

Johannine Perspectives on Ethical Enabling in the Context of Stoic and Philonic Ethics

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It is to be welcomed that the majority view of scholarship regarding Johannine ethics has lately been challenged. In contrast to the now outdated consensus, a number of recent publications attest to an ethical interest in John's Gospel.¹ These studies usually take the love command as their starting point, for it is here that Johannine ethics converges (John 13:34–35). However, John's focus on love does not need to be seen as a reduction of the breadth of ethics found elsewhere in the New Testament. Rather, the love command functions as a prism that spreads light on the multicolored spectrum of Johannine ethics, including the framework of the family and friendship ethos upon which the exhortation to love is developed, and within which the love command takes on its concrete dimensions, including the Gospel's call for washing each other's feet, dying for one another, etc. "The exhortation to 'love one another' calls for unity in the face of internal diversity (cf. John 11:51–52; 17:21–23) and demands the reconciliation of social, ethnic and other differences in the new 'family' or 'community of friends'", as Jörg Frey observes.²

However, none of the recent studies on ethics in John is devoted to the question how the disciples are enabled to live according to the community ethics of the Fourth Gospel.³ Therefore, this article asks the question: how

¹ See the article "Is There Ethics in the Gospel of John?" by Ruben Zimmermann (above, pp. 44ff.) for both an overview of the many scholars who deny and the few who affirm an ethical interest of the Fourth Gospel. With regard to the latter category, see already the fine treatment in Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 138–157. The present article focuses on John's Gospel too but also interacts with 1 John in a few places.

² Jörg Frey, "'Ethical' Traditions, Family Ethos, and Love in the Johannine Literature", in *Ethics in the New Testament* (eds. Jan W. van Henten and Jozef Verheyden; NOSTER; Leiden/Boston: Brill; forthcoming).

³ Ethical enabling has been only sporadically the implicit concern of exegetical treatments of John 15. Cf. the article by Chrys C. Caragounis in the present volume.

is religious-ethical life empowered in John's Gospel?⁴ By way of answer I want to substantiate the following three proposals: 1. Stoicism is not the primary background against which ethical enabling in John is best understood. 2. In John, religious-ethical life is enabled through the experience of divine love in an intimate relationship to Jesus and the Father. The Spirit-Paraclete plays an important role in this "relational empowering", as I will call it. And 3., a number of early Jewish traditions show distinct parallels to this mode of ethical enabling, most prominently Philo of Alexandria.

1. A Stoic Concept of Ethical Empowering in John?

Reading the New Testament against a Stoic background has become popular in recent times. The edited volume *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, published 2010, testifies as one example to this development.⁵ Coming from the same school, Gitte Buch-Hansen has recently provided an extensive analysis of John's Gospel from a Stoic perspective.⁶ In her Stoic reading of John she particularly focuses on πνεῦμα (S/spirit). What she writes is relevant for our question, because she understands πνεῦμα to be responsible for a transformation of the believer's nature. On the basis of this new nature, people are able to live according to God's will.

According to Buch-Hansen, πνεῦμα is the "physical vehicle" that leads people to the Father and the Son. Through the infusion with πνεῦμα the disciples become born ἄνωθεν.⁷ In line with Stoic physics, this infusion

⁴ This article adopts a broad definition of "ethics" (which is thus equivalent to "religious-ethical life"). According to Wolfgang Schrage, the subject matter of New Testament ethics "is the question of what was the enabling and grounds, the criteria and content of the early Christian way of acting and living" (Wolfgang Schrage, *Ethik des Neuen Testaments* [GNT/NTD 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989], 9). The present study focuses on the aspect of enabling.

⁵ Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen and Ismo Dunderberg, eds., *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010). Cf. Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). See particularly the work of Troels Engberg-Pedersen on the apostle Paul (for instance, idem, *Paul and the Stoics* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000]; idem, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], and his article "Logos and Pneuma in the Fourth Gospel", in *Greco-Roman Culture and the New Testament: Studies Commemorating the Centennial of the Pontifical Biblical Institute* (ed. David E. Aune; NovTSup 143; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 27–47.

⁶ Gitte Buch-Hansen, "It is the Spirit that Gives Life": A Stoic Understanding of Pneuma in John's Gospel (BZNW 173; Berlin and New York, N.Y.: De Gruyter, 2010), a revised Ph.D. thesis supervised by Troels Engberg-Pedersen.

⁷ Buch-Hansen, *Spirit* (n. 6), 215, 288, 331, 401, 417, etc.

can be comprehended as a “blending of bodies”.⁸ The Father has involved himself physically in all that is, including the disciples themselves. Through the infusion with πνεῦμα the disciples thus “literally become Jesus’ ‘brothers’”.⁹ The ethical effect of this infusion is most clearly expressed in Buch-Hansen’s interpretation of John 4:24 (“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth”):

In 4:24, the *physical* dimensions of the Fourth Gospel (the story about the πνεῦμα), and the *cognitive* dimensions (the story about divine love) are brought together in the paternal wish for worshippers that worship him “in spirit and truth”. Seen in this way, believing in Jesus is simultaneously to live in accordance with God’s will for the world as it has been laid out originally. The new commandment of love becomes the universal law: the request to “follow Jesus” is simultaneously a request to follow Nature (ἀκολουθεῖν τῷ [sic] φύσει) or to live “in accordance with nature” (κατὰ φύσιν), which, as we know, are the Stoic maxims of true living. Thus, faith in Jesus becomes a short cut to truth and virtuous living.¹⁰

Buch-Hansen thus perceives the same mechanics of ethical living to be at work in John as in Stoicism. On the one hand, there is the cognitive cultivation of the person’s mind (νοῦς). On the other hand, there is the concept of living according to nature, both nature in general as well as one’s individual nature. According to Buch-Hansen, this individual nature changes to the better as people are being infused with the physical πνεῦμα. One can hence speak of this view of ethical enabling, in which a material πνεῦμα physically changes the interior or “substance” of the believer, as “infusion-transformation”.¹¹

Buch-Hansen’s detailed 500-page analysis, to which we cannot do justice in this short discussion, deserves respect for its originality in bringing a fascinating aspect of Stoicism – namely its pneumatology – to bear on John’s Gospel. Nevertheless, let me briefly indicate one or two problems that this Stoic reading of the (ethical) work of the Spirit in John is faced with. This is not to suggest that John’s Gospel is anti-Stoic¹² or

⁸ Buch-Hansen, *Spirit* (n. 6), 418.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 402, 426.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 427; cf. 443, 456–457.

¹¹ On the conceptual details of this notion, see further Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul: Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life* (WUNT 2.283; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 18–20.

¹² For further aspects of this question, see n. 54 below. It should be noted that “Stoicism” is no monolithic entity but that it has developed over a period of more than four hundred years from Early to Middle and Late Stoa. No complete work by any Stoic philosopher from the first two phases of Stoicism has survived, so that we only have a fragmentary knowledge of their developing views on different issues based on secondary sources (as, for instance, Galen’s *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*). See, for example, the different Stoic views on the role of πνεῦμα in the constitution of human beings

anti-physical – after all, according to John’s famous prologue the Logos became flesh (1:14: ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο; the latter includes materiality but is not limited to it). Nor is it to deny that in Stoicism πνεῦμα is a material entity. Nonetheless, it should not be overlooked that “the story about the πνεῦμα” in John, as Buch-Hansen calls it, differs in many ways from that of Stoicism. For one thing, there is no evidence in John that the author shares the same interest in the ontology of the Spirit as the Stoics. We do not find any of the kind of discussions about the nature of πνεῦμα as we can see in Stoicism. Nor is there any evidence in John of abstract language regarding the nature of πνεῦμα as in Philo – Philo being the only early Jewish theologian who explicitly reflects about the nature of the Spirit. Buch-Hansen draws extensively on Philo in support of her Stoic reading of πνεῦμα in John. However, in contrast to Stoicism, there is clear evidence in Philo that suggests that he comprehended the divine Spirit to be an immaterial substance.¹³ Moreover, while it should not be denied that Philo interacts with and adopts elements of Stoicism in his writings, the actual mechanics of the Spirit’s work differ strongly from Stoicism because the basis and mode of action of πνεῦμα in Philo is not physics and matter but the relational dynamics of intimate interaction with the divine, as we will see in section 3 below.

The character as well as the language regarding the nature of the Spirit in John differ clearly from both Stoicism and Philo. This is partly due to the fact that John’s Gospel is of a different genre. It is essentially narrative. However, if John had intended to let his readers know that he shares the assumptions of Stoic pneumatology, he could have easily made this a point in one of the extended dialogues in the Gospel – for example, in the Farewell Discourses. There John speaks of the Spirit as the ἄλλος παράκλητος, “another advocate” (14:16), whom Jesus is going to send to the disciples. However, the Paraclete is anything but the Stoic πνεῦμα-substance that permeates and moves everything. The word ἄλλος here translates as “another of the same kind”, which means, as Max Turner has

mentioned in Gretchen Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 123–125.

¹³ While Philo places the (anthropological) πνεῦμα into the category of σῶμα in his discussion of the substance of the human mind (*Leg. alleg.* 1.91; *Somn.* 1.30), there are a number of passages that suggest that Philo comprehends the Spirit of God to be immaterial: *Opif.* 29–30 (ἀσώματος οὐσία); *Deus* 2; *QG* 1.90, 92; *Gig.* 19, 29, 53–54. See the discussion in Rabens, *Spirit* (n. 11), 69–74. Cf. Gérard Verbeke, *L’Évolution de la Doctrine du Pneuma du Stoïcisme à S. Augustin* (BISPUL; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1945), 245–247, 256–259; Marie E. Isaacs, *The Concept of the Spirit: A Study of Pneuma in Hellenistic Judaism and Its Bearing on the New Testament* (Heythrop Monographs; London: Heythrop College, 1976), 19, 30, 44, 56.

convincingly shown, that the Spirit-Paraclete is modeled on Jesus.¹⁴ Jesus says, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you” (14:16–18).¹⁵ The Paraclete thus is Jesus’ personal presence. If one wants to give a definition of πνεῦμα in John, one can hence speak of a personal concept of the Spirit.¹⁶ Apart from that, the statement that the world cannot receive the Spirit-Paraclete indicates an exclusiveness that collides with Stoic inclusivism (cf. 7:39: οὐπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα). In Stoic pantheism, πνεῦμα is all-permeating.

However, there is not only no common language or conceptualization of the nature of the Spirit, also John’s portrayal of the work of the Spirit differs strongly from that of Stoic philosophy and physics. In fact, even in Stoicism the concept of “infusion-transformation” is not readily available in the form in which it is portrayed in Buch-Hansen’s presentation of John (or by Engberg-Pedersen and others with regard to Paul and his context).¹⁷ Despite some claims to the contrary, one hardly finds a Stoic text in which the ethical effect of πνεῦμα is explicitly treated. The closest one can get seems to be the description of Stoic physics by Diogenes Laertius in which he mentions in passing that the Stoics “consider that the passions are caused by the variations of the vital breath” (αἰτίας δὲ τῶν παθῶν ἀπολείπουσιν τὰς περὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τροπὰς, 7.158). As there is a lack of more explicit

¹⁴ Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts – Then and Now* (2nd ed.; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 79–81; Max Turner, “‘Trinitarian’ Pneumatology in the New Testament? Towards an Explanation of the Worship of Jesus”, *ATJ* 57/58 (2002/2003): 170–177. Cf. Hans-Christian Kammler, “Jesus Christus und der Geistparaklet: Eine Studie zur johanneischen Verhältnisbestimmung von Pneumatologie und Christologie”, in *Johannesstudien: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des vierten Evangeliums* (eds. Otfried Hofius and Hans-Christian Kammler; WUNT 88; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 87–190, esp. 183; Jörg Frey, “Vom Windbrausen zum Geist Christi und zur trinitarischen Person: Stationen einer Geschichte des Heiligen Geistes im Neuen Testament”, *JBTh* 24 (2009): 146–151.

¹⁵ On the interpretation of 14:18 as referring to the Paraclete, see esp. Turner, *Spirit* (n. 14), 81; Cornelis Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Relation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel* (WUNT 2.148; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 222–223; pace Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester: InterVarsity, and Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 501–502; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John* (BNTC 4; London: Continuum and Hendrickson, 2005), 395; Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 632; et al.

¹⁶ On the relation of πνεῦμα and παράκλητος in John, see 14:26 and 15:26. Cf. Udo Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (3rd ed.; THKNT 4; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2004), 259–260.

¹⁷ Cf. Rabens, *Spirit* (n. 11), 25–120.

data, we can agree with Büchsel, Keener and Annas that for the Stoics, the physical concept of πνεῦμα did not play a central role in their ethics but in their physics.¹⁸ The Stoics had a materialistic pneumatology, but not an ethic of substantive transformation that is built upon it. After birth, a supplementary increase or “compression” of one’s individual πνεῦμα through external intervention by the divine – as the “birth from above” in John 3:7–8 – is not intended in Stoic philosophy. Rather, cognitive transformation through philosophy and active reasoning played a central role in Stoic ethics.¹⁹ Philosophy’s ethical function is understood as that of toning up the soul – developing its muscles, assisting its use of its own capabilities more effectively (Seneca, *Ep.* 15).²⁰ With regard to the Fourth Gospel, however, it seems doubtful that the evangelist would have wholeheartedly agreed with Buch-Hansen’s claim that the request to follow Jesus is a request to follow N/nature. In John, following Jesus is primarily a matter of a personal encounter with Jesus that results in a relationship of love, trust and imitation. This, however, also includes the cognitive dimension that Buch-Hansen helpfully pointed out as the second aspect of worship in Spirit and truth. We will encounter this aspect again in the next section in the context of our exploration of relational empowering in John.

¹⁸ Friedrich Büchsel, *Der Geist Gottes im Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1926), 47; Craig S. Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 7; Julia Annas, “Ethics in Stoic Philosophy”, *Phronesis* 52 (2007): 58–87, esp. 67. Nonetheless, it is of course not possible to divorce ethics from physics in Stoic philosophy. Cf. the discussion in Marcelo Boeri, “Does Cosmic Nature Matter? Some Remarks on the Cosmological Aspects of Stoic Ethics”, in *God and Cosmos in Stoicism* (ed. Ricardo Salles; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 173–200; Rabens, *Spirit* (n. 11), 30–35.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Seneca, *Ep.* 6:1–2; 73:15–16; 110:1, 10; Marcus Aurelius 8.14. Cf. Anthony A. Long and David N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1: *Translation of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 346–354, 359–368, 381–386; Maximilian Forschner, *Die stoische Ethik: Über den Zusammenhang von Natur-, Sprach- und Moralphilosophie im altstoischen System* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), 151; Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), esp. ch. 9; Christoph Horn, *Antike Lebenskunst: Glück und Moral von Sokrates bis zu den Neuplatonikern* (Beck’sche Reihe 1271; Munich: Beck, 1998), chs. 1 and 4; Engberg-Pedersen, *Stoics* (n. 5), ch. 3; James Ware, “Moral Progress and Divine Power in Seneca and Paul”, in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought* (ed. John T. Fitzgerald; RMCs; London: Routledge, 2008), 267–283; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity* (AYBRL; Yale, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 70–71.

²⁰ This is not a metaphor but a physical idea, as Nussbaum, *Therapy* (n. 19), 317–318, points out. On Stoic physics of the mind, see further Long and Sedley, *Philosophers*, vol. 1 (n. 19), 313–323, 368, 385–386.

We can conclude that too many logical gaps between the nature and work of the Spirit in Stoicism and the Fourth Gospel prevent the model of infusion-transformation (which does not appear to be genuinely Stoic itself) to function as a convincing interpretation of ethical empowering in John.²¹ While it cannot be excluded that John's presentation of the Spirit-Paraclete was read by some individuals in his audience against the background of Stoic philosophy, one wonders how such a disciple would fathom the work of the Spirit-Paraclete – who was yet to appear, and then only to the disciples – if he believed that everybody and everything was indwelt by the Spirit anyway. It seems that a Stoic approach to the Spirit in John has difficulties to accommodate the Johannine interpretation of the Spirit as Paraclete. This Paraclete, however, plays a central role in bringing home the personal presence of Jesus to the disciples, and thus also his transforming love. It is to this mode of ethical empowering in John that we now turn.

2. Relational Empowering in John

The clearest passage in the Fourth Gospel that conveys both the content of as well as the enabling power behind John's ethics in a nutshell is 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Ἐντολήν καινὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους). In this passage we can see that the love with which the disciples should love one another continues the love which Christ has for them. Jesus' love for them is not only the model but also the enabling force of their love. This second aspect of the verse, which takes καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς not only as comparative but also as causative,²² has been overlooked by many interpreters. However, the importance of this aspect of 13:34 was already discovered by Bultmann. Bultmann explains that the pre-eminent love given by God opens up a new *Lebensraum* (living space) for us, in which we can and should love the brothers in a new way. The experience of the love of

²¹ For further methodological considerations with regard to the interpretation of New Testament pneumatology in the context of Hellenistic philosophy, see Volker Rabens, "Geistes-Geschichte: Die Rede vom Geist im Horizont der griechisch-römischen und jüdisch-hellenistischen Literatur", *Zeitschrift für Neues Testament* 25 (2010): 46–55.

²² In 15:9 we find a construction that is similar in content but limited to a comparison: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you" (καθὼς ἠγάπησέν με ὁ πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἠγάπησα). However, in 13:34 καθὼς is followed by ἵνα to indicate purpose (καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους).

Jesus is the presupposition and drive for a love which is, based on this experience, new and creates new fellowship.²³

However, the question arises how we are to comprehend this “experience of love”. In order to approach this question, we will briefly turn to the recent publications of one of the most prolific writers on ethics in John, Jan van der Watt, who has very helpfully elucidated the centrality of love for John’s ethics. Van der Watt argues that in John “the basis of love is not emotion but relationships that are expressed in actions. Love exists in activity. When God loves, he gives his Son (3,16), ... When Jesus loves intensely he washes feet and gives his life for his friends (13,1ff.; 15,9ff.), when believers love they follow the example of Jesus of serving and caring, even if it means shifting their own interests aside in order to serve God and one another (13,12–20; 12,24–26).”²⁴ In support, Van der Watt cites Schrage and Larsson who state that the nature of love in John’s Gospel is “not an emotion or an affect ... but simply living for others”,²⁵ and that “God is not viewed as filled with an affection, but God as love means God as giving life and sharing and desiring fellowship”.²⁶ Since Van der Watt points out that “giving and obeying are the two central elements of love”,²⁷ it may be fair to comprehend Van der Watt as operating with a functional concept of love in John. In fact, he himself uses very

²³ Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (20th ed.; KEK 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 403–404. He was followed by some scholars, most of whom rightly recognize that καθώς is both comparative and causative in 13:34. See, for instance, Victor Paul Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1972), 138–139; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, vol. 3: *Kommentar zu Kap. 13–21* (HTKNT IV; Freiburg et al.: Herder, 1977), 60; Fernando F. Segovia, *Love Relationships in the Johannine Tradition: Agapē/Agapan in I John and the Fourth Gospel* (SBLDS 58; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 123; Raymond F. Collins, “‘A New Commandment I Give to You, that You Love One Another ...’ (John 13:34)”, in idem, *These Things Have Been Written: Studies on the Fourth Gospel* (Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 2; Louvain: Peeters, 1990), 248; Enno Edzard Popkes, *Die Theologie der Liebe Gottes in den johanneischen Schriften: Zur Semantik der Liebe und zum Motivkreis des Dualismus* (WUNT 2.197; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 258.

²⁴ Jan G. van der Watt, “Ethics and Ethos in the Gospel according to John”, *ZNW* 97 (2006): 147–176, here 161 = Jan G. van der Watt, “Radical Social Redefinition and Radical Love: Ethics and Ethos in the Gospel according to John”, in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament* (ed. Jan G. van der Watt; BZNW 141; Berlin and New York, N.Y.: De Gruyter, 2006), 107–133, here 116–117.

²⁵ Wolfgang Schrage, *Ethics of the New Testament* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Augsburg Fortress, 1988), 318, as cited by Van der Watt, “Ethics and Ethos” (n. 24), 161.

²⁶ Todd Larsson, *God in the Fourth Gospel: A Hermeneutical Study of the History of Interpretations* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001), 276, as cited in Van der Watt, “Ethics and Ethos” (n. 24), 162 n. 77.

²⁷ Van der Watt, “Ethics and Ethos” (n. 24), 166.

similar language: “The nature of love in this Gospel is found in the sustenance of functional relations, that means, relations in which members of a group care for and serve one another, according to the example given by the unique Son and Father of the family.”²⁸

Jan van der Watt has put his finger on a very important aspect of love in John. For John, love has to do with action. “Obedience is love in action”, as Van der Watt puts it.²⁹ Nonetheless, I suggest that the notion of intimate relationships (which include emotions and affection) works better for describing the nature of the interactions and transactions of love in John than the term “functional relations”.³⁰ The difference is that of a nuance, but this nuance can help explain why in the Fourth Gospel Jesus’ love not only functions as model but also as the enabling basis of the disciples’ love. This relational approach to ethical empowering draws on John and his cultural and religious contexts (as we will see below), but it is also broadly supported by modern psychological studies.³¹ For example, Hinde explains that “it is ... clear that what we are is determined at least in part by the relationships we have had. Early family relationships have special

²⁸ Ibid., 165–166.

²⁹ Ibid., 160.

³⁰ I adopt the definition of Laurenceau and Kleinman who describe intimacy as “a personal, subjective ... sense of connectedness that is the outcome of an interpersonal, transactional process consisting of self-disclosure and ... responsiveness” (Jean-Philippe Laurenceau and Brigid M. Kleinman, “Intimacy in Personal Relationships”, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Personal Relationships* [eds. Anita L. Vangelisti and Daniel Perlman; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 637–653, here 638). It is further characterized by a “warm, close and communicative exchange with others – an interpersonal interaction perceived as an end in itself rather than a means to another end” (Dan P. McAdams, “Motivation and Friendship”, in *Understanding Personal Relationships: An Interdisciplinary Approach* [eds. Steve Duck and Daniel Perlman; London: Sage, 1985], 85–105, here 87, italics removed). Accordingly, close or loving relationships are exemplified by intimacy, care, sensitivity, and mutual support (cf. Hugh LaFollette, *Personal Relationships: Love, Identity, and Morality* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1996], 18). In an unpublished paper given at the 66th General Meeting of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (Annandale-on-Hudson, 2011), Van der Watt has most recently also adopted the notion of intimate relationships as providing the motivation and basis for loving others (“On Ethics in the Gospel and Letters of John”, 14). According to Van der Watt, “intimacy” speaks about the proximity of a relationship, whereas the term “functional relation” characterizes the function of such a relationship. He would hence be happy to speak about “intimate functional relationships”.

³¹ See, for instance, John Bowlby, *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 119–136; LaFollette, *Relationships* (n. 30), 89–90, 197–199, 207–209; Ludwig Stecher, *Die Wirkung sozialer Beziehungen: Empirische Ergebnisse zur Bedeutung sozialen Kapitals für die Entwicklung von Kindern und Jugendlichen* (Munich: Juventa, 2001), 249–250; Phillip R. Shaver and Mario Mikulincer, “Attachment Theory, Individual Psychodynamics, and Relationship Functioning”, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Personal Relationships* (n. 30), 251–271.

importance here, but relationships all through life continue not only to affect us in the short term but also influence our subsequent behavior and relationships."³² In particular, "definitions of self, our view of reality, our attitudes and personality are continuously influenced by our interactions and relationships with others".³³ This general insight on how relationships influence people provides the backdrop for the positive and empowering effect of intimate and loving relationships. The spectrum of effects that relates to our study is well expressed by Daniel Williams:

The discovery that we are loved does have a causally efficacious power which creates through that experience the transformation of the self. This is one of the most important themes in the psychoanalytic doctrine of love.... The attitudes and responses which the self finds in others are powerful factors in moving the self. Being loved creates a new person. We can make the general statement that inter-personal relations constitute a field of force in which action in any part of the field alters the structure of the field and all the elements within it.³⁴

In accordance with this reflection on "the power of love", the ensuing analysis of the nature and effect of love in John will show that it is on the basis of love that people are transformed and empowered to love. In this context we will see that loving relationships in John have a number of aspects and effects that justify their designation as both "intimate" and "empowering".

To begin with, love is the very being of God. Most explicitly, this is of course expressed in 1 John 4:8: "Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."³⁵ The affirmation "God is love" seems to go beyond the statement that "God acts lovingly". It is the very character of God that

³² Robert A. Hinde, *Towards Understanding Relationships* (EMSP 18; London: Academic Press, 1979), 4. Cf. Barbara R. Sarason and Irwin G. Sarason, "Close Relationships and Social Support: Implications for the Measurement of Social Support", in *The Cambridge Handbook of Personal Relationships* (n. 30), 435–440.

³³ Hinde, *Understanding* (n. 32), 326.

³⁴ Daniel Day Williams, *The Spirit and the Forms of Love* (LCT; Digswell Place: Nisbet, 1968), 120. Cf. Thomas E. Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power: From Domination to Transformation* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1990), 211; Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (SD; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 182–186.

³⁵ Here we see also the character of true knowledge (cf. John 5:20; 13:35; 14:31). It is the existential encounter with love = God that leads people to love, not just the cognitive piece of information that God is love. Moreover, the statement cannot be processed anyway unless one has experiential knowledge of what love is. On the complex interrelation of experience and interpretation, see further Volker Rabens, "Power from In Between: The Relational Experience of the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts in Paul's Churches", in *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament and Christian Theology* (eds. Cornelis Bennema, I. Howard Marshall and Volker Rabens; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans; forthcoming), part 2.

is love. This can be seen in John's Gospel by looking at the love of the Father for Jesus – the place where it all begins. Twice John notes that the Father's love for the Son is the source of all that the Son has (3:35; 5:20). It is because of this love that the Son is able to do the works of the Father. The mission of the Son is the result of the Father's love. In fulfilling his mission, the Son abides in the Father's love (15:10). The μένειν (ἐν) formula underscores the reciprocal immanence of the Son and the Father.³⁶ It is this "mystical" dynamic of love to which the disciples are invited (15:10, et al.).³⁷ By loving, the disciples thus participate in the very life of God.

The Son's relationship with his disciples is like the relationship which the Father has with him. The Father's love for the Son is thus the paradigm of the Son's love for his disciples: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you" (15:9). As Collins points out: "Were one to combine, more immediately than the evangelist has done, vv. 9 and 12 of John 15, the text would read: 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; as I have loved you, so you love one another.'"³⁸ It is obvious that this love does not remain extrinsic to the disciples since the Father's love with which the disciples are loved is in them. Jesus thus prays "that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (17:26). "In a very real sense, then, there is reciprocal intimacy between the Father and Jesus, between Jesus and his disciples, and between the Father and the disciples because of the reality of love."³⁹

As I have stated at the outset of this section, the model of relational empowering which I am proposing builds on a holistic concept of loving relationships which are not only characterized by obedient actions but also by intimacy, warmth and affection. As this emotional aspect of love in John has been called into question, our own analysis of love in John has to pay special attention to this aspect. Nonetheless, at a first glance the evangelist appears not to say explicitly that love involves emotions. However,

³⁶ Cf. Andreas Dettwiler, "Umstrittene Ethik: Überlegungen zu Joh 15,1–17", in *Johannes-Studien: Interdisziplinäre Zugänge zum Johannes-Evangelium* (ed. Martin Rose; Zurich: TVZ, 1991), 180–182; Collins, "New Commandment" (n. 23), 249; Van der Watt, "Ethics and Ethos" (n. 24), 163.

³⁷ Cf. Klaus Scholtissek, "Mystik im Johannesevangelium? Reflexionen zu einer umstrittenen Fragestellung", in *Pneuma und Gemeinde: Christsein in der Tradition des Paulus und Johannes* (eds. Jost Eckert, Martin Schmidl and Hanneliese Steichele; Festschrift Josef Hainz; Düsseldorf: Patmos, 2001), 295–324, here 318. "Mysticism" is here broadly defined as "a form of religiosity which has the immediate experience of divine reality as its center. This experience, which transcends everyday consciousness and cognition based on reason, is at the same time the *experience of an intimate closeness to the divine reality*" (Hans-Christoph Meier, *Mystik bei Paulus: Zur Phänomenologie religiöser Erfahrung im Neuen Testament* [TANZ 26; Tübingen: Francke, 1998]), 20, italics added).

³⁸ Collins, "New Commandment" (n. 23), 250.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 251.

it is a strong implication of a number of passages in John. For example, it is within the context of the commandment to abide in the love of the Father and the Son (15:10, 12) that Jesus affirms: "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete" (15:11). Relationships of love thus produce the (empowering) emotion of joy. This observation is supported by Attridge's analysis of John's Gospel in the light of the Stoic's view on emotions:

However much liberating truth plays a role in the soteriology of the Fourth Gospel, what initially causes the disciples' joy does not seem to be the calm assurance that one is, according to the basic Stoic formula, "living in conformity" with nature. It is rather the joy that arises from the intimacy of personal relation, the fellowship of Father, Son, and Spirit-guided believers. It is a joy that appears in the narrative when the disciples come to see the resurrected one (20:20). The relationship may lack what the Stoics called passions, but it displays an intimate interpersonal dimension and suggests an intensity that the Stoics might have found problematic.⁴⁰

This emotional closeness is presented in John as part of the metaphorical network of both, the Gospel's family and friendship ethos. The importance of the former has rightly been highlighted by Van der Watt in his monograph *Family of the King*. Family ethics is "doing what the F/father requires".⁴¹ In concert with a number of other exegetes, Van der Watt interprets the biblical tradition of family ethics in the context of the ancient *pater familias*. "Children of a family were taught what was expected of them and were then required to act and behave according to what they were taught. For instance, in 8:31 Jesus says to his disciples: 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples'."⁴² This aspect of the ancient as well as the Johannine family ethos is to be appreciated. However, in accordance with my emphasis on the holistic (and thus also emotional) nature of love

⁴⁰ Cf. Harold W. Attridge, "An 'Emotional' Jesus and Stoic Tradition", in *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (n. 5), 77–92, here 89. See also Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel: Human or Divine?* (LNTS 284; London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), ch. 7.

⁴¹ Jan G. van der Watt, *Family of the King: Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (BJS 47; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 284.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 284. Cf. Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (NSBT 22; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006), ch. 3, pp. 144–148; O. Larry Yarbrough, "Parents and Children in the Jewish Family of Antiquity", in *The Jewish Family in Antiquity* (ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen; BJS 289; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1993), 48–53; Marianne M. Thompson, *The Promise of the Father: Jesus and God in the New Testament* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 45: "Fathers require obedience and honor, and a father was also accorded the task of discipline and correcting his children (Prov 1:8; 4:1; 6:20; 15:5; 30:17)." Cf. the overview of the father's duties of correction and discipline in the Hebrew Bible, early Judaism and Paul in Anthony A. Myrick, "'Father' Imagery in 2 Corinthians 1–9 and Jewish Paternal Tradition", *TynBu* 47 (1996): 164–171.

in John – which complements rather than contradicts the approach of Van der Watt⁴³ – I contend that for John “family” is also a place of ethical empowering and personal transformation. As I have shown at greater length elsewhere,⁴⁴ numerous sources indicate that various ancient traditions of family ethics insisted that the family is and should be a place of affection and emotional well-being (see, for instance, Plutarch, *Am. prol.* 496C; *Frat. amor.* 480G; Philo, *Spec. leg.* 1.137; 2.236, 239–240; *Abr.* 168–170; *Ios.* 4).⁴⁵ Moreover, the concept of God as a loving and gracious father and his filial relationship with his people (both corporately and individually)⁴⁶ is a tradition that is deeply rooted in the Hebrew Bible as well as in early Jewish literature (see, for instance, Exod 4:22; Isa 43:6; Sir 51:10; Tob 13:5; Philo, *Conf.* 145; *Jub.* 2:20; 19:29; *L.A.B.* 16:5; *T. Job* 40:2). It is a relationship characterized by the love of YHWH for his children (see, for instance, Deut 32:6, 8–14; Isa 63:8–10, 16; Sir 4:10; 4 Ezra 6:58; *Pss. Sol.* 18:3–4; Wis 16:26). Three examples, which will not be commented on for reasons of space, provide a powerful illustration of this relational intimacy and its vitalizing and empowering effect.

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.... [I]t was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them (Hos 11:1, 3–4; cf. Deut 1:31).

My father did not know me, and my mother abandoned me to you. Because you are father to all the [son]s of your truth. You rejoice in them, like her who loves her child, and like a wet-nurse you take care of all your creatures on (your) lap (1QH^a XVII, 35–36).

For (just) as a little child who is afraid flees to his father, and the father, stretching out his hands, snatches him off the ground, and puts his arms around him by his breast, and the child clasps his hands around his father's neck, ... and rests at his father's breast, ... likewise you too, Lord, stretch out your hands upon me as a child-loving father, and snatch me off the earth.... [15] What father is as sweet as you, Lord, and who (is) as quick in mercy as you, Lord ...? (*Jos. Asen.* 12:8, 15).

⁴³ For similarities to my approach, see Van der Watt, *Family* (n. 41), 316–319; idem, “Ethics and Ethos” (n. 24), 165.

⁴⁴ Rabens, *Spirit* (n. 11), 219–224.

⁴⁵ Cf. Seneca, *Clem.* 1.14.1–3 (on Préchac's counting: 3.12.1–3). For further examples, see Craig S. Keener, “Family and Household”, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 357–358; Diane G. Chen, *God as Father in Luke-Acts* (Studies in Biblical Literature 92; New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 28–29; Adele Reinhartz, “Parents and Children: A Philonic Perspective”, in *The Jewish Family in Antiquity* (n. 42), 61–88, here 81.

⁴⁶ God is presented as the Father of the nation (for instance 4Q504 frags. 1–2 III, 5–7) and of patriarchs and kings, etc. (for instance Ps 2:7; see further Chen, *God* [n. 45], 131–135).

John also draws on the emotional aspects of the family ethos. We have already touched on this in our exposition of the reciprocal immanence of Father, Son and believers above. It comes further to the fore in the Farewell Discourses, in which consolation plays a major role.⁴⁷ Jesus' words express a love that is not only demonstrated in actions but also in emotional comfort and care:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ... I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also (14:1–3). Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.... Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid (14:27).

As the disciples are afraid of the break-up of the family and the consequence that they will be orphaned, Jesus assures them of his care and of their continuing place within the family.

As Jesus is about to depart, the Spirit-Paraclete plays a central role in keeping the family-bonds alive – and deepening them further (16:6–7). It even seems that the intimate presence of Jesus by the Paraclete (v. 16) is the reason why the disciples can continue to keep the commandments after the ascension:

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you (John 14:15–17; cf. 16:6–7).

In this passage we can see that after addressing the disciples with the love commandment, Jesus instantaneously turns to the relational work of the Paraclete. While there appears to be no immediate connection at first sight, the care shown by John's Jesus for his disciples' well-being, which includes their emotional stability ("I will not leave you orphaned"),⁴⁸ matches with our main point that we have based on 13:34. That is, as the disciples experience the love of Jesus, they are enabled to love. The work of the Paraclete as Jesus' intimate presence will continue this experience

⁴⁷ Cf. Manfred Lang, "Johanneische Abschiedsreden und Senecas Konsolationsliteratur: Wie konnte ein Römer Joh 13,31–17,26 lesen?", in *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums: Das vierte Evangelium in religions- und traditionsgeschichtlicher Perspektive* (eds. Jörg Frey and Udo Schnelle; WUNT 175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 365–412; George L. Parsenios, *Departure and Consolation: The Johannine Farewell Discourses in Light of Greco-Roman Literature* (NovTSup 117; Leiden: Brill, 2005), ch. 3; Petra von Gemünden, "Der Umgang mit Angst und Aggression im Johannesevangelium: Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie des Urchristentums", in eadem, *Affekt und Glaube: Studien zur Historischen Psychologie des Frühjudentums und Urchristentums* (NTOA/SUNT 73; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 279–306.

⁴⁸ On the interpretation of 14:18, see n. 15 above.

of love in Jesus' physical absence.⁴⁹ As the Spirit thus mediates the intimate presence of Father and Son and provides deeper knowledge of God by teaching and leading the disciples into all the truth, the disciples experience further empowering in their obedience to the love command.

Next to the family imagery, also the friendship ethos lucidly displays the multifaceted tapestry of "love" in John. The experiential dimension of love comes particularly to the fore in the way in which Jesus is calling and treating his disciples as his friends. If love equaled obedience, Jesus would not have needed to differentiate the new relationship of the disciples to the Father and the Son from that of slavery. However, Jesus declares "I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (15:15). This new relationship is marked by openness and trust. In accordance with the ancient ideal of friendship,⁵⁰ in John friendship involves *παρρησία*. Jesus

⁴⁹ Cf. Bennema, *Power* (n. 15), 222–223: "The point of [John] 14.9–11 ... is that to see, know and have fellowship with Jesus is to see, know and experience fellowship with the Father, because of the unity and oneness in relationship between the Father and Son... [T]he indwelling of the believer by the Father and Son (14.23) is (experienced by) the indwelling of the believer by the Paraclete (14.17). This suggestion seems confirmed by 1 John, which explains that the believer's *κοινωνία* is with the Father and Son, and that the Father and Son remain in the believer by means of the Spirit (1 John 1.3; 2.27; 3.24; 4.13)." Apart from that, also outside the Farewell Discourses John draws on the relational work of the Spirit. In 7:37–39 the evangelist describes the longing ("thirst") of people that can only be fulfilled in an intimate relationship to Jesus ("come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink"). The empowering effects of the Spirit are described in this passages with the same imagery ("Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.' Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive.").

⁵⁰ Konstan shows that *φιλία* was used in all periods of ancient Greek history to indicate "an intimate relationship predicated on mutual affection and commitment" (David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* [KTAH; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 19). See also the insightful essay by Fitzgerald, who singles out partnership (*κοινωνία*), intimacy (*συνήθεια*), concord (*ὁμόνοια*), equality (*ἰσότης*) and confident trust in one another (*παρρησία*) as vital components of the Greek concept of an affectionate relationship (i.e. *φιλία*) (John T. Fitzgerald, "Paul and Friendship", in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* [ed. J. Paul Sampley; Harrisburg, Pa., and London: Trinity Press, 2003], 325–327). Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.4.3; Seneca, *Ep.* 2.2–7; 48.2–3; David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 43; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981), 188–189; Nussbaum, *Therapy* (n. 19), 341–345; Philip A. Harland, "Familial Dimensions of Group Identity: 'Brothers' (Ἀδελφοί) in Associations of the Greek East", *JBL* 124 (2005): 491–513; Ronald R. Cox, *By the Same Word: Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity* (BZNW 145; Berlin and New York, N.Y.: De Gruyter, 2007), 84–87; Martin M. Culy, *Echoes of Friendship in the Gospel of John* (NTM 30; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 34–86.

lets his disciples take part in everything that he has received from the Father. There is nothing that he would hold back from them – there are no secrets. He shares everything with them, including his “goods”, as Scholtissek explains: “Inhaltlich bezieht sich die Gütergemeinschaft, die der johanneische Jesus seinen Freunden anbietet, auf die reziproke Güter- und Besitzgemeinschaft von Vater und Sohn (vgl. 10,14; 16,14–15; 17,9–10), auf das heilvolle ‘Wissen’ vom Vater, das Jesus den Seinen offenbart und mit ihnen teilt, letztlich auf die Aufnahme in die personale *Communio* zwischen Vater und Sohn.”⁵¹ This initiation results in a new identity (as friends of Jesus and the Father), a new, egalitarian status,⁵² and a new community life (in true *κοινωνία* with the Father and the Son, and with the Spirit-Paraclete). It transforms and empowers the disciples’ lives, so that they are able to live in accordance with the friendship ethos of the Gospel (as expressed, for instance, in washing each other’s feet, ch. 13).⁵³

John explicitly says that Jesus loves his friends (for instance 11:3, 5, 11). Jesus “loved his own ones in the world ... unto completion” (13:1). It means suffering and giving his life for them. However, John is clear that for Jesus friendship and love also involve feelings. At this point the narrative of the Gospel provides important insights into the Johannine concepts of love and friendship: Jesus weeps at Lazarus’ tomb (11:35; cf. vv. 33, 38). The nature of this loving action is an emotion which is recognized by the crowd as an expression of Jesus’ love: “Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’” (11:35–36).⁵⁴ Weeping and giving up

⁵¹ Klaus Scholtissek, “‘Eine größere Liebe als diese hat niemand, als wenn einer sein Leben hingibt für seine Freunde’ (Joh 15,13)”, in *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums: Das vierte Evangelium in religions- und traditions-geschichtlicher Perspektive* (eds. Jörg Frey and Udo Schnelle; WUNT 175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 413–439, here 435. On *παρρησία*, see further Boris Repschinski, “Freundschaft mit Jesus: Joh 15,12–17”, in *Im Geist und in der Wahrheit: Studien zum Johannesevangelium und zur Offenbarung des Johannes sowie andere Beiträge: Festschrift für Martin Hasitschka* (eds. Konrad Huber and Boris Repschinski; NTAbh 52; Münster: Aschendorff, 2008), 155–167, here 165.

⁵² On this, see further Culy, *Echoes of Friendship* (n. 50), 186–188; Frey, “Traditions” (n. 2), 24; Aleksandar Gusa, *Friendship according to John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; forthcoming).

⁵³ On the ethical dimension of the foot-washing, see the helpful comments in Van der Watt, “Ethics and Ethos” (n. 24), 172–174.

⁵⁴ Buch-Hansen intends to show that the emotions of Jesus described in John 11 do not threaten the ideal of the Stoic sage. She arrives at this result through an interpretative detour via Origen, Philo and Paul. However, this approach seems somewhat forced, not least because it is only by a dehistoricizing allegorization of Jesus’ tears that Origen, who is Buch-Hansen’s starting point, can steer free of the impression that Jesus might have submitted to a grief that would be at odds with the behavior expected of a Stoic sage (Gitte Buch-Hansen, “The Emotional Jesus: Anti-Stoicism in the Fourth Gospel?”, in *Stoicism in Early Christianity* [n. 5], 93–114, here 101). See the more persuasive Attridge, “Jesus and Stoic Tradition” (n. 40), and Voorwinde, *Jesus’ Emotions* (n. 40),

one's life for a friend are expressions of an intimate relationship, of which emotions are one characteristic. To recognize this does not mean employing a sentimentalist interpretation of love in John of which Hays rightly warns.⁵⁵ Emotions are not the basis of love. Love is grounded in one's being, in one's character (cf. 1 John 4:8). It includes emotions, and expresses itself in actions which again include emotions, as we have seen in the case of Jesus weeping for Lazarus.

In our analysis thus far we have seen that John has a holistic concept of love which includes emotions and which finds its expression in intimate relationships. We have also observed that John comprehends this experience of love to be empowering for ethical living, that is, for loving others. I will conclude this section by trying to shed further light on this latter aspect. I will do so by providing further evidence from John that love experienced in intimate relationships transforms and empowers people for ethical life in accordance with the values of the Fourth Gospel.

The fundamental principle of empowering love is most prominently formulated in John 13:34, as we have seen. However, it is also conveyed in 1 John 4:19. After ascertaining the positive emotional effect of love in verse 18 ("there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear"), the author declares: "We love because he first loved us" (ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν, ὅτι αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, v. 19). Divine love is thus the basis for the ability to love God and others.⁵⁶ John's Gospel spells out further details of how God's love can become a source for human love (cf. 1 John 4:8 and the comments in n. 35 above). It is clear from the unfolding of the image of the vine in chapter 15 that it is only in their union with Christ that the disciples can "bear fruit".⁵⁷ "Abide in me ... [and] abide in my love", says Jesus (vv. 4–10). "Μένειν" is the language of relationship. It should not be reduced to functionality in the sense of individual acts of obedience. It is important to recognize that Jesus does not use the imperative "bear much fruit", but he says "abide in me". Abiding in Jesus and his love

ch. 5. More generally on the emotion of grief in early Christianity and its cultural context, see Stephen C. Barton, "Eschatology and the Emotions in Early Christianity", *JBL* 130 (2011): 578–586. See also n. 60 below.

⁵⁵ Hays, *Vision* (n. 1), 145.

⁵⁶ Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), 225. It should be noted that in the Johannine epistles, love can also function as an identity marker of demarcation (for instance 2 John 5–6). On the situation of the addresses, see most recently Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, "'Was von Anfang an war ...': Der Streit um Christus und die Taufe in den Gemeinden der Johannesbriefe", *TQ* 191 (2011): 223–241, esp. 223.

⁵⁷ On the ethical character of "bearing fruit", see Rainer Borig, *Der wahre Weinstock: Untersuchungen zu Jo 15, 1–10* (Munich: Kösel, 1967), esp. 238–242; Dettwiler, "Ethik" (n. 36), 175–189; et al.

enables loving. Only in this love are they able to “do something” (“because apart from me you can do nothing”, v. 5). Admittedly, “abiding” is later set in close relation to “keeping my commandments” (v. 10: “if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love”). However, it is clear from both the vine imagery as well as from Jesus’ explicit statement “apart from me you can do nothing” (v. 5) that the “intimate/relational” dimension comes first (being in the vine/in Jesus) and the “functional” is built upon it (keeping Jesus’ commandments/bearing fruit).

While this imagery may appear very abstract to some, a broader look at John’s Gospel shows that the motif of loving relationships finds very concrete expressions in the unfolding of the narrative,⁵⁸ as recent character studies on the Gospel support. The Samaritan woman, the beloved disciple, Peter, and others display a sometimes surprising development to the better as they encounter Jesus.⁵⁹ Of course, there is no automatism involved in this relational dynamic, and the development is not necessarily linear (cf., for instance, the negative development of Judas⁶⁰).⁶¹ However, the new “family” and “friends” identity⁶² – the ethos of which is of course highly relevant to ethical living – is not just a cognitive construction that needs to be mentally appropriated. Rather, the disciples lived their everyday lives with Jesus, and they experienced what “family” and friendship is. The consequence of this insight is that the commandment of love should not be interpreted in isolation but only within that broader narrative framework of

⁵⁸ Cf. Attridge, “Jesus and Stoic Tradition” (n. 40), 89: “The principles by which one overcomes the stirrings of grief and fear, and on which positive emotions are based, are ultimately not abstract theories about the simple truth that virtue is the only good and all else is indifferent. Those principles are relationships, with the one who is ‘the way, and the truth, and the life’ (14:6) and with all those who find Spirit-guided access to the Father through him.”

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Cornelis Bennema, “A Theory of Character in the Fourth Gospel with Reference to Ancient and Modern Literature”, *BibInt* 17 (2009): 375–421, here 403–405; idem, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), passim. Cf. Scholtissek, “Söhne” (n. 37), 313–314.

⁶⁰ In accordance with our overarching model, dysfunctional relationships thus also have a negative (“disempowering”) effect on people. See 13:21: “After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, ‘Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me’.”

⁶¹ Cf. for instance, Susan Hylen, *Imperfect Believers: Ambiguous Characters in the Gospel of John* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

⁶² On the identity-forming impact of the symbolic action of foot-washing (John 13), see Van der Watt, “Redefinition” (n. 24), 128–129. On the identity-creating dimension of demarcation from others in the Johannine Gospel and community, see Wayne A. Meeks, “The Ethics of the Fourth Evangelist”, in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* (eds. R. Alan Culpepper and Clifton C. Black; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 317–326, here 323.

love expressions, that is, within the Johannine “dramatic Christology of love”.⁶³

In summary, my relational approach to ethical empowering in John can be captured with the key phrase: Love forms the basis on which obedience functions. As we have seen in our dialogue with Jan van der Watt and others, it is possible to perceive the basis of ethical behavior in John rather to be obedience (“Obedience ... seems to form the basis on which love functions. If the believers obey what Jesus says, they remain obedient to the Father [14:24]. Consequently, they deserve and will receive the love of the Father.”⁶⁴). This is also reflected in Van der Watt’s graphic illustration of his model of ethical behavior in John.⁶⁵ Love is only mentioned as an outcome of the learning process of the children of God (induced by their education from Jesus). While van der Watt elsewhere also speaks about the Father’s initial love,⁶⁶ he thus appears to place stronger emphasis on God’s consequential love (“Keeping [Jesus’] words will lead to an intimate familial relationship between the believer and the Father and the Son.”⁶⁷). And indeed, this consequential love is an important aspect of the dynamics of love in John. It has not featured in our analysis above, but it is integrated into the graphic below which illustrates and summarizes my model of relational empowering. It starts with (divine) initial love, continues with (human) responsive love, and results in further (divine) love. This third stage, again, has an explicit experiential dimension: “I will love him and manifest myself to him” (ἀγαπήσω αὐτὸν καὶ ἐμφανίσω αὐτῷ ἑμαυτὸν, 14:21), and: “my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (14:23).

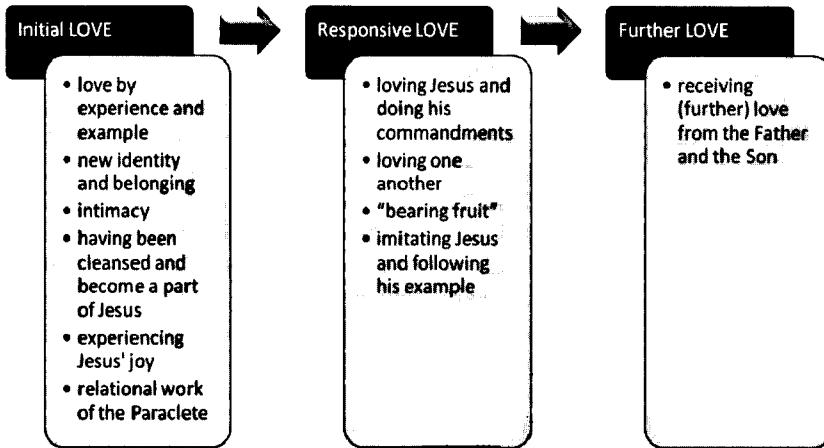
⁶³ Thus the formulation by Popkes, *Theologie* (n. 23), 355 (“die dramaturgische Christologie der Liebe Gottes”), followed by Frey, “Traditions” (n. 2), 30.

⁶⁴ Van der Watt, *Family* (n. 41), 307; cf. 311.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 292, figure 34.

⁶⁶ See n. 43 above.

⁶⁷ Van der Watt, *Family* (n. 41), 301.



1. Initial Love

- a) experience of love (by the Father: 17:26 [cf. 1 John 4:8, 19]; by Jesus: 13:1, 34; 15:9, 12; etc.)
- b) example of love (13:15, 34; 15:12)
- c) new identity, new belonging (family: 14:2–3, 18; friends: 15:14–15; being “his own”: 13:1; “royalty”: chs. 18–19; 3:3–5)
- d) intimacy (knowing Jesus/the Father and his will: 14:8–14; 15:15; 17:26; mutual indwelling: 14:20; 17:21, 26)
- e) relational work of the Paraclete (14:15–18, 26; 15:26; 16:6–7)
- f) having been cleansed and made part of Christ (15:3–6) → abiding/remaining in Christ
- g) experiencing Jesus’ joy, having full joy (15:11)⁶⁸

2. Responsive Love

- h) loving Jesus and doing his commandments (14:15, 21, 23)
- i) loving one another (13:34–35; 15:12, 17)
- j) “bearing fruit” (15:1–11)
- k) imitating Jesus and following his example (13:15, 34; 15:10, 12)

3. Further Love

- l) receiving further love from the Father and the Son (14:21, 23)

⁶⁸ Not all of the items in this list are explicitly connected to stage two (responsive love). However, they directly or indirectly belong to the semantic field of love, and love is described as empowering (responsive) love in 13:34, et al.

3. Relational Empowering in Philo

In section 2 of this article we have seen that in John ethical life is empowered through the experience and example of love in an intimate relationship to Jesus and the Father. In section 1 we have observed that Stoic ethics does not present itself as a profitable interpretative context for gaining further insight into the dynamics of ethical living in John. However, the following analysis will show that the model of ethical enabling which we have discovered in John seems to have been part of an ethical tradition that has deep roots in early Jewish literature, particularly in Philo of Alexandria.⁶⁹ This lends further support to the thesis advanced in the last section.

Generally speaking, there is ample evidence in the Hebrew Bible and early Judaism that an intimate relationship with God (including deeper understanding of him and his deeds) and with the community of faith⁷⁰ was comprehended as transforming and empowering for religious-ethical living.

Empowering through an intimate relationship with God is evident, for instance, in Ps 18:1–2 (the relationship to God strengthens the Psalmist); 23; 27; 40:1–4, 11, 16 (trusting in YHWH saves from going astray, his love is salvation); 42:1–2 (being with God produces strength/refreshment); 63:1–8; 84 (strength [v. 7] and happiness [vv. 4, 12] are the result of an intimate relationship with YHWH); 1 Sam 10:6–7 (the Spirit of YHWH and the presence of God is with Saul and transforms him); Isaiah 6; Ezek 37:27–28 (God's presence sanctifies); *1 En.* 39:14; 71:10–11; *2 Enoch* 22; *3 Enoch* 12 (transformation in the presence of the divine);⁷¹ *Deut. Rab.* 6:14 (as the Spirit/the Divine Presence rests on the people they will receive understanding of the Torah and dwell in peace [drawing on Joel 3:1 and Isa 54:13]); etc.

However, Philo offers particularly close parallels to the mode of ethical enabling established in this article, as the following brief study will show.

⁶⁹ On the centrality of relationships in the biblical tradition in general, see the overview in Rabens, *Spirit* (n. 11), 133–137. Since the Johannine literature was written later than Paul's letters, the latter were most likely part of John's religious context too. As with Philo, it is uncertain whether John has read Paul. However, as with Philo too, Paul provides significant parallels to John's model of ethical enabling. For details on this issue in Paul, see Rabens, *Spirit* (n. 11), chs. 4 and 6.

⁷⁰ Empowering through intimate relationships within the community of faith (which appears to receive less emphasis in John than, for instance, in Paul (on the latter, see Rabens, *Spirit* [n. 11], esp. 137–138, 237–242) is evident, for instance, in Ps 42:4–5 (the Psalmist is uplifted by the memory of worshipping God in the community); 133:1, 3 (well-being ['blessing'] is the consequence of intimate relationships ['unity']); 1 Samuel 20 (David and Jonathan draw strength from their intimate friendship in times of trouble).

⁷¹ On these and further texts from early Judaism, see Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition", *JJS* 43 (1992): 1–31; Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 47–71.

(Except for a few comments in the footnotes I will not point out each parallel to John as we look at the individual Philonic texts; I will rather draw some conclusions at the end of the section.⁷²)

Philo is at heart a theologian for whom the intimate experience of “the One who Is” is of paramount importance. Noack rightly remarks that Philo “betreibt als Exeget Erfahrungstheologie, in der er Wege zur verwandelnden Erfahrung göttlicher Gegenwart sucht”.⁷³ For example, when he interprets Deut 30:20, Philo emphasizes the love of God and the effects of what we may call a mystical union⁷⁴ with God in the following way:

Moses will lay down for his pupils a charge most noble “to love God and hearken to and cleave to Him” (Deut 30:20).... And his way of inviting them to honor Him Who is the worthy object of strong yearning and devoted love is vivid and expressive. He bids them “cleave to Him”, bringing out by the use of this word how constant and continuous and unbroken is the concord and union that comes through making God our own.... But so unceasingly does he himself yearn to see God and to be seen by Him, that he implores Him to reveal clearly His own nature (Exod 33:13), which is so hard to divine, hoping thus to obtain at length a view free from all falsehood, and to exchange doubt and uncertainty for a most assured confidence (*Post.* 12–13; cf. 1, 69).⁷⁵

⁷² Methodologically speaking, one needs to oscillate between looking at John and at potential religious contexts of his theology in order to find out whether he seems to have adopted one strand in particular. This way one avoids, on the one side, projecting the concepts of one particular philosophy on John, and interpreting John in isolation from his historical context on the other side. The main part of the following analysis of Philo is taken from my study of early Jewish ethics in Rabens, *Spirit* (n. 11), ch. 5.

⁷³ Christian Noack, *Gottesbewußtsein: Exegetische Studien zur Soteriologie und Mystik bei Philo von Alexandria* (WUNT 2.116; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 247. Cf. Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (New York, N.Y.: Abingdon, 1970), 226; David Winston, “Philo’s Ethical Theory”, in *ANRW II.21.1* (ed. Wolfgang Haase; Berlin and New York, N.Y.: De Gruyter, 1984), 372–377; John R. Levison, “Philo’s Personal Experience and the Persistence of Prophecy”, in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (eds. Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak; LHB/OTS 427; New York, N.Y./London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 196–209.

⁷⁴ Cf. the definition of mysticism in n. 37 above; on Philo’s mysticism, see more specifically David Winston, “Philo’s Mysticism”, *SPA* 8 (1996): 74–82. This notion of mysticism should not be confused with that of the mystery religions which Pascher anachronistically ascribes to Philo (Joseph Pascher, *Η ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ ΟΔΟΣ: Der Königsweg zu Wiedergeburt und Vergottung bei Philon von Alexandria* [Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums 17.3–4; Paderborn: Schöningh, 1931], 164–167, 177, 183).

⁷⁵ On the human longing for an intimate relationship with God, see further *Opif.* 70–71; *Ebr.* 152; et al. On seeing God in John, cf. Philip’s request “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied” (14:8). Jesus tells him that this desire can be satisfied: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (14:9). According to 1 John 4:8, knowing the Father means knowing love, and this results in responsive love (“Those who do not love, do not know God; because God is love”).

The religious-ethical effect of this mystical relationship (which Philo describes in *Plant.* 39 as “an ecstasy of the love that is heavenly and Divine”) comes more clearly to the fore in *De Legatione ad Gaium*. Philo expresses that seeing God

seems to me of all possessions, public or private, the most precious. For if the sight of seniors or instructors or rulers or parents stirs the beholders to respect for them and decent behavior and the desire to live a life of self-control, how firmly based is the virtue and nobility of conduct which we may expect to find in souls whose vision has soared above all created things and schooled itself to behold the uncreated and divine, the primal good, the excellent, the happy, the blessed, which may truly be called better than the good, more excellent than the excellent, more blessed than blessedness, more happy than happiness itself. (*Leg. Cai.* 4–5)

The impact of an intimate encounter with God is thus attested as “firmly based ... virtue and nobility of conduct”. Philo does not indicate whether the ethical life of those who have “beheld the uncreated and divine” results from a feeling of duty (as, for instance, in *Gig.* 47) or a sense of empowering, although the latter seems more likely. Perhaps the best way of categorizing the effect is that it furthers the motivation for ethical life. More specifically, however, in *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum* Philo finds a way to describe figuratively how such a religious-ethical transformation happens: “just as one who comes near the light is straightaway illumined, so also is filled the entire soul of him to whom God has appeared” (*QE* 2.7; cf. *Gig.* 49; *QG* 4.25). Philo here speaks of God’s empowering presence as the motor of change in a person and not so much of moral obligation. Knowledge and wisdom are central agents in this process,⁷⁶ aiming at the person’s being “full of every good” (*QE* 2.7).⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Cf. Bennema, *Power* (n. 15), 75, 81–83; André Munzinger, *Discerning the Spirits: Theological and Ethical Hermeneutics in Paul* (SNTSMS 140; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 109–110, cf. more generally, 111–121. Hellemann points out that the change that results from the close relationship to God is conceptualized by Philo as a process (Wendy E. Hellemann, “Philo of Alexandria on Deification and Assimilation to God”, *SPA* 2 [1990]: 51–71, here 62–63, 70–71). Accordingly, Schweitzer believes that it is better to speak of the product of this transformation as a new relationship and not of a new creation (Wolfgang Schweitzer, “Gotteskindschaft, Wiedergeburt und Erneuerung im Neuen Testament und in seiner Umwelt” [Ph.D. thesis, Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen, 1944], 108).

⁷⁷ Numerous further passages could be discussed as evidence of the often overlooked fact that for Philo, an intimate relationship with the divine empowers religious-ethical life. See, for instance, *Gig.* 49; *QG* 4.4, 29, 140; *Contempl.* 90; *Migr.* 132; *Plant.* 64–66; *Deus* 3–4; *Her.* 70–71; *Praem.* 41–48; *Abr.* 58–59; *Leg. alleg.* 3.71; *Cher.* 24, 50; *Somn.* 1.149; 2.232; *Fug.* 82; *Virt.* 163–164, 181, 215–216, 218; cf. *Mos.* 1.156. It should be noted that – as in John – some of these passages imply that ethical life can also be a presupposition for seeing God. However, Philo generally portrays God as the initiator of moral life. Cf. Walther Völker, *Fortschritt und Vollendung bei Philo von Alexandrien:*

As in John, in Philo the Spirit of God has a definite place in the context of relational empowering for ethics. First of all, the Spirit relates humans to God (*Plant.* 18; *Leg. alleg.* 1.33–34, 37–38). Likewise, Philo clearly relates the Spirit to the furtherance of virtuous life (for instance *Mos.* 2.265; *Gig.* 23, 28, 47; *Mut.* 123–124; *Leg. alleg.* 1.33–34; *QG* 4.140). More specifically, however, Philo provides evidence that these two aspects of the Spirit's work – the creation of intimacy with God and the empowering for ethics – are interconnected in his thinking. In order to demonstrate this, we will look at two texts that deal with the ethical influence of the prophetic Spirit on Moses.⁷⁸ When Philo interprets Exod 24:2 in *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum*, he writes:

For when the prophetic mind becomes divinely inspired and filled with God, it becomes like the monad, not being at all mixed with any of those things associated with duality. But he who is resolved into the nature of unity, is said to come near God in a kind of family relation, “for having given up and left behind all mortal kinds”, he is changed into the divine, so that such men become kin to God and truly divine. (*QE* 2.29)

That “divine inspiration and filling with God” implies the presence and work of the Spirit is suggested by Philo's interpretation of the same experience of Moses in *De Vita Mosis*: Moses “became possessed ... and ... filled with the spirit which was wont to visit him” (*Mos.* 1.175; cf. *Virt.* 217; et al.). Philo elucidates in *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum* 2.29 how such a possession leads to ethical life (becoming like the monad),⁷⁹ intimacy and closeness to God (coming near God in a kind of family relation),⁸⁰ and how this results in the person's further (religious-ethical) transformation (becoming kin to God and truly divine).

Our second and final text which conveys Philo's interpretation of Moses' endowment with the ethical Spirit is *De Gigantibus* 54–55. When Moses begins to worship God (by the aid of the Spirit, cf. § 53), he enters the darkness, the invisible region, and he abides there

Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit (TU 49.1; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1938), 302–303; John M. G. Barclay, “‘By the Grace of God I am what I am’: Grace and Agency in Philo and Paul”, in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment* (eds. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole [ECC/LNTS 335; London: Continuum, 2006]), 141–148; Volker Rabens, “Philo's Attractive Ethics”, in *“Trading Religions”: Religious Formation, Transformation and Cross-Cultural Exchange between East and West* (eds. Peter Wick and Volker Rabens; DHR; Leiden: Brill; forthcoming).

⁷⁸ See also *Mos.* 2.69, as discussed in Rabens, *Spirit* (n. 11), 154. More generally, cf. John R. Levison, “Inspiration and the Divine Spirit in the Writings of Philo Judaeus”, *JSJ* 26 (1995): 280–308.

⁷⁹ On the term “monad” in Philo, see Noack, *Gottesbewußtsein* (n. 73), 132–141.

⁸⁰ Cf. the work of the Spirit-Paraclete in the context of John's family imagery as elucidated above.

while he learns the secrets of the most holy mysteries. There he becomes not only one of the congregation of the initiated, but also the hierophant and teacher of divine rites, which he will impart to those whose ears are purified. He then has ever the divine spirit at his side, taking the lead in every journey of righteousness (*Gig.* 54–55).

This passage suggests that it is in the close proximity to God that the divine Spirit is active and experienced as a guide “in every journey of righteousness”. In this connection, it appears that the intimacy of worship not only leads (by means of the Spirit) to ethics in a narrow sense, but also encompasses an empowering for ministry (teaching divine truths⁸¹).⁸²

We can conclude that the writings of Philo of Alexandria give strong confirmation that the dynamics of empowering relationships had a clear place in John’s context. While I do not claim that John had read Philo, the fact that different strands of early Jewish theology (next to Philo one needs to mention particularly the Dead Sea Scrolls and the traditions based on Ezek 36:25–28)⁸³ know of the transforming and empowering effect of an

⁸¹ Regarding the Spirit’s religious-ethical influence through the communication of deeper understanding of God, see *Somn.* 2.252–253: Philo hears “the voice of the invisible spirit, the familiar secret tenant”, saying, “[...] Know then, good friend, that God alone is the real veritable peace, free from all illusion, but the whole substance of things created only to perish is one constant war”. The Spirit continues to give further insight into the nature of God, and Philo implies that this should lead people to forsake war and cross over to the camp of those whose character echoes that of God. We can see in this passage that the Spirit (of God: see Levison, “Inspiration” [n. 78], 299–300) enables a deeper understanding of God and his designs (i.e. peace). Although the passage is not very explicit in ascribing “the strength to forsake war and Fatality” to this deepening of the cognitive aspect of people’s relationship to the divine, it is most likely that this is exactly what Philo wants to say here (cf. *QE* 2.7 and *Leg. alleg.* 1.37–38).

⁸² Cf. John 20:20–21, where Jesus sends and empowers the disciples for their ministry in the world. Jesus himself was empowered by his intimate union with the Father, and then sent by him into the world. Now the disciples, who are and remain in Jesus, are in the same way empowered by the Holy Spirit and sent into “ministry”: “‘As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’.”

⁸³ For instance 1QH^a VI, 12–14; VIII, 14–15, 19–20; XVII, 29–34; XX, 11–14 = 4Q427 frgs. 2–3 II, 12–14; 1Q28b II, 24; 4Q504 frg. 6:6–17; *Jub.* 1:23–25; *T. Jud.* 24:2–3; *Num. Rab.* 9:49; *m. Sotah* 9:15. On the details of both strands, see Rabens, *Spirit* (n. 11), 156–167. For a similar role of Wisdom and the divine Spirit in Wisdom of Solomon, see, for instance, 7:27–28: Wisdom “renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets; for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom”. (The Spirit of) Wisdom thus relates people intimately to God, and living by W/wisdom means living a virtuous life (6:18–19; 7:14; 8:7; 9:10–12, 18; 15:2; cf. Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel’s Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Journal of Pentecostal Theology, Supplement Series 9; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 125–126; Cornelis Bennema, “The Strands of Wisdom Tradition in Intertestamental Judaism: Origins, Developments and Characteristics”, *TynBu* 52 (2001): 61–82, here 71–72; Finny Philip, *The Origins of*

intimate relationship to the divine, and the role of the Spirit in this, lends further credibility to the relational model of ethical empowering in John presented in this essay.

4. Conclusion

This article has put forward that it is the experience of love in the context of intimate relationships that characterizes the source of ethical life in John. The personal encounter with the love of Jesus (cf. John 13:34) and the knowledge of God's love (cf. 1 John 4:7–19) enables the disciples to pass on this love to others. Ethical behavior is also established through example and imitation as well as obedience,⁸⁴ but it is fundamentally grounded in the experience of loving relationships. Love forms the basis on which obedience functions. While Stoic philosophy did not help to elucidate how people are empowered for ethics in John, we have found that copious early Jewish writings do, particularly those of Philo of Alexandria. We have also seen that this mode of transformation and empowering is broadly attested in both ancient and modern psychological studies. In John, these empowering dynamics come particularly to the fore in his ethos of family and friendship. Moreover, the Spirit-Paraclete plays an important role in sustaining the disciples in this empowering relationship to Jesus and his love in which they are to abide.

Pauline Pneumatology: The Eschatological Bestowal of the Spirit upon Gentiles in Judaism and in the Early Development of Paul's Theology (WUNT 2.194; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 93–95. This judgment is also confirmed by Winston: "the desire for Wisdom leads ... to immortality and nearness to God, and it is the intimacy with the divine that is the ultimate source of all human sovereignty (Wis. 6.17–21)" (David Winston, "The Sage as Mystic in the Wisdom of Solomon", in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* [eds. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 383–397, here 394–395, cf. 396).

⁸⁴ On the role of imitation in John's ethics, see further Collins, "New Commandment" (n. 23), 246.