



A New Commandment I Give To You, that You Love One Another..." (Jn 13 : 34)

Raymond F. Collins

Volume 35, Number 3, 1979

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/705746ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/705746ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Faculté de philosophie, Université Laval

ISSN

0023-9054 (print)

1703-8804 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Collins, R. F. (1979). A New Commandment I Give To You, that You Love One Another..." (Jn 13 : 34). *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 35(3), 235–261. <https://doi.org/10.7202/705746ar>

“A NEW COMMANDMENT I GIVE TO YOU, THAT YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER...” (Jn 13: 34)

Raymond F. COLLINS

BY WAY of conclusion to an examination of the love ethic in the Johannine writings in the important monograph which he consecrated to the moral teaching of the New Testament, Rudolf Schnackenburg wrote that “St. John is not only a loyal guardian of Christ’s inheritance preserving his spirit but also a disciple of the Lord illumined by the Holy Spirit, giving added profundity to the commandment of love and raising it to be the ruling principle of Christian morality throughout all ages.”¹ Schnackenburg’s enthusiastic praise of the Johannine endeavor is undoubtedly shared by most believers and teachers of morality who stand within the Christian tradition. It is, nonetheless, an enthusiasm which some contemporary exegetes refuse to share. Many of them see in the Johannine formulation of the love commandment, not so much a new profundity as a restriction of the commandment in view of the so-called sectarianism of the Fourth Gospel. Illustrative of this other position is the opinion offered by the Tübingen exegete, Ernst Käsemann. Käsemann claims that the Fourth Gospel was intended for a Johannine conventicle whose thought-patterns were decidedly gnostic. In view of this gnostic sectarianism, Käsemann proffers the opinion that “the object of Christian love for John is only what belongs to the community under the Word, or what is elected to belong to it, that is, the brotherhood of Jesus.”²

This dichotomy of opinion is sufficient to indicate that the meaning of the Johannine “new commandment” is not as easy to ascertain as a first reading of the Gospel might suggest. In point of fact, the interpretation of Jn 13: 34 raises a series of exegetical questions for which a response must be found if the Johannine version of Christ’s command to love is to be understood fully. These questions are of a literary, linguistic, and theological nature.

1. Rudolf SCHNACKENBURG, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament*, New York-London, 1964, pp. 328-329.

2. Ernst KÄSEMANN, *The Testament of Jesus. A Study of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, Philadelphia, 1968, p. 65.

From the standpoint of a literary consideration of Jn 13: 34 the exegete must direct his attention to the appearance of the verse within the Johannine farewell discourse (Jn 13: 31–14: 31). Although the discourse apparently concludes at 14: 31, it is followed by other farewell discourse material (Jn 15–16) which also includes the love commandment: Jn 15: 12 and Jn 15: 17. According to Raymond Brown, these verses are “related to and perhaps a duplicate of” 13: 34.³ In these passages, however, the commandment is not styled “a new commandment.” This expression recurs in the New Testament only in 1 Jn 2: 7–8 and 2 Jn 5. Given the rarity of the expression, some authors conclude that it is to 1 Jn 2: 7–8 that we must go if we are to understand the meaning of the “new commandment” in Jn 13: 34. This quickly brings one to a thorny aspect of the Johannine problem, namely the relationship between the Johannine epistles and the Fourth Gospel. When literary considerations are brought to bear upon the Gospel, considered as it were in isolation from other elements of the Johannine corpus, attention must be directed to the relationship between Jn 13: 34–35 and the footwashing scene (Jn 13: 1–20) as well as to the relationship between the love command of Jn 15: 12, 17 and the parable of the true vine (Jn 15: 1–11).

From the standpoint of a linguistic analysis of the text, two questions call for careful consideration. First of all, in what sense can the Johannine love command be styled a “new” commandment? Apparently the qualification was traditional within Johannine circles. Nevertheless it seems to have been problematic for the author of 1 Jn who writes, “Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new commandment” (1 Jn 2: 7–8a). The author of the Fourth Gospel uses the adjective *kainos* (new) but twice in his Gospel, namely in Jn 13: 34 and again in 19: 41. There the term is used with an obviously different meaning (the “new tomb”). Why, then, does the author use this adjective in Jn 13: 34? The Fourth Gospel clearly stands within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Within Judaism the love command was at least as old as Lev 19: 18; within Christianity the love command was at least as old as the Synoptic traditions reflected in the discussion on the greatest commandment in the Law (Mk 12: 28–34 and par.) and those lying behind the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5: 43–48; Lk 6: 27–28, 32–36). Why, then, is the Johannine formulation of the love command designated a “new commandment?”

In addition, attention must be directed to the very use of the term *entolē* (“commandment”) in John’s formulation of the Jesuanic logion. John uses the term in a sense different from that of the Synoptics. There *entolē* characteristically refers to the commandments of the Torah. As John uses the term, however, *entolē* refers to the commandments which the Father has addressed to the Son. It is also used of the commandments which Jesus addresses to his disciples. Does the use of the term imply an order issued from without? What is the relationship between the commandments (plural) of Jesus and his commandment (singular)?

3. Raymond E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (xiii–xxi), AB 29A, Garden City, 1970, p. 681.

From the standpoint of an analysis of the text which I would call theological because it has reference to the meaning of the Scripture as the "ruling principle of Christian morality," there are again two major issues to be raised. First of all, there is the matter of the object of love.⁴ According to the Johannine version of the command, the disciples are to love "one another." The Synoptics characteristically speak of love of one's "neighbour" or love of one's "enemy." Albeit it from radically different perspectives, authors as different as William Wrede, Ethelbert Stauffer, Hugh Montefiore, Archbishop Bernard, Brown, and Käsemann indicate that the Johannine command has a scope more restricted than that of the Synoptics.⁵ Is there truly a difference between the Johannine and Synoptic traditions?⁶ If so, does this difference reflect an impoverishment or an intensification of the Johannine tradition as seen against that of the Synoptics? This question has been raised with renewed earnestness in recent years because of interest in the possible Gnostic background of the Fourth Gospel as well as in the comparison of John and the Qumran writings.

A second point to be considered is the Christological import of the "new commandment." The issue is all the more important in that there exists an ever-growing consensus which holds that the Christological and eschatological character of the New Testament ethic constitutes the hallmark of this ethic. Specifically the issue of the Christological import of the Johannine new commandment must be raised in view of the Christological insertion at Jn 13: 34, "as I have loved you."⁷ A similar insertion is not to be found in the Synoptic or Pauline versions of the love command. Granted the Johannine formulation of the insertion, some discussion must be had as to the nature of the Christological reference. Is Christ the exemplar of fraternal love or is he the source of fraternal love? Should we perhaps speak of both at once and of even more? Such are but some of the issues to which the remainder of this article will be devoted as it seeks to shed some light on Jn 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."

4. It is commonly noted that the Gospel of John, unlike the Synoptics (Mk 12: 28-34 and par.), unlike 1 Jn as well (1 Jn 4: 10, 20 (2x), 21; 5: 2), does not refer to God as the direct object of the disciples' love. Cf., for example, André FEUILLET, "La morale chrétienne d'après saint Jean," *Esprit et Vie* 83 (1973) 665-670, pp. 669-670; K. OTTOSON, "The Love of God in St. John Chrysostom's Commentary on the Fourth Gospel," *Church Quarterly Review* 166 (1965) 315-323, p. 317. The problematic entailed by Jn's omission of God as the object of love will not be my concern in the present article.

5. Stauffer, for example, comments: "It is not love for one's fellow man which Jesus proclaimed, with which the Johannine corpus is concerned: it is the love of the Christian brother and fellow-believer." Even C.H. Dodd noted that "Probably... the early church narrowed the concept of neighbour until it was equivalent to church member." Cf. E. STAUFFER, *Die Botschaft Jesu*, Bern-Munich, 1959, p. 47; C.H. DODD, *Gospel and Law*, Cambridge, 1951, p. 42.

6. Ludwig Berg has relegated, in effect, this discussion to a relatively secondary place by stressing that the emphasis of the love commandment is on the spontaneity of love, "that man should *be loving*," rather than on the object of love, "that man should love *someone*." He finds a confirmation of his opinion in the exemplarity of God's love. Cf. L. BERG, "Das neutestamentliche Liebesgebet-Prinzip der Sittlichkeit," *Trier Theologische Zeitschrift* 83 (1974) 129-145, esp. pp. 134-136.

7. Cf. Jn 15: 12.

THE FAREWELL DISCOURSE

It is now commonly asserted that Jn 13: 31-16: 33 is written according to the literary genre of the farewell discourse.⁸ Approximately fifty speeches ascribed to famous men in anticipation of their deaths have been preserved for us in Biblical and extra-biblical sources. A most striking example of the genre is to be found in the speeches of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Farewell discourses typically contain exhortations to keep the commandments of God, especially the commandment to love one another, and thus manifest the unity of the brethren. Indeed, in an unpublished dissertation, John F. Randall⁹ has demonstrated that *agapē* (charity) is one of the most commonplace words in the whole literature. Love is sometimes expressed in service. Love serves as a sign for the nations. Joseph is the example or image of fraternal love. Randall's study thus points to fraternal charity as a characteristic trait of the farewell discourse genre. Consequently the appearance of the exhortation to fraternal charity in the farewell discourses of the Fourth Gospel is to be expected. In effect, the presence of the love motif in the Johannine farewell discourses is not as striking as is the specificity with which John casts his presentation of the love command.

That the exhortation to fraternal love is integral to the Johannine farewell discourses has been confirmed by André Feuillet's comparative structural analysis of Jn and 1 Jn.¹⁰ Feuillet notes that whereas "light" and "life" are the key words of the first part of the Gospel, *agapē* (love) and *agapan* (to love) are the key words which characterize the second part of Jn. Of the thirty-six appearances of these two words¹¹ in the Fourth Gospel, thirty-one are found in the farewell discourses, where the verb is employed twenty-five times and the noun appears some six times. The verse which occupies our attention not only contains three of the verbal uses of *agapan*; it also makes use of a characteristic Johannine expression, the *kathōs*-relationship formula, in a way which is restricted to the farewell discourses and the "high priestly prayer" which is appended to them.¹²

While a consideration of the literary genre of the farewell discourse and the use of agapeic vocabulary in Jn 13: 31-16: 33 confirm one another in the assertion that

8. Among the characteristic traits of the farewell discourse found in Jn are the use of direct style ("I-you") and the characteristic expression, "little children" (Jn 13: 33. Cf. T. Gad 4: 1-2; 6: 1; T. Rub. 1: 3, 4: 5; T. Iss 5: 1, 6: 1). Cf. Noël LAZURE, "Louange au Fils de l'homme et Commandement nouveau. Jn 13, 31-33a. 34-35," *Assemblées du Seigneur* 26 (1973) 73-80, p. 74. For a brief exposition of the literary genre, one might consult R.E. BROWN, *o.c.*, pp. 597-603.

9. Cf. John F. RANDALL, *The Theme of Unity in John XVII: 20-23*, Louvain, 1962, pp. 63-83.

10. André FEUILLET, "The Structure of First John. Comparison with the Fourth Gospel. The Pattern of Christian Life," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 3 (1973) 194-216.

11. For some general considerations on Johannine "love" vocabulary, cf. Ceslaus SPICQ, *Agape in the New Testament*, vol. 3, St. Louis, 1966.

12. The usage of the formula to compare the relationship between Jesus and his disciples with that among the disciples is restricted to Jn 13: 15, 34; 15: 12; 17: 14, 16. De Dinechin considers this to be a third (of four) type of *Kathōs*-relationship, which he calls "*agape* as similitude." Cf. Olivier DE DINECHIN, "ΚΑΘΩΣ: La similitude dans l'évangile selon saint Jean," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 58 (1970) 195-236, pp. 208-209.

the theme of love is integral to John's farewell discourse, we may not overlook the fact that the extant text of Jn 13-17 gives evidence of having developed over a long period of time before reaching its present form.¹³ The problematic "Rise, let us go hence" of Jn 14: 31 as well as the many parallels between Jn 13-14 and 15-16 have led many authors to consider that the Johannine farewell discourse contains two editions of the same discourse or considerable secondary material (Jn 15-17) which have been added to an earlier text by a later redactor, a disciple of the evangelist.¹⁴ Indeed Zimmerman has suggested that Jn 13-14 and 15-16 constitute two discourses.¹⁵

In any event the commandment of love, found at 13: 34 and 15: 12, is one of the duplicative elements which have led the majority¹⁶ of Johannine commentators to conclude that the present text of Jn 13-17 is a composite whose present format results from a later redaction of the Johannine text. Within this perspective it has been suggested that the exhortation to love one another (Jn 13: 34-35) is out of place in its present context and may well have been inserted into the farewell discourse from some other tradition of Jesuanic logia.¹⁷ Analysis of Jn 13: 31-38 reveals that the pericope has a structural pattern which recurs some six times in Jn 13-17.¹⁸ The structural pattern consists of three elements: a revelation by Jesus, a question by his interlocutors who speak on a superficial level, and a response by Jesus to clarify his original revelation. Since the love commandment (vv. 34-35) is not alluded to within the context, it must be considered as an addition to the pattern.¹⁹ Thus, the pericope within which the love commandment occurs, Jn 13: 31-38, must be considered as a composite text with its own history. In this composite text the love commandment is situated within a frame of reference which has the departure of Jesus as its theme. By means of the sandwich technique,²⁰ a redactor has highlighted the love commandment as the legacy of the departing Jesus for the community which he has left behind.

13. Cf. J.M. REESE, "Literary Structure of Jn 13: 31-14: 31; 16: 5-6, 16-33," *CBQ* 34 (1972) 321-331, p. 321.

14. Thus, in various ways, A. Merx, P. Gaechter, C.H. Dodd, C.K. Barrett, A. Wikenhauser, R. Schnackenburg, M.E. Boismard, etc. A brief discussion of the issue is offered by R.E. BROWN, *o.c.*, pp. 582-586. George Johnston divides Jn 13-16 into three speeches, 13: 31-14: 31, 15: 1-16: 4a, 16: 4b-33, without, however, accepting a duplicate version theory. Cf. George JOHNSTON, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John*, SNTSMS, 12, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 72, 168.

15. Cf. Heinrich ZIMMERMANN, "Struktur und Aussageabsicht der johanneischen Abschiedsreden (Jn 13-17)," *Bibel und Leben* 8 (1967) 279-290. Zimmermann (p. 289) even cites the change of locale, indicated at Jn 14: 31, as support for his theory.

16. Cf. Jurgen BECKER, "Die Abschiedsreden Jesu in Johannevangelium," *ZNW* 616 (1970) 215-246, p. 218.

17. Cf. J. BECKER, *art. cit.*, p. 220. Becker cites Hirtmüller, Wellhausen, Hirsch, and Richter.

18. Cf. J.M. REESE, *art. cit.*

19. Cf. J.M. REESE, *art. cit.*, pp. 323-324. Schnackenburg agrees that vv. 34-35 are a redactional insertion. In favor of his opinion he cites seven arguments including the link between vv. 33 and 36 and the fact that Jn 14 does not dwell on the love commandment. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannevangelium 3. Kommentar zu Kap. 13-21*, HTKNT 4/3, Freiburg, 1975, p. 59. Bultmann suggests that vv. 34-35 are the evangelist's insertion into his "revelation discourse" source. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel According to John*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 523-524. Heinz Becker, however, allows for the trace of sources in 13: 31-38 but concludes that the pericope is largely the composition of the Evangelist. Cf. H. BECKER, *Die Reden des Johannevangeliums und der Stil der gnostischen Offenbarungsrede*, *FRLANT*, 50, Göttingen, 1956, p. 94.

20. Cf. N. LAZURE, "Louange", p. 73.

By identifying six instances of the revelation-question-clarification pattern in Jn 13: 31–14: 31 and 16: 4–33, Reese has called into question the broadly held theory that Jn 14 and Jn 16 are duplicate discourses. While accepting Jn 15: 1–16: 4 as a later insertion,²¹ he has raised many questions, not the least of which is the unity of the present redaction of the farewell discourse. In an independent study,²² Günter Reim has identified 15: 18–16: 4 as the later insertion and cites the changed situation of the community — namely, one of persecution — as its *Sitz-im-Leben*. Thus any attempt to explicate the farewell discourse in its present unity must take into account that the composite text is both a reflection upon the disciples' relationship to Jesus in his absence and a reflection upon the disciples' relationship to the world in its persecution. This is, of course, the point of Zimmermann's article, which so emphasizes the differences between Jn 13–14 and 15–16 as to conclude that they constitute two discourses, the first (13–14) expressing the significance of Jesus' departure and its bearing upon the situation of the Church while Jesus is with the Father, whereas the second (15–16) bears on the significance of Jesus' union with the disciples and their situation in the world. Despite the differences, we must note that the present text constitutes a unity²³ in which it is possible to discern an emphasis on the modality of Jesus' presence in his absence in the first part, and an emphasis on the recognition of the world in the second part. Within this unified body of material the evangelist and/or redactor have interspersed their version of traditions which are otherwise formulated in the Synoptic Gospels.²⁴

When now we look to the Johannine formulation of the love commandment within the context of the farewell discourses, it is apparent that the author would have his readers understand the love commandment in specific reference to the Passion-glorification of Jesus. The *oun*²⁵ ("therefore") of 13: 31 indicates that the entire pericope, consisting of vv. 31–38, must be considered in the light of the Passion. If Bultmann's suggestion to the effect that the *arti* ("now") of v. 33 relates in fact to the love commandment of v. 34,²⁶ then clearly the hour of the Son of Man gives

21. J.M. REESE, *art. cit.*, p. 323.

22. G. REIM, "Probleme der Abschiedsreden," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 20 (1976) 117–122, p. 117.

23. Cf. John L. BOYLE, "The Last Discourse (Jn 13, 31–16, 33) and Prayer (Jn 17): Some Observations on Their Unity and Development," *Biblica* 56 (1975) 210–222.

24. In these five chapters (Jn 13–17) John has gathered together his version of material which the Synoptics have dispersed throughout. We might cite the mission logia (Mk 6: 7–11 and par.), the instruction on life in the Christian community (Mk 9: 35–40), the warning about persecution and the promise of divine assistance (Mk 13: 9–13), the prediction of the Passion (Mk 13: 26–27), the prediction of Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial, and the disciples' scattering (Mk 14: 18–21, 26–31). Lagrange was in fact so impressed by some of these parallels that he considered Jn 15: 1–17 to be the Johannine parallel of the Synoptics' mission discourse. We should also note the presence of the "Truly, truly, I say to you" formula — a formula which Lindars has identified as generally indicating a traditional logion. Cf. Jn 13: 16, 20, 21; 14: 12; 16: 20, 23 (with "you" in the plural); Jn 13: 38 (with "you" in the singular). Cf. M.J. LAGRANGE, *Saint Jean. Études bibliques*, 6th ed., Paris, 1936, p. 399; B. LINDARS, *The Gospel of John, New Century Bible*, London, 1972, p. 48.

25. Cf. Francis J. MOLONEY, *The Johannine Son of Man, Biblioteca de scienze religiose*, 14, Rome, 1976, p. 195. Cf. p. 199.

26. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel*, p. 525, n. 2; R.E. BROWN, *o.c.*, p. 607; O. DE DINECHIN, *art. cit.*, p. 212.

urgency to the commandment itself. Now that he is about to depart in the hour of his exaltation-glorification, the Son of Man gives the new commandment of love to his disciples as his legacy and challenge. In Jn 15, the love commandment (v. 12) is followed by a passage which explicitly cites the Passion as an example of the love to be imitated by Jesus' disciples: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (v. 13). Thus the reference to the Passion is a consistent and specifically Johannine element²⁷ in the presentation of the new commandment.

From the literary point of view, both Jn 13: 34-35 and 15: 12, 17 are joined to a symbolic narrative. The new commandment of Jn 13 is linked to the footwashing scene (Jn 13: 1-20).²⁸ The composition of the scene owes to Johannine redaction. Whether it refers essentially to the Passion as a symbolic action or to baptism as a sacramental action remains, however, a moot question.²⁹ In any event, the present redaction of the scene offers Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet as a *hupodeigma*, an "example" (v. 15), to be followed by his disciples. The example shows that the love which the disciples are to imitate is the example of loving service, directed to one another. In its turn, the love commandment in Jn 15: 12 has been linked to the parable of the vine and the branches (Jn 15: 1-18).³⁰ Both the parable and the pericope which follows (15: 9-17) are concerned with the fruitfulness of the word of Jesus. *Bleiben* ("abide") serves as the catch-word which links together the two inseparable pericopes. The catch-word demonstrably points to the intimate relationship among the Father's love for Jesus, Jesus' love for his disciples, and the disciples' love for one another. The pericope concludes with the refrain, "This I command you, to love one another" (v. 17). Although this verse was undoubtedly added to the narrative at a relatively late stage of composition,³¹ it truly belongs to the narrative as presently edited. Indeed a quick look at the text shows that the thought of vv. 16-17 picks up the thought of vv. 7-8, albeit in reverse order.³² Thus, the discourse material added to each of the symbolic narratives offers significant reflections on the Johannine notion of love as well as on the symbolic narratives themselves.

27. Cf. R. THYSMAN, "L'Éthique de l'Imitation du Christ dans le Nouveau Testament. Situation, notations et variations du thème," *ETL* 42 (1966) 138-175, pp. 173-174. Thysman speaks of the salvific deeds as grounding "imitation ethics."

28. Cf. Lucien CERFAUX, "La charité fraternelle et le retour du Christ (Jo., XIII, 33-38)," *ETL* 24 (1948) 321-332, rp. in *Recueil Lucien Cerfaux* II, 27-40, cf. p. 37; R. Percival BROWN, *entolē kainē* (St. John 13, 38), *Theology* 26 (1933) 184-193, pp. 184-185, 193; Jack SEYNAEVE, "La 'Charité' chrétienne est-elle dépassée?", *Revue du Clergé Africain* 27 (1972) 389-413, pp. 393, 399.

29. Cf. Georg RICHTER, *Die Fusswaschung im Johannesevangelium. Geschichte ihrer Deutung. Biblische Untersuchungen*, I, Regensburg, 1967, pp. 252-259. Cf. J.D.G. DUNN, "The Washing of the Disciples' Feet in John 13: 1-20," *ZNTW* 61 (1970) 247-252.

30. Cf. Piet VAN BOXEL, "Glaube und Liebe. Die Aktualität des johanneischen Jüngermodells," *Geist und Leben* 48 (1975) 18-28, p. 25.

31. On the other hand, Dibelius argued that it was vv. 13-15 which do not fit well into the context. The linchpin of his thesis was that v. 13 offered an example of "heroic" love which is not otherwise characteristic of the thought of the Fourth Evangelist. Cf. Martin DIBELIUS, "Joh 15, 13. Eine Studie zum Traditionsproblem des Johannesevangeliums," in *Festgabe für Adolf Deissmann zum Geburtstag 7 November 1927*, Tübingen, 1927, pp. 168-186.

32. Cf. P. VAN BOXEL, *loc. cit.*

These brief reflections on the context of the love commandment in the Fourth Gospel have served to show that the evangelist and his disciple-redactor have truly integrated the theme of mutual love into the farewell discourses. Behind the farewell discourses of Jn 13-17 lies the history of the composition of the Johannine text. The pericopes in which the love commandment appears show clear and considerable evidence of Johannine composition/redaction. As a result, the entirety of the farewell discourses is encompassed by the theme of love, which occurs at their outset (13: 1) and their conclusion (17: 26). The most obvious lesson to be learned from the author's redactional efforts is that he would have the love command understood in reference to Jesus' Passion-glorification. It is the Passion-glorification which imparts meaning to the love commandment; the love commandment is Jesus' legacy for his own to be fulfilled during the period of his absence. Such are but a few elements connoted by the rich Johannine formulation of the love commandment.

THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES

To speak of the love commandment as a "new commandment" is to speak the language of the Johannine school. The Johannine phraseology "new commandment" appears not only in Jn 13: 34 but also in 1 Jn 2: 7-8 and 2 Jn 5.³³ All three of these writings reflect a situation of tension within the Christian community. The tension present in the life situation of 1-2 Jn appears nevertheless to be more critical than that of the life situation of the farewell discourses.³⁴ It is to the situation of some crisis that John draws our attention when he writes of a commandment which is "no new commandment," the "old commandment," and yet "a new commandment" as he does in 1 Jn 2: 7-8: "Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining." A similar assertion, but without the reversal of thought, is to be found in 2 Jn: "And now I beg you, lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning, that we love one another."

The polemical aspects of each of these passages is clear enough. John affirms that the love commandment is not a new one because his correspondents have heard

33. I cannot now consider the interrelationship among the five books in the Johannine corpus (Jn, 1, 2, 3 Jn, Rev) in full detail. As a working hypothesis, I would only suggest that the five books emanate from the same, somewhat closed, circle of Christians. Thus I find it useful to speak, as does Culpepper, of "the Johannine school." Nevertheless I am inclined to the view that no two of the writings which directly concern the present essay — Jn, 1 Jn, 2 Jn — derive from the same hand. Notwithstanding my acceptance of this view, and without therefore implying common authorship, it seems useful to maintain the traditional designation "John" as an indiscriminate signum to identify the authors of the respective texts. Cf. R. Alan CULPEPPER, *The Johannine School. An Evaluation of the Johannine-school Hypothesis based on an Investigation of the nature of Ancient Schools*, SBL Dissertation Series, 26, Missoula, 1975.

34. Cf. David L. MEALAND, "The Language of Mystical Union in the Johannine Writings," *Downside Review* 95 (1977) 19-34, p. 32.

it "from the beginning." For John's correspondents, the love commandment cannot be considered a new revelation. The love commandment was part of their baptismal catechesis.³⁵ That is certainly the import of the explanatory formula, "the old commandment is the word which you heard" (v. 7).³⁶ For the recipients of the letter the commandment is not new, since they have received it as part of their fundamental catechesis, from the very beginning of their faith in Christ. Yet the author of the letter may well have intended to say even more. He may have intended to affirm not only that the recipients of the letter had received the love commandment along with the initial proclamation of the Gospel *to them*, but also that the love commandment is the commandment which Christianity has had from the very beginning, that is, from the first moment of the proclamation of the Gospel.³⁷ If this is indeed the case then John is both affirming his fidelity to the proclamation of the primitive Gospel and indicating that the primitive (i.e., in Johannine terms, the "old") Gospel was actualized in the baptismal catechesis of the recipients of the letter.

The contrast between the old and the new makes sense only if we understand why the author makes pains to affirm that the love commandment of Christian tradition is not new. His concern is undoubtedly occasioned by the Gnostics who are the troublesome opponents for the author of both letters. It is hardly likely that the Gnostics had proposed any "new commandments." What is more likely is that they exploited a "new Christian experience" in the Spirit at the expense of Christian tradition.³⁸ Within that perspective, the Gnostics considered such commandments as the love commandment to be an outmoded part of tradition. In contrast the Johannine authors suggest that what is new is later and lacks the necessary authority to be an authentic part of the Christian experience. In this sense the love commandment is certainly not new — for it is the commandment of Jesus himself.³⁹

35. Thus, Matthew Vullanickal. Cf. *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings*, AB 72, Rome, 1978, p. 234. Rudolf Schnackenburg speaks only of "the beginning of their Christian life" whereas Bultmann speaks of "the point within history in which the Christian proclamation was received by the believers." Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Die Johannesbriefe*, HTKNT 13/3, 2nd ed., Freiburg, 1963, p. 111; R. BULTMANN, *The Johannine Epistles, Hermaneta*, Philadelphia, 1973, pp. 27, 111. For a similar opinion, cf. Johannes SCHNEIDER, *Die Briefe des Jacobus, Petrus, Judas und Johannes. Die katholische Briefe*, NTD, 10, 9th ed., Göttingen, 1961, p. 150.

36. Cf. 1 Jn 2: 7, 18, 24; 3: 11; 4: 3.

37. Cf. J. SCHNEIDER, *o.c.*, p. 191; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Die Briefe*, p. 311 (both in reference to 2 Jn 5. Cf. also H. CONZELMANN, "'was von Anfang war,'" *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann*, BZNW 21, Berlin, 1954, 194–202, esp. pp. 195–199; V. FURNISH, *The Love Command in the New Testament*, Nashville-New York, 1972, p. 152. This opinion is also offered by Alphonse Humbert. Cf. A. HUMBERT, "L'observance des commandements dans les écrits johanniques," pp. 187–219 in *Studia Moralia*, I, Rome, 1963, p. 206.

38. Cf. A. E. Brooke who writes that "the real force of the expression is to heighten the contrast of the 'newer' teaching which places knowledge higher than love." A.E. BROOKE, *The Johannine Epistles, ICC*, Edinburgh, 1912, p. 35. Commenting on 2 Jn 5, Schnackenburg notes that the love commandment is formulated not only to insist on brotherly love but also to underscore the link with older tradition. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Die Briefe*, p. 311. Cf. also R. BULTMANN, *The Johannine Epistles*, p. 27; J. SCHNEIDER, *o.c.*, p. 150.

39. In this respect Balz, Brooke, and others note that the Jesuanic commandment is also the commandment of God. Cf. HORST BALZ, *Die Katholische Briefe*, NTD 10, 11th ed., Göttingen, p. 170; A.E. BROOKE, *o.c.*, p. 35.

Nevertheless the commandment which is not new in one sense is indeed new in another sense. Thus we have the paradox of 1 Jn 2: 7-8:⁴⁰ the commandment which is not new, but old, is, in fact, new. It is clear that the author of 1 Jn knew the logion of Jn 13: 34; most probably his readers knew the logion as well.⁴¹ His reference to the past, made in the heat of controversy, has brought him to consider the newness of the commandment which he is proposing once again.⁴² The commandment of love has been given for those who abide in the light by none other than the Lord himself. The commandment is new because it is the commandment for the new age. Thus the author of 1 Jn affirms that the newness of the commandment owes to the fact that its truth⁴³ derives from Christ himself ("truth in him" — v. 8), and that its fulfillment is pertinent to the lives of Christians ("and in you") who live in the new age. In effect the love commandment is new because it is the eschatological commandment, the commandment for the new age,⁴⁴ ethics for the final times.⁴⁵

In this new age love for one another is proof of one's love for God.⁴⁶ If one does not have mutual love, then one is only a liar. He belongs to the realm of darkness, rather than to the realm of light. Thus the love commandment is much more than one among the other Christian commandments. It is even more than the most important commandment in the Christian moral code. It is the decisive commandment.⁴⁷ For the Johannine authors, the fulfillment of the love commandment is the sign of true knowledge of God and the sign of belonging to the community of light. The one who does not practice brotherly love can no more claim to have true knowledge of God than membership in the brotherhood; he has cut himself off from one and the other. Thus the commandment of mutual love is "new" precisely insofar as it is the hallmark of the new age. 1 Jn, therefore, insists with even more emphasis than is found in the Gospel, that love for the brethren is the distinctive sign of belonging to the Christian community. The exercise of brotherly love is the essential manifestation of the Christian life. The commandment of mutual love is part of the traditional and authoritative proclamation of the Gospel. As such it is paradoxically old and new at the same time. It pertains to the traditional kerygma, and proclaims an ethic pertinent to the time of waiting for the end.

40. Cf. Marinus DE JONGE, *De Brieven van Johannes. De Prediking van Het Nieuw Testament*. Nijkerk, 1968, p. 82.

41. M. DE JONGE, *ibid.*

42. Cf. the *palin* ("yet" (RSV), literally "again") in 1 Jn 2: 8.

43. Bultmann's comment is apropos. He writes: "*Alēthēs* therefore does not mean 'true' in the sense of 'correct', but characterizes the 'new commandment' as something verifying itself as real. That it verifies itself as real in the congregation is also said in 3: 14." R. BULTMANN, *o.c.*, p. 27, n. 20.

44. Cf. H. BALZ, *o.c.*, p. 171; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Die Johannesbriefe*, pp. 111-112; R. BULTMANN, *The Johannine Epistles*, p. 27.

45. Cf. J. BECKER, *art. cit.*

46. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Die Johannesbriefe*, p. 111; David L. MEALAND, *art. cit.*, p. 32. Vallanickal writes, "*agapē* in Jn becomes an objective reality, a form of existence, a concrete expression of the life of God in this world." Cf. M. VALLANICKAL, *o.c.*, p. 314.

47. Cf. J. SCHNEIDER, *o.c.*, p. 151.

We must note, nevertheless, that it is on the commandment as such, as a precept demanding observance in behavior,⁴⁸ that the author of 1 Jn insists in the first pericope of his epistle in which he dwells upon the theme of love which pervades the entire document.⁴⁹ Subsequently⁵⁰ he will cite (1 Jn 3: 10-24) the example of Christ as a model for love among the brethren. The author calls for a concrete expression of love: a love of one's "brothers" in mutual service.⁵¹ Still later in the epistle (1 Jn 4: 7-21) he will turn his attention to God as the very source of love. Thus while he chooses to counter the Gnostics' deviant neglect of the practice of mutual love by referring to the Lord's promulgation of a commandment (1 Jn 2: 8), his total understanding of love is that it is a necessary concomitant of union with God.

THE LOVE COMMANDMENT

In his commentary on 1 Jn 2: 7-8, Bultmann not only suggests that this pair of verses has been added to a source by the redactor of the epistle but that the use of "commandment" in the singular is a reference to a logion of the Lord.⁵² Undoubtedly the use of "commandment" in 1 Jn 2: 7 has a referential function, but that function should not obscure the even more important fact that "commandment" is a particularly significant Johannine concept. Indeed the Johannine corpus⁵³ has the highest preponderance of use of "commandment" (*entole*) and its cognate verb, "to command" (*entellesthai*) in the entire New Testament.⁵⁴ In John's Gospel the term is used once to denote a legal commandment or order issued by the Sanhedrin (11: 57). Apart from that singular reference, the term is used either of the charge or mission given to Jesus by the Father (10: 18; 12: 49, 50; 14: 31) or the commandment given by Jesus to his disciples (13: 34; 14: 15, 21; 15: 10, 12).⁵⁵ In this latter sense, the

48. We must note the practicality of the love commandment's demand. Mutual love is a matter of exercise, practice, action. Thus Schnackenburg, contrary to Brooke (p. 177) takes the *hina* clause of 2 Jn 5 as dependent on *erōtō* ("beg") rather than on *entolēn* ("commandment"). In effect the text should be understood as follows: "And now, lady, not as writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning, I beg you to love one another." The practical aspect of the love ethic is also emphasized in 2 Jn 6, linked externally to v. 5 by the catchword "love" (*agapē*). To love one another is to "follow" (*peripatein*) his commandments. The author uses *peripatein* (literally, "to walk"), the verb traditionally used of behavior in Jewish and Christian writings. Stress on the reality of love is also strongly emphasized at 1 Jn 4: 7-10. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Die Johannesbriefe*, pp. 311-312; M. DE JONGE, *o.c.*, pp. 246-247.

49. Cf. A. FEUILLET, "The Structure."

50. M. VALLANICKAL, *o.c.*, p. 303.

51. Cf. Heinrich SCHLIER, "Die Bruderliebe nach dem Evangelium und den Briefen des Johannes," in *Mélanges Béda Rigaux*, ed. by A. Descamps and A. de Halleux, Gembloux, 1970, 235-245, p. 243.

52. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *The Johannine Epistles*, p. 27.

53. The Book of Revelation offers an exception to the otherwise Johannine predilection for "commandment."

54. Cf. Noël LAZURE, *Les Valeurs Morales de la théologie johannique (Évangiles et Épîtres)*, *Études bibliques*, Paris, 1965, p. 31. *Entolē* ('commandment') appears ten times in Jn (10: 18; 11: 57; 12: 49, 50; 13: 34; 14: 15, 21, 31; 15: 10, 12), fourteen times in 1 Jn (2: 3, 4, 7 (3x); 8: 3; 22, 23 (2x); 24: 4; 21; 5: 2, 3 (2x)), and four times in 2 Jn (2 Jn 4, 5, 6 (2x)). It also appears in Rev 12: 17; 14: 12. *Entellesthai* ('to command') appears only in Jn 8: 5; 14: 31; 15: 14, 17. It appears some twelve other times in the NT, including five times in Mt.

55. Cf. William HENDRICKSON, *New Testament Commentary. Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, V2, Grand Rapids, 1954, p. 252.

terminology is restricted to the farewell discourses, where, indeed, it seems to have an imperative force.⁵⁶ It is questionable, however, whether it is the imperative force which predominates in the use of the terminology when it is applied to the "commandment" of the Father to the Son. In those passages, "commandment" seems rather to indicate the will of the Father directing the Son to the work of salvation and indicating to Him the means by which the salvation of men should be accomplished.⁵⁷ From this perspective, "commandment" seems to have a universal rather than a specific sense, and a salvific rather than an imperative sense. This suggests that the Johannine use of "commandment" has some similarity with the LXX in which "commandment" (*entolē*) is used as an expression for the will of God.

If, then, we look to the Old Testament in the hopes that it will shed some light on the Johannine notion of "commandment" we find that it is principally to the Deuteronomic literature that we must look.⁵⁸ Indeed, "the whole spirit of Deuteronomy is expressed by the term," "commandment".⁵⁹ "Commandment" is a relational term which can be understood only within the covenantal context. The "commandments" are the covenant obligations imposed by Yahweh and undertaken by Israel. Specifically one can look to the Decalogue as a synopsis of these obligations. They represent the material content of the covenant prescriptions. Yet the formal sense of the "commandments" is something other than the material (ethical) content of the ten commandments.

The *entolē* of the Septuagintal version of Dt corresponds to the Hebrew *miswa*, both terms having the basic sense of "command." The emphasis lies on the fact of being commanded. There is, thus, a relational element and a personal quality inherent in the connotation of the term. This personal quality means that the commandment derives from moral authority, rather than from forceful constraint or arbitrary demand. In most instances of the use of *entolē* in Dt, the commandment is of divine origin. Thus *entolē* generally indicates God's will. The stress is on the Lawgiver who would lay claim to the service of man in order that man be united to Himself. The commandment is parallel to God's instruction (*nomos*, "the law") and thus is, at least in some sense, a revelation of God Himself.⁶⁰ Thus the commandment is a covenantal reality,⁶¹ a sign of Israel's special relationship with Yahweh. In context, therefore, the commandment is not only an expression of the divine will but

56. Cf. C. SPICQ, *Agapē*, 3, p. 49; *Théologie Morale du Nouveau Testament*, 2, *Études bibliques*, Paris, 1965, pp. 507-509.

57. Cf. N. LAZURE, *Les valeurs morales*, p. 144.

58. Cf. Matthew J. O'CONNELL, "The Concept of Commandment in the Old Testament," *Theological Studies* 21 (1960) 351-403, esp. pp. 351, 369.

59. J. VAN DER PLOEG, "Studies in Hebrew Law," *CBQ* 12 (1950) 248-259, 416-427, p. 258.

60. With van Boxel, we can note the similarity between "words" and "commandments" (Ex 20: 1; Dt 5: 5, 22). Cf. P. VAN BOXEL, *art. cit.*, p. 26. Something similar is to be found within the Johannine corpus (1 Jn 2: 4-5). Cf. N. LAZURE, *Les Valeurs Morales*, p. 138; H. SCHLIER, *art. cit.*, p. 241.

61. Thus O'Connell describes the commandment of Dt as "the creative and redemptive pattern, revealed by God, for Israel's existence as His holy people." M.J. O'CONNELL, *art. cit.*, p. 372.

is also, as Spicq notes,⁶² both an instruction and a salvation device. The first and fundamental content of *entolē*, taken in its singular Deuteronomic sense, is the imperative of love.⁶³ All the other commandments depend on love. To love⁶⁴ is to keep God's commandments.⁶⁵ Finally, and most significantly, "the *entolē*... becomes a mode of the presence of God to His people and an evidence of the dynamic and active quality of this presence."⁶⁶

This Deuteronomic concept of commandment appears to have provided the model for the Johannine concept. In the first instance, the Johannine concept has an all-embracing sense which is linked to the history of salvation. This is particularly evident in those passages which speak of the commandment which the Father has given to Jesus. The material content of the "commandment" is Jesus' death (10: 18)⁶⁷ or his revelation (12: 49, 50). Thus the "commandment" has to do with the Father's will directing the revelatory and salvific mission of Jesus: "the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life." (12: 49b-50a) Since the context raises the issue of the authority of Jesus' revelatory message and since the author invokes the "poverty principle"⁶⁸ in response, it is clear that the commandment concept is one which includes its obligatory force. The idea of commandment as precept to be fulfilled by Jesus is likewise present in 15: 10: "I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." In this case John speaks of commandments, in the plural, as he always does⁶⁹ when commandment is the object of the verb *tērein* (to keep).

A link to the history of salvation is no less present when the evangelist writes of the commandment which Jesus gives to his disciples. The constant reference to the Passion, the comparison between Jesus and the disciples, and the situation of the love commandment within the farewell discourses provide the history of salvation framework for the love commandment. Indeed the situation of the love commandment within the farewell discourses provides another positive point of comparison

62. Cf. C. SPICQ, *Agapē*, 3, p. 49.

63. Cf. M. O'CONNELL, *art. cit.*, p. 394; A. LACOMARA, «Deuteronomy and the Farewell Discourse (Jn 13: 31-16: 33),» *CBQ* 36 (1974) 65-84, pp. 73-74; William L. MORAN, «The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,» *CBQ* 25 (1963) 77-87, p. 78.

64. A specific formulation of the commandment of brotherly love is not found in Dt, as it is in Lev 19: 18. G.E. Wright considers this to be an accidental phenomenon insofar as "the motive of brotherly love is so basic and prominent in the exposition of the law." Cf. G.E. WRIGHT, *Deuteronomy. Interpreter's Bible*, 2, New York, 1953, p. 401.

65. Cf. Dt 10: 12, 11: 1, 22; 19: 9.

66. M.J. O'CONNELL, *art. cit.*, p. 394. Cf. pp. 382-383.

67. Here the RSV renders *entolē* as charge.

68. Cf. David M. STANLEY, "Believe the Works," *The Way* 4 (1978) 272-286, p. 281.

69. Jn 14: 15, 21; 15: 10 (twice). These are, in fact, the only passages in the Gospel in which the plural is used. 2 Jn uses the plural seven times (2: 3, 4; 3: 22, 24; 5: 2, 3 (twice)), five times with the verb *tērein*. Lazure claims that the distinction between the singular and the plural should be maintained. The singular has reference to a specific precept, whereas the plural refers to the total will of God. Cf. N. LAZURE, *Les Valeurs Morales*, pp. 126-127.

between the Johannine and the Deuteronomic notions of commandment. Dt is one of the oldest examples of the farewell discourse genre. In its entirety it is presented as the address of the departing Moses to the nation of Israel.⁷⁰ There Moses is the mediator of the covenant and the lawgiver; now Jesus appears as the mediator of the covenant and the lawgiver.⁷¹ In both cases the binding force of the precept is inherent in the notion of the commandment which is given.

Yet the commandment is not simply a precept to be obeyed. The new commandment is a commandment which Jesus gives to his disciples.⁷² It is the gift of the departing Jesus. The use of the verb *didonai*⁷³ by the evangelist serves to place the new commandment among the great realities of divine salvation with which John employs the powerful verb "to give": the Spirit (3: 34; 14: 16), the bread of life (6: 11, 27, 31, 32 (2x), 33, 34, 37, 39, 51, 52, 65), the living water (4: 10, 14, 15), peace (14: 27), eternal life (10: 18; 17: 2), glory (17: 22, 24), the power to become children of God (1: 12) and the word of God (17: 8, 14). These are the "gifts of God" (4: 10) which Jesus gives to his own. The new commandment is no less a gift. It is the legacy which Jesus gives to those whom he is about to leave.

That legacy is not only commandment to be kept; it is also revelation to be treasured. Already in Dt, "commandment" had the sense of divine revelation and instruction. That sense is preserved in Jn's use of commandment which appears predominantly in a passage which serves as an instruction to the disciples by Jesus as to the meaning of his departure. The revelatory nature⁷⁴ of the Johannine commandment is highlighted by the parallelism between "word" and "commandment" in 14: 21, 23. Jesus' commandment is the word which he entrusts to his disciples. It makes known to them God's plan for them.

In Dt, the commandment was also a mode of God's active and dynamic presence. In this respect it can be suggested that the love commandment is the modality of Jesus' presence⁷⁵ with his disciples after his departure. Jesus' glorification involves his separation from his disciples and their attendant distress. The farewell discourses seek to express the meaning of his departure. In 13: 34-35 it appears that the solution to the problem of Jesus' absence is the presence of love.

70. Cf. Dt 1: 1; 32: 45; 33: 1. Cf. A. LACOMARA, "Deuteronomy," p. 84.

71. Cf. A. Lacomara, who writes: "Jesus is the first-person subject of the 'I-thou' form of address and hence, like Moses in Dt, he is not a mere herald of the law, he is a lawgiver: 'I give you a new commandment' (Jn 13: 34; cf. 14: 15, 15: 12, 14). In the OT it is only in Dt that we find a parallel to this presentation of the law in the person of the mediator." A. LACOMARA, *art. cit.*, p. 67; A. HUMBERT, *art. cit.*, p. 202.

72. Bernard has gone beyond the evidence of the text in asserting apropos Jn 13: 34 that, "He claimed to 'give commandments,' and so claimed to be equal to God." Cf. J.H. BERNARD, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, ICC, Edinburgh, 1929, p. 326.

73. Cf. A. VANHOYE, "L'œuvre du Christ, don du Père," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 48 (1960) 387-391.

74. Cf. N. LAZURE, *Les Valeurs Morales*, pp. 130-131. That the commandment is Jesus' revelatory word is also indicated in 1 Jn where we find a parallelism between Jesus' commandments and his word in 2: 4-5 and where the love commandment is styled "the message" (*aggelia*) in 3: 11.

75. While noting that Jn has no symbol for love, P.S. Naumann has shown that in Jn "love is the presence of Christ," Cf. P.S. NAUMANN, "The presence of Love in John's Gospel," *Worship* 39 (1965) 369-371. Cf. also C. SPICQ, *Agapē*, p. 54.

Mutual love is the new mode of Jesus' presence among his disciples.⁷⁶ His presence constitutes the moral demand.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

The love commandment is called a "new commandment" (*entolē kainē*) in Jn 13: 34. Otherwise the commandments which Jesus addressed to his disciples are called "my commandments," with the pronomial adjective *emē* as in 14: 15; 15: 10, or the pronoun *mou* as in 14: 21; 15: 12. Outside of Jn 13: 34, Jn employs the adjective *kainos* but once, i.e. in reference to the "new tomb" in which the body of Jesus was placed.⁷⁷ The love commandment appears elsewhere in the NT,⁷⁸ but is not called a new commandment except in 1 Jn 2: 7-8 and 2 Jn 5. In a real sense, the love commandment is not a new commandment at all, as even the author of 1 Jn must admit.⁷⁹ Not only does the love commandment go back to Jesus but it was an integral part of the Torah⁸⁰ to such an extent that rabbinic legend ascribes to R. Hillel the summation of the entire Torah in the golden rule.⁸¹

Given this situation, one must ask why and in what sense did the Johannine school⁸² interpret the love commandment as a new commandment. The designation is certainly somewhat unusual and warrants reflection. Reflection is not absent from the writings. As a matter of fact, commentators on the Fourth Gospel are rather inclined to devote considerable attention to the expression. Thus Ceslaus Spicq indicates no less than eight reasons why the Johannine love commandment is styled a "new commandment".⁸³ (1) The new commandment places mutual love among the specific elements of the new economy of salvation, the new covenant replacing the

76. While the verb *didonai* occurs some eight times in Jn 17, it is relatively rarely used in the farewell discourses. However it does serve to indicate that peace (14: 27), the Spirit (14: 16), and the 'New commandment' (13: 34) are Jesus' gift to his disciples. Certainly the gift of the Spirit is the answer to Jesus' absence; it is the new mode of his active presence. Something similar can also be said of the new commandment.

77. Cf. Jn 19: 14.

78. Cf. Mk 12: 31 and par.

79. Cf. 1 Jn 2: 7-8 and *supra*, pp. 242-243.

80. Lev 19: 10.

81. *Mishnah*, Ab 1: 12.

82. That the love commandment is called a "new commandment" in Jn 13: 34, 1 Jn 2: 7-8, and 2 Jn 5 would seem to indicate that the epithet is common to the Johannine school. That the author of 1 Jn who wants to stress the relative antiquity of the love commandment nevertheless feels constrained to call the love commandment a "new commandment" would seem to indicate that the designation enjoyed the force of normative tradition within the Johannine school. Thus it is difficult to agree with the contention of Alphonse Humbert and Noel Lazure that the "new commandment" designation of Jn 13: 34 indicates a literary dependence on 1 Jn 2: 7-8. An argument in favor of the Humbert-Lazure position might be that vv. 34-35 are a relatively late addition in the redaction of Jn 13. However vv. 7-8 would also seem to warrant the judgment that they too are a traditional element inserted by a redactor into material taken from a source (thus, Bultmann). In any event 1 Jn seems to have been composed after Jn, in which case it is more likely that 1 Jn 2: 7-8 and 2 Jn 5 depend on Jn 13: 34-35 than vice versa. Cf. A. HUMBERT, *art. cit.*, pp. 205-206; U. PRUNET, *La morale chrétienne d'après les écrits johanniques*, Paris, 1957, p. 106; N. LAZURE, *Les Valeurs Morales*, p. 229; R. BULTMANN, *The Johannine Epistles*, p. 27.

83. Cf. C. SPICQ, *Agapē*, pp. 53-54.

old. (2) The innovation in the commandment is that love is given and unequaled place and made the object of a fundamental and quasi-unique precept. (3) In relation to Lev 19: 18, love has a new object, determined by ties of faith, not blood ("one another" rather than "your neighbour"). (4) In reference to the Sermon on the Mount's love of enemies, the Lord at the Last Supper asked for reciprocal love which will constitute the Church as a society of loving and loved men. (5) The great innovation is the nature and mode of the new love insofar as the disciples' love is rooted in Christ. (6) Mutual love is not an additional rule of conduct nor is there given a new reason for loving; rather, love is gift as well as precept. (7) The mode and activity of love are changed insofar as praying and doing good give way to self-sacrifice, a love for the other which is greater than one's love for oneself.⁸⁴ (8) The love commandment constitutes the Church as truly as does the Eucharist in that the Eucharist is a memorial of his going, and love a sign of his presence.

While an extensive enumerated list is somewhat overwhelming there is something to be said for each of the reflections offered by Spicq.⁸⁵ It would appear, nevertheless, that the most fundamental reason for calling the love commandment a "new commandment" is that it is the commandment for the final times. The dualism of the Johannine *Weltanschauung* is apparent in the Gospel, and is quite explicit in the very context in which the author of 1 Jn explains the new commandment.⁸⁶ There it appears that the love commandment is the commandment which obtains among those who exist in the light, whereas it is not kept by those who walk in the darkness. In the epistles as in the Gospel, Johannine dualism is often expressed by antithetical images. This is in keeping with the realized eschatology⁸⁷ of the Johannine school. The Synoptists' espousal of consequent eschatology, on the other hand, generally provides for a contrast between the present age and the age to come. Within this perspective the realities of the age-to-come are often called "new."⁸⁸ In effect, "new" is equivalent to "eschatological" or "of the final times." The Johannine school has retained this sense of "new" when it speaks of the "new commandment." In Jn, however, the love commandment is not new from a temporal perspective; it is new only from the qualitative point of view. The love commandment as exposed by Jn derives its newness, i.e. its characteristic uniqueness, from the new eschatological world which Jesus brings.⁸⁹

84. Cf. also, E.C. HOSKYNs, *o.c.*, p. 450; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Moral Teaching*, p. 324.

85. Surprisingly Joseph Bonsirven gives two reasons why "new" is an appropriate qualification of the Johannine love commandment. In the first instance he cites the universal extension of the commandment. Cf. J. BONsirven, *Épîtres de saint Jean*, Paris, 1935, p. 116.

86. 1 Jn 2: 7-11.

87. The purpose of the present article allows me this generalization, à la C.H. Dodd, despite the consequent eschatology of Jn 5: 25-29, etc.

88. New wineskins (Mt 9: 17; Mk 2: 22); new things (Mt 13: 52); new covenant (Mt 26: 28; Mk 14: 24; Lk 22: 20); new teaching (Mk 1: 27); new cloth (Mk 2: 21); new wine (Mt 2: 22; Lk 5: 38); new garment (Lk 5: 36 (3x)). Cf. Mt 26: 29; Mk 14: 25.

89. Cf. Roy A. HARRISVILLE, *The Concept of Newness in the New Testament*, Minneapolis, 1960, p. 93; R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel*, pp. 526, 527; L. CERFAUX, *art. cit.*, pp. 38-39; V. FURNISH, *o.c.*, pp. 138, 151, etc. Bultmann writes, with characteristic and correct conciseness: "Jesus' command of love is 'new' even when it has been long-known, because it is the law of the eschatological

In its specifically Johannine interpretation,⁹⁰ the love commandment is new because it is an eschatological commandment but it is eschatological because it is a gift of the Johannine Jesus. At root then the Johannine love commandment is a new commandment because of its reference to Jesus. Yet John does not consider the love commandment a "new" commandment because he is citing a traditional Jesuanic logion (which, of course, he does); rather, the commandment is new because it is the final challenge and gift of the departing Jesus for his own. It is a reality of the post-resurrection era; it pertains to the times dominated by the apparent absence of the glorified Jesus. In this sense it is a rule for the new eschatological community. Yet it is more than a rule since it is Jesus' gift to the community of light created by the gift of his presence. Thus, with Schnackenburg, one can understand the commandment as new in the light of John's profound understanding of discipleship.⁹¹ Thus, too, with Lazure we can understand the commandment as new because it is qualified by "as I have loved you."⁹² The absent-present Jesus and the disciples are the poles of the relationship which constitutes the newness of the Johannine love commandment.

The Johannine love commandment is "new", then, insofar as it is specifically Christian.⁹³ But is it new with the more or less explicit specificity of the new covenant so that the gift of presence which it entails is properly qualified as the Johannine analogue to the institution of the Eucharist?⁹⁴ There are, in fact, substantial reasons for considering Jn 15: 1-8 as a Eucharistic text,⁹⁵ but it is in Jn 13 rather than Jn 15 that the love commandment is styled a "new commandment." The symbolic action (Jn 13: 1-12) which serves as a prelude to that portion of the farewell discourse which presently contains the new commandment does not, however, appear to have a sacramental reference clearly in view.⁹⁶ Thus it would be difficult to argue for a

community, for which the attribute 'new' denotes not an historical characteristic but its essential nature." (p. 527) Cf. E. KÄSEMANN, *o.c.*, pp. 67-70. Among other reflections, Käsemann states that "brotherly love is heavenly solidarity directed towards individual Christians" (p. 70).

90. The Synoptic formulation of the love commandment, i.e. as the great or first commandment(s), from among the 613 of the Torah is not endowed with the same eschatological qualification as is the Johannine formulation in which the commandment is given as Jesus' legacy to his disciples at the moment of his departure. Thus the Synoptists' love commandment could not be properly described as a "new commandment." Nonetheless Cerfaux has correctly exploited Mt 25: 34-45 as an indication that charity is the normal occupation of the Christian who is waiting for the Parousia, i.e. who is in a state of eschatological anticipation. Cf. L. CERFAUX, *art. cit.*, p. 32.

91. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Moral Teaching*, p. 325.

92. Cf. N. LAZURE, *Les Valeurs Morales*, p. 230.

93. Cf. L. CERFAUX, *art. cit.*, p. 38; N. LAZURE, *Les Valeurs Morales*, p. 230; J. SEYNAEVE, *art. cit.*, p. 395; S. CIPRIANI, "Dio e amore. La dottrina della carità in San Giovanni," *Scuola Cattolica* 94 (1966) 214-231, p. 221.

94. Cf. Alfred LOISY, *Le Quatrième Évangile*, Paris, 1903, p. 736; G.H.C. MACGREGOR, *The Gospel of John*, MNTC, London, 1928, p. 283.

95. Cf., for example, B. SANDVIC, "Joh. 15 als Abendmahlstext," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 23 (1967) 323-328; R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel*, pp. 672-674; D.J. HAWKINS, "Orthodoxy and Heresy in John 10: 1-21 and 15: 1-17," *Evangelical Quarterly* 47 (1975) 208-213, p. 212.

96. Cf. J.D.G. DUNN, *art. cit.*; Georg RICHTER, "Die Fusswaschung Joh 13, 1-20," *Munchener Theologischer Zeitschrift* 16 (1965) 13-26.

specifically Eucharistic sense of the Johannine love commandment.⁹⁷ This opinion is all the more probable in that Jn does not cite the new covenant formula of Jer in reference to the new commandment as do the Synoptists in their respective narrations of the institution of the Eucharist.

On the other hand, there are sufficient parallels between the literary form and content of Dt and the literary form and content of Jn 13-17 to suggest a Deuteronomic model for the latter. In this case, the new commandment would indeed be a reality of the new covenant, even though Jn does not formally describe it as such. Indeed it is not only *a* reality of the new covenant; it is *the* reality of the new covenant⁹⁸ insofar as all the commandments are reduced to one⁹⁹ by the Johannine Jesus. Thus without citing the *berith*-formula itself and without making reference to Jer's new covenant, Jn is able to establish the love commandment as the convenantal stipulation *par excellence* of the new covenant¹⁰⁰ and to indicate that the bond of union between the Father and the new people of God is constituted by the fulfillment of that obligation in covenant of which Jesus is the mediator.

AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

It is, in fact, the Christological reference which constitutes the essential novelty of the Johannine new commandment.¹⁰¹ John has inserted the love commandment in a literary framework which interprets it within the context of Jesus' great saving presence-absence, his glorification and return to the Father. Indeed, by his repetition of the "as I have loved you" formula in 13: 34¹⁰² John has drawn emphatic attention to the singular importance of the Christological reference. Hence the crucial question for the interpreter becomes that of the significance of this Christological reference. What is the meaning of "as I have loved you," stated and emphasized again?¹⁰³

97. In effect, the main arguments for the Eucharistic interpretation of the Johannine new commandment seem to be its placement within the farewell discourse and its connotation as Christ's presence. These arguments seem weak and unnecessary to me, especially in view of John's treatment of the profound significance of the Eucharist in Jn 6. Thus I would take issue with the position modestly suggested by Furnish (*The Love Command*, pp. 138-139), and advanced by R. Percival Brown (*art. cit.*, pp. 190-191), and André Feuillet, (*Le mystère de l'amour divin dans la théologie johannique. Études bibliques*, Paris, 1972, p. 98).

98. Thus Raymond Brown writes: "The newness of the commandment of love is really related to the theme of covenant at the Last Supper — the 'new commandment' of John xiii 34 is the basic stipulation of the 'new Covenant' of Luke xxii 20." R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (xiii-xxi), AB 29A, p. 614.

99. Cf. A. LOISY, *o.c.*, p. 769; J.H. BERNARD, *o.c.*, pp. 485-486; E.C. HOSKYNs, *The Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed., London, 1947, p. 450; A. FEUILLET, "La morale chrétienne d'après saint Jean," *Esprit et vie* 83 (1973) 665-670, p. 669; "Le Temps de l'Église" p. 68; P. VAN BOXEL, *art. cit.*, p. 27; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 123; *Econtra*, V. FURNISH, *o.c.*, p. 137. Cf. A.E. BROOKE, *The Johannine Epistles*, p. 177.

100. Cf. J.L. BOYLE, *art. cit.*, pp. 210-211; A. FEUILLET, *Le mystère*, p. 88.

101. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 3, pp. 59-60.

102. Cf. Jn 15: 12.

103. With R. P. Brown we can note that a "sub-final clause introduced by *hina* to define the content of a command or a request is extraordinarily frequent in the NT." The second *hina* clause reaffirms and amplifies the first, with which it is coordinated. Cf. R.P. BROWN, *art. cit.*, p. 189; L. MORRIS, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, Grand Rapids, 1971, p. 633, n. 73.

What precisely is the sense of the *kathōs* in the expression? Does it mean "as" or "because"? Is Jesus' love for his own the exemplar, the motivation, the foundation, or the source of the disciples' love for one another?

To respond disjunctively is effectively to sap the Johannine formulation of the love commandment of its unique strength. When John writes that the disciples are to love "as I have loved you," he implies that Jesus is at once¹⁰⁴ the model, the reason, the ground, and the mediator of the disciples' love for one another. Thus we must look to various levels of meaning in the expression "as I have loved you" rather than opt for one or another meaning to the exclusion of all others.

Certainly one ought not to set aside, as readily as does Bultmann,¹⁰⁵ the fact that Jesus' love for his disciples is the model of their love for one another. In the present redaction of the text, the footwashing scene (Jn 13: 1-20) is clearly presented as an example of Jesus' love for his disciples. It is situated within the context of Jesus' love for his disciples unto the end (v. 1) and terminates with a discussion on the exemplary character of Jesus' action (vv. 13-20).¹⁰⁶ Within that discussion Jesus' action is presented as "an example that you also should do" (v. 15). The parallelism between v. 15, "For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you,"¹⁰⁷ and v. 34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you," is, moreover, such to link the commandment with John's exposition of the exemplary gesture.¹⁰⁸ The gesture not only situates the commandment within the perspective of Jesus' Passion-glorification but serves notice that the

104. Fully a half-century ago, Macgregor already wrote that, "Jesus' love is to be at once the source and measure of theirs." Cf. G.H.C. MACGREGOR, *o.c.*, p. 289. De Dinechin also points to a fuller understanding of the *kathōs* formula by citing the "three dimensions: logical, chronological, and unifying" of the relationship. Cf. O. DE DINECHIN, *art. cit.*, p. 210. Brown notes that "For John *kathōs* is not only comparative but also causative or constitutive, meaning 'inasmuch as.'" Cf. R.E. BROWN, *Gospel*, p. 663.

105. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel*, p. 525. Undoubtedly Bultmann's rejection of the interpretations of Loisy and Schumann, the former suggesting that Jesus' love offers a model for the intensity of the disciples' love and the latter suggesting that Jesus' love offers a model for the manner of the disciples' love, owes to his exegetical apriori. An existential analysis of the text does not leave room for an exemplary role to be accorded to the love of the historical Jesus.

106. It must be granted that there is considerable discussion as to the relationship between Jn 13: 1-12 and 13-20. Substantial opinion holds that vv. 13-20 are a later addition to the tradition. As such they serve to add a paraenetic reflection to a tradition which is essentially Christological and soteriological in emphasis. Cf. M.E. BOISMARD, "Le lavement des pieds," *Revue biblique* 71 (1964) 5-24; G. RICHTER, "Die Fusswaschung Joh 13, 1-12," p. 301-320; "Die Deutung des Kreuzetodes Jesu in der Leidensgeschichte des Johannesevangeliums (Joh 13-19)," *Bibel und Leben* 9 (1968) 21-36; J.D.G. DUNN, "The Washing of the Disciples' Feet." On the other hand, Alfons Weiser has argued vigorously against Richter's position. He holds that basically the verses have been inserted into the narrative by the evangelist himself. Cf. A. WEISER, "Joh 13, 12-20 — Zufügung eines späteren Herausgebers?" *Biblische Zeitschrift* 12 (1968) 252-257.

107. Apropos 13: 15, Victor Furnish comments: "Jesus has provided not just an ideal model or pattern to be imitated. His action becomes 'exemplary' insofar as his disciples themselves have been served by his love." V. FURNISH, *The Love Command*, pp. 136-137.

108. Thus de Dinechin classifies the saying of 13: 15 along with those found in 13: 34 and 15: 12 within the third type of similitude found in Jn, i.e. "*agapē* as similitude." Cf. O. DE DINECHIN, *art. cit.*, p. 208.

fulfillment of the commandment is effected in loving service.¹⁰⁹ Thus Cerfaux noted that the footwashing is "the example, the symbol, and the commandment of brotherly love."¹¹⁰

When John returns to his exposition of the love commandment in 15: 12-17, "love" (*agapē*) serves as the catch-word to link vv. 12 and 13 together. Thus, the love with which Jesus lays down his life for his friends (v. 13)¹¹¹ is implicitly proposed as a model for the disciples' love for one another.¹¹² Indeed the particularism with which the significance of the Passion is formulated in v. 13 — lay down his life "for his friends" (*hina tis tēn psuchēn autou thē huper tōn philōn autou*) — is consistent with the particularism of the object of the love commandment and the particularism of that love for his own (13: 1) which serves as the springboard for John's reflection on the significance of the Passion. From the love of Jesus manifest in his passion, one can point to the intensity and extent of the love which ought to be characteristic of Jesus' disciples. In effect, Jesus' laying down his life for his friends is not only an example of great love; it ultimately constitutes the love of the brethren as Christian love.¹¹³

Thus it would seem not only legitimate but exegetically imperative to speak of an ethics of imitation¹¹⁴ with respect to the Johannine formulation of the love commandment. The ethics of imitation is not foreign to Johannine thought. The soteriological-Christological saying of Jn 12: 24 is also followed (v. 25) by a call to imitation.¹¹⁵ Thus, and with respect to the love commandment, Jesus' love for his disciples serves as the norm of fraternal love. More specifically Jesus' love for his own is normative with respect to its object, its intensity, and its quality as loving service.

The ethics of imitation proposed in 13: 34 is grounded in the salvific act that Jesus is to accomplish as he departs from his disciples. The Passion-glorification of Jesus inaugurates the time for the fulfillment of the love commandment and serves as the basis for the obligatory force of the commandment.¹¹⁶ Because Jesus has loved his own and that unto his hour, the disciples must love one another. In this sense the memory of Jesus' love for his own should serve as a motivating force, urging the

109. Even Bultmann and Käsemann underscore service as the content of the love commandment in Jn. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel*, p. 526; E. KÄSEMANN, *o.c.*, pp. 61-62.

110. L. CERFAUX, *art. cit.*, p. 37. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *o.c.*, p. 324; A. FEUILLET, "La morale chrétienne," pp. 667, 670; J. SEYNAEVE, *art. cit.*, p. 393.

111. The command may in fact be formulated according to some well-known proverb. Cf. PLATO, *Symposium* 179B (Brown); ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 8; 1119C, 18-20 (Feillet); Tyrt. 6: 1ff. (Bultmann).

112. Cf. R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel*, p. 682.

113. Cf. D.J. HAWKINS, *art. cit.*, p. 213; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 124.

114. Cf. A. FEUILLET, *ibid.*; R. THYSMAN, *art. cit.*, p. 172; J. SEYNAEVE, *art. cit.*, p. 399; A. LACOMARA, *art. cit.*, pp. 76-77; and A. LOISY, *o.c.*, p. 736. Nevertheless Hendriksen remarks that "the love of Christ cannot in every sense be a pattern of our love toward one another." W. HENDRIKSEN, *o.c.*, p. 305.

115. Cf. A. WEISER, *art. cit.*, pp. 254-255.

116. Cf. R. THYSMAN, *art. cit.*, pp. 172-173; A. PLUMMER, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Cambridge, 1882, *ad loc.* Jack Seynaeve comments that this Johannine love commandment derives its entire motivation from a christological fact — charity manifested by Christ himself. Cf. J. SEYNAEVE, *art. cit.*, p. 396.

disciples to love one another. The disciples must love one another not only "as" Jesus loved them (the ethics of imitation) but "because" Jesus loved them (the motivation for brotherly love).

As with most covenant motifs, it is the memory of a divine favor in the past which creates future covenantal obligations. It is the memory of what Jesus is for the disciples which allows for the Johannine insertion of the love commandment in the farewell discourses. It is as the one who is about to accomplish that for which he has been sent, that Jesus can command the disciples to love one another. Indeed, as has already been suggested, the love commandment is no arbitrary decree of some despot but the legacy of the departing Lord. The very use of the word *entolē* suggests that the person of the Lawgiver is of importance for the obligatory force of the commandment. In no case is the commandment to be separated from the one who commands; but in the case of 13: 34 the circumstances of the command give its fulfillment an urgency which it would not otherwise have. Thus fidelity to the memory of Jesus who loved them unto the end moves¹¹⁷ the disciples to love one another.

To move the discussion one step further, we must agree with Bultmann that the *kathōs* of v. 34 expresses the integral connection between the "love one another" and Jesus' love which they have experienced.¹¹⁸ One can then speak of Jesus' love as the foundation of the disciples' mutual love.¹¹⁹ The disciples' love for one another is grounded in the love of Jesus in the sense that the disciples' love for one another is the fulfillment of the purpose of Jesus' love. The love which the disciples have for one another continues the love which Christ has for them. Jesus loves them in order that they might love one another.¹²⁰ His love culminates in their love,¹²¹ one for the other. His love is the enabling force of their love. As Bultmann writes: "The imperative is itself a gift, and this it can be because it receives its significance and its possibility of realization from the past, experienced as the love of the Revealer: *kathōs ēgapēsa humas*."¹²² The commandment itself is the gift of Jesus and the possibility of its own realization.¹²³

117. Cf. N. LAZURE, *Les Valeurs Morales*, p. 220.

118. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel of John*, p. 525. In somewhat similar vein, Lacomara writes: "The love that is to be expressed in mutual charity is nothing less than the love that found supreme expression on the cross. It is because of this love, and according to the measure of this love, that the disciples are to love one another, the *kathōs* of 13: 34 and 15: 12 signifying both 'because' and 'as.' Because the Passion, the foundation of this law is new and, strictly, unparalleled, the law of charity is not a repetition of a former stipulation, but the enunciation of a new code by which the new community is to be bound together and united to Jesus." Cf. A. LACOMARA, *art. cit.*, p. 77. Similarly, H. VAN DEN BUSSCHE, *Le Discours d'Adieu de Jésus*, Tournai, 1959, p. 58.

119. Bultmann often speaks of the "foundational" (*begründend*) sense of *kathōs*. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel*, pp. 527-528, and *passim*. Indeed, he states that, "The only thing that is specifically Christian is the grounding of the command and, in line with this, its realization." *The Gospel*, p. 542, n. 4. Cf. also H. SCHLIER, "Die Bruderliebe," p. 238, n. 1, p. 244; and R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 60.

120. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *Gospel*, p. 525.

121. Cf. L. CERFAUX, *art. cit.*, p. 37; O. DE DINECHIN, *art. cit.*, p. 209.

122. R. BULTMANN, *Gospel*, p. 525. Cf. H. SCHLIER, *art. cit.*, pp. 239-240.

123. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 60.

At the deepest level, however, the *kathōs* of 13: 34 overcomes the extrinsicism of the commandment. What the departing Jesus leaves to his disciples is not so much an order, but his presence in another mode. The love of the disciples for one another has its ontological root in the love of Christ which in turn is the love of God for them. It is, in fact, characteristic of Johannine theology to get back to the very foundation of the salvific realities.¹²⁴ Thus John, alone among the evangelists, offers a profound theological interpretation of love, an interpretation that is appropriately called "metaphysical."¹²⁵ Brotherly love means that the loving disciples participate in the very life of God.¹²⁶

To grasp the realities toward which the Gospel is pointing, we must begin with the love of the Father for Jesus.¹²⁷ Twice (Jn 3: 35; 5: 20) John notes that the Father's love for the Son is the source of all that the Son has. It is because of the Father's love that the Son has all things (3: 35); because of that same love the Son is able to do the works of the Father (5: 20). In effect, the mission of the Son results from the Father's love. In fulfilling his mission, the Son abides in the Father's love (15: 10). The *menein en* formula of Jn 15: 10 underscores the reciprocal immanence of the Son and the Father. The Son, by fulfilling his mission, has kept the Father's commandments. Thus the Son abides in the Father and the Father in Him.

Yet the very love of the Father for the Son is the exemplar of the love¹²⁸ which Jesus extends to his disciples (15: 9). The relationship is such that de Dinechin speaks of the *Analogatum Princeps* of similarity.¹²⁹ 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 (*kagō humas ēgapēsa*)" (15: 9). There is similarity, but there is no extrinsicism because the Son abides in the Father's love. Thus one can say that the Son loves his disciples with that love with which he is loved.¹³⁰

124. Cf. L. CERFAUX, *art. cit.*, p. 38.

125. Already Martin Dibelius had spoken of the double nature of *agapē* in Jn: its popular aspect and the "metaphysical" conception. Cf. M. DIBELIUS, "Joh 15, 13"; also A. FEUILLET, "Le Temps de l'Église," pp. 69-70; *Le Mystère*, pp. 20, 84. Cipriani has, however, taken issue with Dibelius' "metaphysical" interpretation. Cf. S. CIPRIANI, *art. cit.*, p. 218. A weakness of Dibelius' position was, in fact, his separation of the ethical from the ontic dimensions of the love commandment and finding only the latter to be characteristic of Jn. These two aspects compenetrates one another.

126. With somewhat more precision than a strict interpretation of the text warrants, Feuillet has even written that "the Christian life has become like a reflection of the Trinitarian relations." Cf. A. FEUILLET, "La morale chrétienne d'après saint Jean," p. 666. Cf. also A. FEUILLET, *Le mystère*, p. 58; "Un cas privilégié de pluralisme doctrinal: La conception différente de l'agapē chez saint Paul et saint Jean," *Esprit et Vie* 82 (1972) 497-509, p. 501.

127. Cf. H. SCHLIER, *art. cit.*, pp. 235-239. Cf. also R. SCHNACKENBURG, "Excurs 10. Die Liebe als Wesenseigentümlichkeit Gottes," in *Die Johannesbriefe*, pp. 206-213.

128. Jn 15: 9. Cf. A. HUMBERT, *art. cit.*, p. 204.

129. Cf. O. DE DINECHIN, *art. cit.*, pp. 198-199.

130. Cf. Jürgen Heise, who comments: "The love of the Son for his own is grounded in the love of the Father for the Son (cf. 3: 25). In the love of the Son the Father's love has been revealed to the world." Cf. J. HEISE, *Bleiben. Menein in den Johanneischen Schriften, Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie*, 9, Tübingen, 1967, p. 89.

When now Jesus commands his disciples to love one another, it appears that the love which he has for the disciples is the *tertium quid*, the mediating link, between the Father's love and the disciples' love for one another. Were one to combine, more immediately than the evangelist has done, vv. 9 and 12 of Jn 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." In effect this means that the disciples are also the recipients of the Father's love, through the mediation of Jesus' love for them. This the evangelist states explicitly in the Priestly Prayer: "Thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me" (17: 23). That love does not remain extrinsic to the disciples since the Father's love with which the disciples are loved is in them: "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them" (17: 26).

Although the evangelist does not make use of the powerful *menein en* formula to speak of the disciples' being in the Father's love, he does so when he reflects on the love which the disciples have for one another: "abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (15: 9c-10). The commandment above all which the disciples are to keep is the love commandment which follows almost immediately (15: 12). It is clear that to "abide in my love" is the same as to "abide in me and I in you."¹³¹ Thus the reciprocal immanence of Christ and the disciples is the existential situation of those disciples who truly love one another as Jesus has loved them. Such reciprocity is not a reward for keeping the love commandment.¹³² Rather the love commandment is gift. Here, as so often in the Fourth Gospel, the Giver abides in the gift which He gives.¹³³

Thus within the broad context of Jesus' mission, understood both in terms of commandment and of Jesus' participation in the life of the Father, falls the love commandment in its specifically Johannine formulation. The disciples' love for one another is caught up in a series of participatory relationships¹³⁴ in which we can discern two main motifs. On the one hand there is the Father's command to the Son bearing upon the totality of the Son's mission, and the command of the Son to his disciples at the hour of fulfillment of that mission. In a real sense, the mission of the Son is fulfilled in the love commandment. On the other hand, there is the Father's love for Jesus, Jesus' mediating love for the disciples, and the disciples' love for one another. The love of the disciples for one another has its true source in the love of God as Father.¹³⁵ In a very real sense, then, there is reciprocal intimacy between

131. Jn 15: 4. Cf. J. HEISE, *o.c.*, p. 90.

132. Cf. J. HEISE, *o.c.*, p. 90.

133. With Brown and Feuillet one can cite the influence of Wisdom motifs. Divine *Sophia* abides in men and makes them God's friends. Cf. R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel*, pp. 682-683; A. FEUILLET, *Le mystère*, pp. 42-43.

134. Cf. A. HUMBERT, *art. cit.*, pp. 188, 215; O. PRUNET, *o.c.*, p. 99.

135. Cf. J.L. BOYLE, *art. cit.*, p. 218. Prunet distinguishes this "theological" sense from eschatological and the ecclesiastical sense of the love commandment. Cf. O. PRUNET, *La morale chrétienne d'après les écrits johanniques*, Paris, 1957, p. 98.

the Father and Jesus, between Jesus and his disciples, and between the Father and the disciples because of the reality of love.¹³⁶

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Now the significance of "love one another" (*hina apagate allēlous*) as the content¹³⁷ of Jesus' new commandment comes to the full. The evangelist has sought to interpret the meaning of Jesus' glorification-return to the Father. To do so, he has employed the genre of the farewell discourse. The genre which he has chosen requires that the Departing One have something to say about the relationships which ought to obtain among those whom he is about to leave. Departure is not the moment for universal legislation; rather, it is the moment for memory and family spirit. Thus John's Jesus speaks of mutual love rather than of love of enemy¹³⁸ or love of neighbour¹³⁹ precisely because he is presented as giving instructions to his own as he is about to leave them: they are to be one among themselves even as he is one with them.

Yet it is not only the choice of literary genre which has dictated the particularism of the Johannine formulation of the love commandment. The Johannine dualism,¹⁴⁰ so apparent in the exposition of the love commandment in 1 Jn 2 but also present in the farewell discourse, especially in its second part, has also contributed to a shaping of the apparently restrictive object of the love commandment in its Johannine formulation.¹⁴¹ In Jesus the final times have arrived for those who are his disciples; they indeed belong to the light, and not to the darkness. The eschatological salvation of the future¹⁴² is made present in the love of the community.¹⁴³ In effect, the love commandment in Jn is particularistic in its formulation because it is a reflection on the Church in the situation of Jesus' absence-presence. In somewhat similar fashion, but without the depth of theological reflection present in John's formulation of the

136. Cf. O. DE DINECHIN, *art. cit.*, pp. 214-215; H. SCHLIER, *art. cit.*, p. 241. The point is well emphasized by David L. Mealand, who writes: "It is because God has known his own from the beginning, and has revealed himself to them in his Son, that they in turn know and trust him. But above all it is in the dynamic of *agapē* that the mutuality consists. Dodd expresses this very well when he speaks of indwelling as due to the love which is 'the very life and activity of God.'" Cf. D.L. MEALAND, *art. cit.*, p. 31 with reference to C.H. DODD, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, London, 1952, p. 196.

137. The *hina* clause is to be taken expegetically so that "love one another" constitutes the commandment. Cf. R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel*, p. 607; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 60. Bultmann comments: "And in so far as the content of the *entolē* is *hina agapātē allēlous*, the care for oneself is changed into a care for one's neighbour." Cf. R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel*, p. 525. Cf. 2 Jn 5 where the *hina* clause, *pace* Brooke (*o.c.*, p. 173), relates to *erōtō*. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Die Johannesbriefe*, pp. 311-312.

138. Cf. Mt 5: 43 (44-48). Cf. Lk 6: 27-28, 32-36.

139. Mk 12: 31 and par.

140. Cf. N. LAZURE, *Les Valeurs Morales*, p. 232.

141. In this respect it is to be noted that Jesus' love is also directed to "his own." Cf. Jn 15: 9. The Father's love is, however, directed to the world. Cf. Jn 3: 16.

142. Cf. Jn 14: 2.

143. Cf. J. BECKER, *art. cit.*, pp. 230, 232; O. PRUNET, *o.c.*, p. 106.

love commandment, even the love commandment of the Old Testament was rather particularistic in its formulation. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev 19: 18) speaks more of love among the Israelites than it speaks of a universal love. Yet this prescription is not so restrictive as it is a covenant stipulation bearing upon the relationships which ought to obtain among those who are covenanted with God and with one another. The love commandment of John is also a covenant reality — the way of those who belong to the new covenant, abiding in the Father through the mediation of Jesus' love.

If the literary genre adopted in Jn 13-16, Johannine dualism, and the covenant connotation of the love commandment in Jn prompt a formulation of the commandment in terms of "brotherly love," one can speak of the sectarian character of John's formulation of the love commandment. It is sectarian in the sense that it is a reflection on the Johannine church against a dualistic background, but it is not sectarian if that means that hatred for those outside of the brotherhood is the necessary concomitant of those who belong to the brotherhood. Oftentimes the dualism of the Fourth Gospel has prompted a comparison between it and the Qumran writings.¹⁴⁴ Both speak of love within the community.¹⁴⁵ Indeed it would appear that brotherly love is the binding force of the members of the sect according to the views of the Qumran sectarians. Thus some commentators suggest that John's exposition of the love commandment is similar to that of Qumran's.¹⁴⁶ But the parting of the ways comes with the realization that John's love commandment never explicitly challenges the disciples to hate those who do not belong to the brotherhood.¹⁴⁷ His reflection simply bears upon the relationships which ought to obtain among the disciples themselves.¹⁴⁸

Indeed in 13: 35 John appears to have defined discipleship in terms of "love for one another."¹⁴⁹ The gift-commandment of brotherly love forms Jesus' followers

144. Cf. F. C. CHARLESWORTH, "A Critical Comparison of the Dualism in 1 QS 3: 13-4: 26 and the 'Dualism' Contained in the Gospel of John," *NTS* 15 (1968-1969), 389-418.

145. Cf. 1 QS 1: 9-11 and 2: 24-25; 5: 4, 24-26; 6: 25-27; 7: 4-9; 8: 2; 10: 17-18; 11: 1-12; CD 6: 20; 7: 2-3; 13: 18.

146. For example, Lucetta Mowry who has written: "To be sure, the evangelist hesitates to press his exclusion to an attitude of hatred for outsiders, but by implication he approaches the Qumran point of view." L. MOWRY, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Early Church*, Chicago, 1962, p. 30. Cf. E. KÄSEMANN, p. 59. Still more nuanced is the view of Leon Morris: But we should not without further ado assume that the attitudes of Qumran and of John are the same, or even basically similar... Nevertheless it is of interest that the Qumran exhortations to brotherly love should be more nearly paralleled in John than in other parts of the New Testament. L. MORRIS, *Studies in the Fourth Gospel*, Grand Rapids, 1969, pp. 338-339. In a similar vein, cf. R. E. BROWN, "The Qumran scrolls and the Johannine gospel and epistles," *CBQ* 17 (1955) 403-419, 559-574, pp. 561-564.

147. Cf. F. C. FENSHAM, "Love in the Writings of Qumran and John," *Neotestamentica* 6 (1972) 67-77, esp. pp. 69, 75.

148. It is surprising, therefore, that Schnackenburg speaks, in context, of the universality of Christian love in contrast to the particularism of Judaism. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Die Johannesbriefe*, p. 111.

149. In v. 35 John uses one of his descriptive definitions. Cf. 16: 30; 1 Jn 2: 3, 5; 3: 16, 19, 24; 4: 9, 13; 5: 2, in each of which is found a following *hoti* clause. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel*, pp. 525, n. 1; 539.

into a community and provides that community with its identity before the world.¹⁵⁰ Since the community is constituted by Jesus' love, the mutual love which it evidences before the world is its mark of recognition and its sign of credibility.¹⁵¹ The community is composed of those to whom the gift of the love commandment is given. As love is a concrete expression of the life of God in the world, those who receive the gift of the love commandment are those who are begotten of God.¹⁵² John joins love and faith together.¹⁵³ As those who believe are begotten of God, so those who love are begotten of God. It is to the children of God that the love commandment is given. Thus it is most appropriate that the proclamation of the love commandment in its Johannine formulation formed a traditional part of the baptismal catechesis within Johannine circles.

The love which is given and which constitutes believers as members of the faith community is, however, not a static reality. Love must produce its fruits. In fact, Jn 15: 9-17, with its theme of love, is really an interpretation of the idea of bearing fruit which is found in the parable of the vine and the branches.¹⁵⁴ A life of love must be the normal occupation of the disciple. To love is the way which the disciple has to do righteousness.¹⁵⁵ His loving is the visible manifestation of the fact that he is the child of God. Thus love is more than a commandment for the disciple. It is his way of life, his mandate.¹⁵⁶

Thus it is the ecclesial situation of the Johannine community which has prompted the seemingly restrictive formulation¹⁵⁷ of the new commandment of love, but it is the Christological gift inherent in that commandment which yields its richness. To separate the Johannine formulation of the love commandment, "that you love one another," from its Johannine context, "a new commandment I give to you... even as I have loved you, that you also love one another," is to misrepresent Johannine thought. Yet it is only by means of such an exegetically unwarranted separation that one can arrive at the conclusion that John intended to restrict the scope of application of the traditional (i.e. Synoptic) logion on love.¹⁵⁸

150. Cf. V. FURNISH, *The Love Command*, p. 139; R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel*, p. 613; P. VAN BOXEL, *art. cit.*, p. 23; C. SPICQ, *Théologie Morale*, pp. 493, 506. The latter speaks of the "institutional law of the Church" and the "constitution of the Church."

151. Cf. N. LAZURE, *Les Valeurs Morales*, p. 229; S. CIPRIANI, *art. cit.*, p. 229; A. FEUILLET, "Le Temps de l'Église," p. 69.

152. Cf. 1 Jn 2: 29-3; 10. Cf. N. VALLANICKAL, *The Divine Sonship*, pp. 295, 313-314.

153. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Moral Teaching*, p. 325; H. SCHLIER, *art. cit.*, pp. 240-241; R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel*, p. 529. Bultmann considers Jn 15: 1-17 to be a commentary on 13: 34-35. He notes that, "The exposition of the command of love as the essential element in the constancy of faith makes it clear that faith and love form a unity; i.e. that the faith of which it can be said *kathōs ēgapēsa humas*, is authentic only when it leads to *agapan allēlous*."

154. Cf. R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel*, p. 680; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 127.

155. Cf. N. VALLANICKAL, *The Divine Sonship*, p. 295; A. HUMBERT, *art. cit.*, p. 209; H. SCHLIER, *art. cit.*, p. 244.

156. Cf. N. LAZURE, *Les Valeurs Morales*, pp. 144-145; "Louange," p. 79.

157. Cf. N. VALLANICKAL, *The Divine Sonship*, p. 299.

158. A more accurate reflection on the limited scope of the Johannine formulation of the love commandment is offered by Feillet who writes of "a privileged case of doctrinal pluralism." Cf. A. FEUILLET, "Un cas privilégié."

The Johannine love commandment is not so much a precept as it is a gift. It does not so much imply a dictate from above as a presence from within. Looked at as one of the salvific gifts which Jesus gives to his own, the love commandment is indeed for those whom he has chosen and to whom Jesus gives the gifts of salvation. The salvific gifts are given to those who are his disciples, for it is among and with them that Jesus abides. Thus Jesus' love for his disciples, as the revelation of the Father's love, is made present in the love which they have for one another. It is this pregnant theological reflection which constitutes the new commandment as an expression of that Revelation which the Revealer has come to make known. It is the reality of this participatory love which is Jesus' abiding in them, that is significant for all men, past and present : ¹⁵⁹ "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13: 35).

159. Abbott already called attention to the frequent use of the present subjunctive in the farewell discourse(s): the precept extends to all future generations. Cf. C.A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Vocabulary*, *Diatesseraica*, 4, London, 1905, p. 2529. From another point of view, a similar point is made by N. LAZURE (*Les Valeurs Morales*, pp. 216-217).