic alike cannot simply be 'synchronized'."

3) They could also take into account the hermeneutical appropriation of the biblical text in contemporary ethical debates in different cultures, interacting with current ethical theories or moral philosophy.

These three dimensions were not intended to mark separate fields, but to address heuristically different perspectives that often overlap in analysing a text.¹⁶ Some of the articles can be clearly linked to one of these dimensions. The majority of these articles, however, deal with more than one perspective and method. Therefore, the order of the volume will follow roughly the canonical order of the text, which is the point of reference of the contribution.

II. The Contributions in this Volume

The following summaries of articles give a first impression of the variety of perspectives and exegetical methods, by means of which the issue of 'Biblical Ethics and Application' is addressed. The contributions cover many fields of the Bible and include texts from Genesis to Revelation. Due to the work areas of Jan van der Watt, there is, however, a clear emphasis on New Testament texts and, in particular, on Johannine writings.

Ellen van Wolde (God's Covenant with the Living Beings on Earth: An Eco-ethical Reading of Genesis 9:8–17) argues that Genesis 9:8–17 is wrongly labelled as a "rainbow text". Her reading of Genesis 1–11, as the broader framework of the meaning for Genesis 9:8–17, leads her to conclude that, although God shares the human perspective, he also shares that of the earth. God's view sometimes agrees with, but also opposes that of human beings. This is vividly illustrated in the story of the flood in Genesis 6–9, where God rescues the earth from evil human beings. After the flood, God inaugurates a new beginning by offering a covenant to Noah and his descendants, as well as to all other living beings on earth. God also sets a bow in the sky as a sign of the covenant (Genesis 9:12–17). In this instance, *qēšēt* does not denote a rainbow, but rather a warrior's bow in the sky as a sign of his power over the earth, but also as a hierarchical pact between himself and all living beings who will share with him the responsibility for ruling over the earth. Unlike in Genesis 1:26–28, Noah and his descendants are not told to subdue the earth. The earth has acquired its own right of being independent of human beings. Over against the misused emphasis in Genesis 1 to defend the view that God created the earth for the benefit of human beings, Van Wolde emphasises that the heart of God's covenant is to benefit the entire earth and all creatures living on it. Her

¹⁶ See as an example for such overlaps Jan G. van der Watt, "Ethics in First John: A Literary and Socioscientific Perspective," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61 (1999): 491–511; Jan G. van der Watt, "Ethics of/ and opponents of Jesus in John's Gospel," in *Rethinking the Ethics of John: "Implicit Ethics" in the Johannine Writings* (ed. J. G. van der Watt and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 291; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 175–91.

eco-ethical reading of Genesis 9 points out that the earth is its own subject of definition, and not only the object of human beings, or merely their habitat or food-production machine.

Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte (Protection against Evil: Jesus Christ as Shield and Buckler [Psalm 91]) investigates early Jewish and Christian understandings of Psalm 91 as an apotropaic text that offers protection against demons, as well as the ethical implications thereof. After pointing out that the LXX translation of Psalm 91 was consciously added to the MT text by linking the meaning of the “arrow that flies by day” to a noonday demon, Peerbolte investigates the New Testament usage of this psalm. Included in this analysis is the implicit link with Psalm 91 in Mark 1:12–13, as well as the temptation stories in Luke and Matthew. The fact that both Matthew and Luke describe the Devil by quoting Psalm 91:11–12 serves as an indication that this psalm was read as an apotropaic text thought to ward off demons. Luke 10:18 and Revelation 12:6–9, referring to the casting out of the Devil, as well as the longer ending of Mark (16:9–20) also point to a tradition of faith in apotropaic prayer and belief in protection against the evil by the name of Jesus. Various texts from early Judaism at the beginning of the Common Era (e.g. The Testament of Solomon) describe how Solomon (and David) battled with, but also had control over demons. This presupposes the influence of Psalm 91. In the Early Church, this apotropaic understanding of Psalm 91 and of the power of Jesus to protect believers from demonic attacks was also widely accepted. Origen, Tertullian and others took up this faith in demons and showed how Jesus held authority over them, while offering protection to believers. Ethically, demons could lead believers astray. Therefore, Peerbolte understands the strong ascetic movement in early Christianity as an attempt to use *enkrateia* in order not to give in to their temptations.

Ben Witherington, III (The Ethic of Jesus Revisited: An Essay in Honor of Jan van der Watt) questions the so-called Bultmannian assumption that the distance between the presentation of Jesus’ ethics in the Gospels and what he actually said is too considerable to construct an ethic of Jesus. He argues that, although the Gospel writers had their own agendas, they ultimately directly or indirectly based their writings on eyewitness testimonies. He highlights the Sermon on the Mount, in particular, as a proof of both the eschatological nature of the ethic of Jesus, and his different form of revelatory wisdom. As God’s wisdom in person, Jesus acts with sovereign freedom, particularly when it comes to the Law. He sometimes intensifies its demands and, at other times, he sets them aside. Jesus prohibits what Moses allows (oaths, divorce, killing), but allows what Moses prohibits (work on Sabbath). This rigorous ethic of Jesus places a considerable ethical demand on his followers to change their moral and spiritual behaviour, and to model themselves on Jesus’ teaching and lifestyle. The ethic of Jesus is a community ethic; it is not meant for outsiders, but for disciples who implement his way of living. Apart from the radical and eschatological nature of Jesus’ eth-

ic, it is also Christocentric. In other words, he not only models the right way to believe and behave, but also enables his followers to do so.

In his re-evaluation of the reign of Herod the Great, *Jan Willem van Henten* (Negative Peace Re-assessed: The Case of Herod the Great) uses the concept “negative peace”, developed by Johan Galtung, Paul F. Diehl, Perry Yoder, William Swartley and others. He understands it as the absence of a violent conflict, including war, whereas positive peace could be defined as the absence of structural violence. From this perspective, Herod the Great (40–4 BCE) is interpreted as a ruler whose rule, surprisingly and in contradiction to his negative reputation in Matthew and in the works of Josephus, resulted in the establishment of a peaceful kingdom for 33 years. The Romans considered Herod a “friendly king”, who succeeded in peace enforcement and preventative peacekeeping as the maximum achievable activities. From this perspective, the “negative peace” of Herod was astonishingly successful.

Tobias Nicklas (“Let the Dead Bury their Own Dead” (Matt 8:22 par. Luke 9:60): A Commandment without Impact for Christian Ethos?) turns our attention to one of the most radical sayings of Jesus and its reception in early Christian sources. Clement of Alexandria alludes to this verse where he speaks about Christians falling back to their old ways of life outside of the church. He understands this saying as a kind of spiritual death. In turn, Tertullian, in his *Monogamia*, while addressing the question of monogamy due to the new priestly status of Christians, does not use Matthew 8:22//Luke 9:60 to rule out the existing burying practices of Christians. Hilary of Poitiers, who shares a similar perspective in terms of early Christian burial practices, also interprets Matthew 8:22//Luke 9:60 as a reference to a believing son and an unbelieving father. Other ancient accounts of Christian martyrdom, such as The Martyrdom of Peter and the Acts of John, seem to criticise the veneration of the apostles’ bodies in the light of Matthew 8:22//Luke 9:60. Thus, even if these texts had the potential to distinguish a Christian group ethos from its environment by distinguishing between Christian and non-Christian practices related to burying the dead, no Christian groups, in all probability, refused to bury their dead because of Jesus’ saying – hence, the figurative interpretations of Matthew 8:22//Luke 9:60 in early Christianity.

Joseph Verheyden (Disqualifying the Opponent: The Catalogue of Vices in Matt 15:19 as Characterisation and Criticism) focuses on Matthew’s list of vices in Matthew 15:19. He points out that Matthew’s list, even though it follows Mark 7 rather closely, is not primarily meant as a general description of the evil side of the human condition, but as a means of disqualifying the opponents in this controversy. Although relying on Mark’s model and after making a selection from Mark’s list, Matthew carefully composed his own list for the specific purpose of characterizing and stigmatizing the Pharisees and, by extension, all other representatives of the Jewish religious establishment. There is a detailed discussion

of each item in Matthew's list of vices, which also addresses the reasons for his omission of certain vices from Mark's list. The morality of the opponents of Jesus, or rather the lack thereof, is emphasised and challenged in line with the purposes Matthew had set for himself.

In his analysis of Mark 13, *Cilliers Breytenbach* (*Das Wissen und Nicht-Wissen um die Zeit als Verhaltensregel: Eine textpragmatische Analyse der Endzeitrede in Markus 13*) first focuses on the intratextual, deictic context of this teaching on the Mount of Olives in Mark 13. He shows that there is a distinction between the hypodiegetic context, with the narrated Jesus as main character addressing four disciples as secondary characters, and the extratextual or extradiegetic context of the implied readers. However, Mark is aware of continuity between the disciples and later addressees and includes them in this text with its view on the future and on a post-resurrection bodily absent Jesus. Breytenbach also addresses the structure of the teaching (vv. 3–37), as an elaborated *chrie*, and presents us with Jesus' elaborated response to two questions of the disciples regarding the fall of the temple ("when" – 4b, and "what signs will serve as proof?" – 4c). This exposition, as a macro-speech act, has profound Christological implications, since Jesus, the main character, is aware of the nature of the end of time, as well as of his own role as inaugurator of God's eternal kingdom. In terms of the perlocutive nature of this speech act, his knowledge of this certain future serves as motivation for the correct ethical behaviour of both the disciples and the intended addressees. This includes faithfulness to Christ, trust in God during Jesus' absence, fleeing from danger, and being vigilant throughout until Jesus returns as the Son of Man to gather the elect.

Aware of the sparsity of ethical behaviour and explicit directives to this extent in the Gospel of John, *Robert L. Brawley* (*Jesus as the Middle Term for Relationships with God in the Fourth Gospel*) shifts our attention to the neglect of meta-ethics in Johannine studies regarding the possibility, empowerment, motivation and discernment for ethics. He addresses the so-called competence phase for ethics described by Greimas and Courtés, which, in terms of the corresponding level of meta-ethics in John, focuses on the how of ethics and on questions such as what empowers behaviour and how does discernment come about? In the Johannine world, what one is and does is always a product of being born from the Spirit (John 3:1–8). In this relationship, Jesus is the middle term between his followers and God. He is their teacher and Lord. A direct relationship between human beings and God is also evident, especially in John 15. At the same time, the Paraclete, like Jesus, abides with the disciples. This love-based reciprocal relationship produces discernment and empowerment for believers. Agape has the status of a new commandment in their midst (John 13:34). This love, which for John only exists in relationships, flows from a relationship of faith with God, one that is mediated by abiding in Jesus and gives an expression to a corporate group guided by the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth.

R. Alan Culpepper (*The Ethics of the Shepherd*) makes use of Jan van der Watt's research on implicit ethics and metaphor in his analysis of John's understanding of the shepherd metaphor. After a summary of Van der Watt's model of the interpretation of biblical metaphors, he offers an in-depth discussion on the development of the image of the shepherd in ancient literature. Biblical references to the role of the shepherd in leading, feeding and protecting the flock are also highlighted before he reviews the shepherd metaphor in John 10. The distinctiveness of John's interpretation of this metaphor, by means of a comparison with the shepherd in John's wider literary tradition, highlights not only John's creativity, but also his subtle reinterpretation and further development of the metaphor. Against the background of the promise of a future Davidic shepherd for Israel (Ezek 34; 37), the promise of a new covenant (Jer 31) and the call to know the Lord and heed his voice, Jesus, the good shepherd, serves as the model for believers. In terms of the implicit ethics in John 10 and the distinctive elements in John's understanding of this common metaphor, the sheep "know" their shepherd, because they "hear" his voice, while he, in turn, lays down his life for them. This implies a Christological ethic for Christian shepherds. At the same time, it also defines the role of those who belong to the flock of the Good Shepherd. They know and follow him and shall become one flock with those sheep who must still be gathered in. John develops the shepherd metaphor to the extent that it has clear Christological and ethical implications.

It has been widely acknowledged that the topic of "friendship" connects the Gospel of John with a central motif in ancient ethical debate (Aristotle, Cicero, Themistios, and so on). In their contribution (*Freundschaftsethik im Johannevangelium: Zur öffentlichen und politischen Reichweite eines ethischen Konzepts*), *Mirjam and Ruben Zimmermann* focus on the public dimension of friendship ethics, which is often overlooked in studies on the Fourth Gospel. After a brief summary of public and political aspects of 'friendship' in moral philosophical debate and society in Antiquity (including state affairs, client-patron-relationship, effective death, and the notion *παρρησία*), they reconsider the Johannine use of friendship motifs throughout the Gospel (e. g. John 3; 11; 15; 19). The analysis of the texts leads to the conclusion that the friendship motif, though used in a specific manner in John, includes a public dimension, which is part of – as Van der Watt mentioned – the Johannine reflection on "a complex multi-layered political system".¹⁷ This article also contributes to the broader question as to whether the ethics of John only address the in-group of a Johannine community, in extreme are sectarian ethics, or should be understood as an open behavioural reflection amenable to aspects of generalization.

In the farewell discourse, the Johannine Jesus shifts the attention, to a large extent, away from his struggle with the "Jews" by addressing the future task of

¹⁷ Attridge, Carter and Van der Watt, "Are John's Ethics Apolitical?," 494.

the church in the world, as well as the new range of relationships that his disciples have to forge, according to *Ulrich Busse* (Die johanneische Abschiedsrede, die soziale Lage der Leserschaft und ethische Implikationen). The passion of Jesus introduces a new epoch in history where the world, the Kosmos, will be tested universally in terms of its “Erkenntnis- und Glaubensfähigkeit”. During this time, and after Jesus’ return to his Father, the disciples will, in solidarity with him, play a decisive role to publicly continue his work and to open new horizons for the future of their faith. Their present love for one another will serve as proof of the Father’s love for Jesus, but at the same time it will also define discipleship in terms of the reciprocal love, respect, and loyalty between themselves and Jesus. As local house churches with their own “in-group” family language and unique organisational forms, their “high” Christology and a corresponding “sacral” Ecclesiology will not only safeguard them from external negative influences and stabilize their faith within their marginalised situation, but also change the very texture of the Kosmos through their mutual love. Loyalty and solidarity among Johannine believers will enable them to collectively embody the eschatological-ethical programme of Jesus. The Gospel of John thus shifts the emphasis away from the past of the early Christian Jesus tradition to the present fraught with difficulties, but to one that is also framed with new meaning.

Udo Schnelle (Ethik und Kosmologie bei Paulus) addresses the question as to what extent it is justified, within the context of Pauline ethics, to speak of cosmology. He finds the answer in the fact that ἀμαρτία or sin is constantly presented in Paul’s thought as a cosmic reality and a trans-individual cosmic power. Paul deliberately raises the status of sin to a level that can only be overcome by another cosmic event: the resurrection and *parousia* of Jesus Christ. The resurrected Christ is now present in his church in the intervening time shortly before the *parousia*. This horizon of an imminent *parousia* provides an eminently cosmological dimension to Paul’s ethics. His use of numerous apocalyptic motifs confirms this fundamental perspective. Paul understands the church as a cosmic entity that is constantly engaged in this cosmic struggle against the power of sin. While the baptized, Spirit-led *ekklesia* actively participates in this battle, as Paul vividly illustrates by means of his frequent use of weapon metaphors, her transformation is already under way on cosmological, individual and social levels. This effective transformation process began with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, continues in the present healing activities of the Spirit, and leads up to the final transformation of the whole creation into the glory of God. A discussion of two texts from an earlier and later phase of Paul’s ministry, namely 1 Thess 5:1–11 and Romans 6:1–23, addresses believers’ participation in this universal transformation process. This coexistence, interdependence and opposition of individual, collective and universal aspects on both theological and cultural levels determine Pauline ethics not only as an ethics of participation in God’s power, but also as an ethics of struggle against and resistance to the anti-God powers.

Michael Wolter (“Gebt allen, was ihr schuldig seid ...” [Röm 13,6–7]: Was die Verpflichtung von Christen, sich den über sie herrschenden “Obrigkeiten” unterzuordnen, begrenzt) addresses the issue regarding the range or extent of the debt owed by believers in Romans 13:6–7. These verses form part of Paul’s argument in Romans 13:1–7, with vv. 1–5 focusing on the necessity (ἀνάγκη; v. 5a) of obedience to all forms of authority (ἐξουσίας ὑπερεχούσαις; v. 1a). All people are included in these instructions (as indicated by πᾶσα ψυχῆ). After a theological argument (vv. 1–2), Paul shifts to a theological and ethical perspective in vv. 3–4, with emphasis on reward and punishment for obedience and/or disobedience to these ἄρχοντες. This is anchored in Paul’s anthropological remarks in v. 5b, linking obedience to conscience. Vv. 6–7 are framed in terms of the question as to who owes Christians in Rome what? Paul acknowledges that they have multiple obligations (“Tribut”, “Steuer”, “Furcht”, “Ehre”), which they should not “pay” indiscriminately to all, but only to those to whom they owe it. It is Paul’s understanding that the readers have more obligations than those mentioned in v. 7b–e. Thus, Romans 13:7 paves the way towards a hermeneutical openness for the intended and other readers to discern for themselves which of these claims they have to fulfil and to whom. Different cultural and historical contexts will constantly determine whether the obligations of those in positions of authority are valid or in conflict with a plurality of other commitments and obligations placed on the readers’ shoulders.

After an overview of ethics in the context of New Testament literature from the perspective of Ruben Zimmermann’s research, *Bart J. Koet* (“Ethics or Halakha? “Calling” as a Key to the Dynamics of Behavior According to Paul in 1 Cor 1:1–11) focuses on the understanding of ἔθος in Flavius Josephus as a reference to typical Jewish behaviour. Koet also discusses *Halakha* as a concept that provides rules as identity markers for the sake of the unity of the Jewish people. He then analyses 1 Cor 1:1–11 in terms of its emphasis on the unity of the fellowship of disciples at Corinth. In this instance, the question: implicit ethics or implicit *halakha*? guides Koet’s understanding of the main thrust and dynamics of this introduction to 1 Corinthians. It is not viewed as an ethical statement concerning the right way of doing things, since the unity of the community is Paul’s highest aim. He calls on the people in Corinth to seek fellowship with Christ and for unity (1:10–11). The various issues and problems raised throughout 1 Corinthians point to the fact that Paul’s view of human behaviour consists in his implicit ethics *together* with the rules necessary to keep the unity. These rules bear more than a passing resemblance to the Jewish *mitzwot*, so basic for the *halakhic* system of the rabbis.

Rainer Hirsch-Luipold (“Ich bete, dass ihr ...”: Impliziter und grammatischer Imperativ im Philipperbrief vor dem Hintergrund zeitgenössischer Literatur zum Gebet) addresses the rhetorical-pragmatic function of prayer in the Letter to the Philippians. On the rhetorical level of the letter, prayer functions as an im-

plicit imperative or as a preview of later remarks set in imperatival form. In this sense, the concept of prayer is a “Kompendium” of Paul’s ethics. This finding is compared to Maximus of Tyros’ reflection on the function of prayer who wrote about hundred years after Paul. His question: εἰ δεῖ εὐχεσθαι (“shall man pray?”) is understood within the framework of the prayers of the ancient philosophers (Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato) as a conversation of the soul with God. For Maximus, prayer is theology proper; it is a pragmatic reflection on what man has been given from the gods. Paul focuses on the ethical-pragmatic function of prayer with special regard to the ethical imperatives inherent in the triangle between God, Paul, and the addressees. Thus, the ethical imperative of love for God and love for others (1:27–2:18) is already inherent in the initial “Gebetsbericht” in 1:3–11, with its emphasis on thanksgiving and supplication. It presupposes the ethical demand on the Philippians to act upon what has been given to them by God. At the same time, prayer deepens the readers’ understanding of God, one that not only implies, but also leads to a corresponding adjustment of their ethical conduct “als Zielbestimmung”.

Stephan Joubert (The Kenotic μορφή of Christ and Character Formation in Paul’s Ethical Discourse in Philippians 2:5–11) points to the marked difference between Paul’s description of the physical presence of Jesus in Philippians 2:5–11 and that of typical Graeco-Roman deities when they took on bodily forms. Their gait, speech, clothes, ornaments and radiation eventually revealed their identity. By contrast, Paul’s poetic presentation of Jesus in Philippians 2:5–11 (in terms of pre-existence, earthly existence in the embodiment of a slave, and post-resurrection exaltation) shows how he deliberately chose to exchange his divine μορφή for the μορφή of a slave. Christ’s ensuing kenotic life, by emptying himself of all the privileges of his deity and associating fully with humanity’s plight, expresses his true character. Verses 9–11 do not allude to any transfiguration of his humble earthly body, as part of his exaltation into God’s presence after his death on the cross. The μορφή of Jesus is no longer the focus, but his new/restored honour and name are emphasised to indicate both his true identity and the type of Lord whom believers must now follow. Paul models this kenotic life of Christ as “ethical exemplar” for the Philippians. In terms of the “universal applicability” of this ethic, Policarpus, in his *Epistula ad Philippenses* about 60 years later, understands Christ’s sacrificial life as the expected pattern of conduct for believers. Sadly, the vibrancy of Paul’s picture of Jesus’ humble character, which gave rise to this ethos among early Christians, has been ideologically forced from the centre to the periphery since the fourth century. It needs to be reclaimed by means of a new theological ethics.

D. Francois Tolmie (John Chrysostom and the “Implicit Ethics” of the Letter to Philemon) applies the notion of “implicit ethics”, developed by Van der Watt and Zimmermann, in his analysis of the reception of Paul’s Letter to Philemon by John Chrysostom. A summary of elements that form part of Philemon’s implicit ethics

is highlighted, such as Paul's own example; lauding the behaviour of certain individuals, as well as the norms and maxims for action. Tolmie then addresses the reception of Philemon in three of Chrysostom's homilies. Chrysostom's implicit ethics is to be found in the πρόθεσις and in the exegetical parts of these homilies in which Paul and Philemon's exemplary behaviour are emphasized. Paul's humility, zeal, rhetorical skills, kindness and concern for believers of different social status, as well as Philemon's behaviour as an admirable man who opens his house to the church and who refreshes the hearts of believers, are worthy of praise and emulation. On the other hand, Onesimus' immoral behaviour (theft and desertion) is also highlighted. Chrysostom's approach resembles a particular type of "virtue ethics". Christian values such as mercy, forgiveness and humility are constantly highlighted as his congregations' correct response to God's actions in Christ. Chrysostom's emphasis of Paul's rhetorical skills probably reflects the role that rhetorical training played in his own education. Similarly, his intuitive association with slave owners also reflects his own social location.

Michael Theobald ("Lauter Milde allen Menschen gegenüber!" [Tit 3,2]: Grenzüberschreitendes Ethos in den Pastoralbriefen) investigates the "ethische Entgrenzung" or the boundary-crossing ethical options propagated by the author of the Pastoral Corpus. The central theological worldview of the author is expressed in Titus 2:11, as the hinge text between the ethical instruction (Tit 2:1–10) and the theological grounding (Tit 2:11–14), with its emphasis on the universal nature of God's grace. In this instance, the Jewish "embossing" inherent in Paul's theology has been abandoned in favour of a true "Heilsuniversalismus". The question as to whether one is a Jew or a Gentile no longer plays a role, neither does the law in terms of qualifying the nature of one's deeds – even though they cannot lead to righteousness before God (Tit 3:5–7). God's grace, which has appeared to all people (Tit 2:11), informs the groundbreaking ethical directives propagated by the author. By accepting and adhering to the socio-ethical standards of the *Umwelt* regarding domestic roles and ecclesiastical functions and offices, he wants to ensure that the church is in good standing with outsiders. Literally, for the first time in Christian history, "public" or "Öffentlichkeit" becomes the criterion for the correct formation of *ekklesia*. While owing their new life to the "grace" and φιλανθρωπία or "human friendliness" of the Saviour God, they are also bound to the outside world through tolerance, mildness, renouncement of "hate-speech" against outsiders, while they are obliged "to do every good work" (Tit 3:2).

The Johannine Elder addresses several centrifugal threats within his churches that pull them away from corporate unity in the three Johannine Epistles according to *Paul N. Anderson* (Identity and Congruence: The Ethics of Integrity in the Johannine Epistles). Some believers refuse to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ; some participate in idolatry and follow questionable teachers, refusing to acknowledge Jesus' coming in the flesh, while others are denied hospitality. In order to hold his community together, the Elder calls on believers to abide in the

love of Christ and to love one another in the same way that they had received love from God. This involves caring for the physical and social needs of community members. True believers must not abandon the community as the schismatics did. They should also maintain the Jewish values of the Johannine leadership and practise hospitality. At the same time, they are not allowed to participate in the festivities of the surrounding pagan culture – even if supported by the imperial presence of the Roman occupiers. Within their multicultural and cosmopolitan context, the Johannine Elder calls for adherence to Jesus as the Father's Son, while also embracing basic standards of the Jewish faith rather than being convinced by the ways of the pagan world. This increases cognitive dissonance in the community by challenging them to constantly love one another. There is a constant appeal to the self-conception of community members. In this sense, group solidarity and personal wholeness are addressed from the perspective of believers' truth and love-oriented identity.

Drawing on Michael Labahn's understanding that ethical texts attempt to persuade readers to accept a writer's perspective on appropriate conduct as normative, *Craig R. Koester* (*Babylon and New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation: Imagery and Ethical Discernment*) argues that Revelation shapes its readers' perspectives on human conduct mainly through imagery or word pictures. Much of the book's ethical impact is created by evocative images such as those of Babylon the whore and New Jerusalem the bride. In terms of a transfer of meaning, the readers' perceptions are shaped by these images, which contribute to their ethical discernment by means of the sharp contrasts between the values represented by Babylon and those of New Jerusalem. When images of wealth, combined with the values of profit and status, are at stake in the portrayal of Babylon and the New Jerusalem, or violence versus reconciliation, and idolatry versus fidelity to God, the readers must figure out how to turn those values into concrete actions. This process of ethical discernment is dynamic. At the same time, Revelation's imagery allows for complexity, since it addresses various readers of different social and economic status. While the imagery of Babylon in Revelation is highly critical of those who seek wealth as the object of social status, the description of New Jerusalem is presented in terms of luxury and wealth. The values conveyed by this imagery must encourage the readers to assume the responsibility of discerning a way forward in their respective contexts.

Michael Labahn (*Der Konflikt zwischen Gut und Böse und seine ethische Dimension für frühchristliche Gemeinden in der römischen Provinz Kleinasien: Überlegungen zur Begründungsstrategie der Ethik in der Johannesoffenbarung*) views the Book of Revelation as a subversive narrative, one that constantly deconstructs the power structures inherent in the Roman Empire. The narrated world of Revelation, probably written at the end of the reign of Emperor Domitian to churches in Asia Minor, is sharply divided into Good (God, the Lamb, the heavenly host and those loyal to God) and Evil (Satan, the two beasts, Babylon,

the Roman emperor, as well as their sympathizers and collaborators). Society is characterized as a rebellious rule of evil, which leaves the Church no other ethical option than a voluntary “Abgrenzung” or separation from it (Rev 18:4), as well as from other non-Christian cults and heretical Christian groups, thus refusing all forms of self-compromising interactions in everyday culture. Since Good has already overcome Evil cosmologically by the fall of Satan (Rev 12), as well as soteriologically in terms of the salvation brought about by the Lamb, and eschatologically in terms of the promised future citizenship in the New Jerusalem, the ethical strategy of the Church entails this freely chosen exile to the fringe of society. In this instance, the right “works” (or ἔργα in Rev 2:2, 5, 6, 19, 22, 23, 26; 3:1, 2, 8, 15) are indicative of the ideal believers’ deliberate, non-compromising resistance to a corrupt society, while at the same time adhering to the call to love God and others in this marginal space.