

'A matter of having fellowship': Ethics in the Johannine epistles

Dirk G. van der Merwe

1. Introduction

The Johannine epistles teach ethics that is almost frankly simple (cf. Van der Watt 1999, 491; Schnackenburg 1967, 316) and yet intriguing.⁷⁸² While its simplicity lies in its resemblance to the Fourth Gospel with regard to the 'new commandment' that Jesus gave to his disciples, namely to 'love one another' (John 13:34; 15:12, 17) – a command that is repeated in the first two Epistles (1 John 3:11, 18, 23; 4:7, 11, 21; 2 John 5) and implied in 3 John (compare 3:10; 4:7 with 3 John 6, 11) as the *sine qua non* of their ethics – an element of intrigue is introduced through the mode in which the Elder⁷⁸³ describes it and the various aspects that he inheres in it.

The first part of the above heading indicates the ethos of the ethics in the Johannine epistles as a matter of *κοινωνία* (fellowship) within a family. It is from this perspective that Johannine ethics will be approached. Already in the *prooemium* and verses 1:6, 7 of 1 John, the Elder tries to explain the close relationship between *κοινωνία* among believers, and between the group of believers and God, which encompasses a matter of spirituality. The one relationship determines and constitutes the other.

782 A lack of general social awareness outside the circle of the Johannine community led some interpreters to doubt whether one can speak of 'ethics in the Johannine epistles' at all; see Klauck 1991a, 277-80.

Probably the most extreme critic on ethics in the Johannine Epistles is Sanders 1975, 100, who sees Johannine ethics as weak and morally bankrupt. A Johannine Christian, he says, on seeing a wounded traveller would ask: 'Are you saved, brother?' instead of giving aid. In this chapter an attempt is made to disprove this allegation by proving how strongly ethics figures in the Johannine epistles.

783 In this chapter it has been accepted, in agreement with the point of view of most scholars, that the three Johannine epistles were written by the same person, referred to in 2 John 1 and 3 John 1 as the *πρεσβύτερος*; Brown 1997, 398; Culpepper 1998, 251; Kenney 2000b, 12; Painter 2002, 18; Thomas 2004, 4. Therefore, the author will be referred to as 'the Elder'.

To introduce this research, it is necessary to refer to the methodology used. Although the three epistles⁷⁸⁴ are closely related, 3 John will be dealt with separately from 1 and 2 John, owing to its more personal character. The two specific existential historical situations in 3 John provide grounds for the decision to discuss 3 John separately. Some of the vocabulary of 2 John is much more like that of 1 John. In the case of the first two epistles, 1 John will be used as the main source in the discussion of Johannine ethics and 2 John will be incorporated where appropriate or necessary. This discussion will be done from the perspective of the symbolic narrative of 'family metaphoric', which constitutes the setting for the interpretation of 1 and 2 John. In order to facilitate an inter-textual understanding of this 'metaphoric', we will look at the customs in first-century Mediterranean family life to provide us with a socio-historical framework against which the ethics of 1 and 2 John will be balanced.

2. Ethics in 1 and 2 John

First and Second John depict a community torn apart (2:18) by doctrinal and ethical differences. First John was addressed to a group that formed part of this community, which included a circle of house churches that had been rent asunder by a schism (Painter 2002, 84). According to Culpepper (1998, 48), serious differences of opinion had precipitated a schism by the time 1 John was written. The deception was already a reality;⁷⁸⁵ it had already caused a rift in the community (Kenney 2000b, 101). It seems as if those who had detached themselves from the group were threatening to encourage others to follow their example. Second John addresses a house church that had close ties with the Elder and the Johannine community. In content this epistle resembles 1 John, as it makes concise reference to some of the same concerns. In an attempt to encourage, instruct and exhort his adherents to maintain a specific form of conduct in these circumstances and to institutionalise a social pattern of fellowship,⁷⁸⁶ the Elder employs a vocabulary that conveys images of *family life*.⁷⁸⁷

784 See Strecker's 1996, 253f; cf. also Painter 2002, 331-336 comparison between 2 and 3 John, in which he focuses on the similarities between these two epistles. Also, see Klauck 1991b, 109ff.; Thomas 2004, 38 for a comparison between 1, 2, and 3 John.

785 The use of the present-tense verb 'πλανώντων' (deceive) is significant here to emphasise the ongoing or immediate nature of the deception; cf. Danker 2000, 821.

786 A predominant function of the Roman family, which was strictly hierarchical, cf. Dixon 1991, 19.40.41, was to evoke images of authority, while the family metaphors

2.1. 'Family metaphoric': the setting for understanding the ethics of 1 and 2 John

The group who separated itself from the Johannine community (τῶν πλανώντων, 1:8; 2:26; 3:7; 2 John 7) and threatened to draw others from the community claimed a form of spiritual illumination. Through this spiritual illumination, they claimed to have attained a state beyond ordinary Christian morality in which they had no more sin and have already attained moral need to continue to resist sin. This result, in their chief ethical error, appears to be a spiritual pride that led them to despise ordinary Christians who did not claim to have attained the same level of spiritual illumination. Therefore, the Elder warns his adherents against claiming to be without sin (1 John 1:8-2:2). He admonishes those who claim to know God, but disobey His commandments (1:6-7; 2:4-6; 5:2-3), or who claim to love God, but do not love their brothers (and sisters) (2:7-11; 3:10-18, 23; 4:7-11, 20-21). He also cautions against loving the world and warns against its power and temptations (2:15-17; 4:4-6; 5:19). Against those who claimed to be children of God (2:19), the adherents of the Elder (community of orthodox believers, 2:24; cf. also 1:1; 3:11; 2 John 5f.) formed a group on their own.

In the ancient Mediterranean world, society consists of groups. Being part of a group was important and a matter of convention.⁷⁸⁸ The in-group of the Johannine community, and how the common life is lived within this group, are what matters to the Elder, and this is the focus of

used by the first Christians imply equality; family metaphors were used to describe relationships between people; see Lassen 1997, 114f.

787 At the beginning of the Christian era, the Roman family had a remarkably strong impact on society – as the ideal and as a metaphor. The family ideal was used for the creation of metaphors outside the family sphere. However, there was no uniform model of family life. Van Henten and Brenner 2000, 2 refer to the 'growing awareness that a single model or concept of "family" obtains no more for antiquity than it does for contemporary life'. See also Van der Watt 1999, 492; Esler 1997, 123; Joubert and Van Henten 1996, 121; Malina & Neyrey 1993a, 26-27 and De Vaux 1973, 20ff., who point out the differences between families in different societies and the diversity of types of family across the Mediterranean in the first century AD. In the light of this cultural diversity in the ancient Mediterranean world, it made good sense to work from a general perspective. In using the word 'family', the wide diversity of family forms across the Mediterranean was acknowledged.

788 Malina 1982, 1986, 1993; 1996, 64; also Esler 2000, 147; Robbins 1996, 101 points out how important group identity, real kinship and fictive kinship relations were in the first-century Mediterranean world – it fully determined the identities of individuals. Since they were group oriented, they were socially minded, attuned to the values, attitudes and beliefs of their in-groups. Because these people were strongly embedded in a group, their behaviour was controlled by strong social inhibitions along with a general lack of personal inhibition.

his doctrine and ethics (cf. Botha 2005, 395-6). By reminding his adherents of their fictive kinship, of their common identity (ἀδελφοί [2:9, 10; 3:10, 12(bis), 13, 15, 17; 4:20(bis), 21; 5:16], ἀλλήλους [1:7; 3:11, 14, 16, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5]), and the values, conduct and doctrine that set them apart from other groups (e.g. the deceivers) in their society, the Elder entrenches their identity as a group, and serves to continue to regulate social (ethical) behaviour in this group.

To this end, the Elder uses this most intimate social phenomenon in the ancient world, namely 'the family'⁷⁸⁹ (Van der Watt 1999, 494), to describe the existential reality of being and living as Christians in such a group.⁷⁹⁰ In doing so, he uses a coherent network of metaphors,⁷⁹¹ related to the social reality of first-century family life (Van der Watt 1999, 491; also Lassen 1997, 103; Moxnes 1997), to provide an understanding of fundamental Christian concepts. He applies widely accepted conventions from everyday life to what happens in the community, and uses generally accepted ideas about family life to explain what Christian life in the community comprises⁷⁹². Therefore, the relevant social and family conventions of that time have to be considered for better under-

789 In the *New Testament*, Jesus groups are described from a strongly 'group-embedded, collectivistic perspective', perceiving themselves as forming 'the household of God'. Sandnes 1997, 156 points out that in the family terms of the New Testament, old and new structures come together. There is a convergence of household and brotherhood structures. The New Testament bears evidence of the process by which new structures emerged from within the household structures. What we see in the New Testament is not an egalitarian community that is being replaced by patriarchal structures; the brotherhood-like nature of the Christian fellowship is in the making, embedded in household structures'.

790 According to Berger and Luckmann 1966, 120, part of the function of parenetic utterances is social formation, where admonitions are made to strengthen the induction 'of an individual into the objective world of a society or sector of it'. This is exactly what the Elder is doing: he is reminding his adherents of the shared values of their particular group that set them apart from the group of deceivers.

791 Metaphorical language forms an important part of any culture; Lassen 1997, 103. Its main function is 'to provide a partial understanding of one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience'. Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 154. Adams 1983, 56 states that, 'Just as "naturalistic" metaphors impact upon an audience, so do relational images impact and act to unify audiences'. When the Elder tries to unite his adherents in an imaginary bonded-in-family, he exhibits a collective orientation, using a network of familial images that can be conjured up for collective purposes. The result is that the familial entanglement of his adherents (addressees) brings about unity, fellowship and the required prescribed ethical conduct in the particular relationship. In this case relational images therefore had a 'bonding power'. 'Brothers and sisters' is a much more powerful form of address than 'people' if the purpose is to promote unification; cf. Adams 1983, 57.

792 Achtemeier, *et al.*, Green, Thompson 2001, 547 assert that the family imagery may provide useful evidence regarding the internal structure and organisation of the Johannine community.

standing. In using these complex metaphors, developed in the text itself (cf. Van der Watt 1999, 493), the Elder focuses only on specific central and widely accepted and relevant aspects (Van der Watt 1992, 272-9) that are important for his purpose. Through doing this, he tries to activate the social dynamic of the interrelatedness between a father and his child and between children mutually in the mind of his adherents. The household of God is the sphere where this Christian fellowship is constituted and experienced.

2.1.1. Family dynamics in the Johannine epistles

The Elder portrays the Christian life of fellowship in the Johannine community as existence in a family⁷⁹³ (Rusam 1993, 105ff.; Van der Watt 1999, 494ff.; Van der Merwe 2005b, 443f) where God is 'the Father' (τὸν πατέρα, 3:1) and the head. The believers are 'children of God' (τέκνα θεοῦ, 3:1-2, 10; 5:2), 'born from God' (γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). They confess that God is 'Father' (πατήρ, 1:2; 2:1, 14-15, 22-24; 3:1; 2 John 4) and are referred to by the Elder as 'brothers' (ἀδελφοί and 'sisters', 3:13) to each other. Jesus is God's 'Son' (Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, 4:15), and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ, 4:2f.). Thus the Elder brings God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and believers into a fellowship that is reminiscent of the fellowship that is enjoyed by an extended earthly family (cf. Tollefson 1999, 88).

a) The position and function of the *Father*

In 1 John God, the Father, is depicted as light (ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστίν, 1:5), righteous (ὁ θεὸς] δίκαιός ἐστιν, 1:9; 2:29) and love (ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν, 4:8, 16). The nature of the Father determines the new status and rules of conduct to which his newborn children have to conform. As the one who cannot be seen (4:12, 20), He knows everything (3:20). He creates κοινωνία, enabling them to be part of this new family (2:25; 3:14-15; 5:11-13), by giving them eternal life through his Son (1:2; 4:9; cf. also 4:11, 14). The Father takes care of his children and lives in and with them by way of the Spirit (3:24).

793 Esler 2000, 148; cf. also 145ff.; 1997, 121ff. points out that neither Greek nor Latin possessed a word that corresponded to our 'family' – οἶκος in Greek and *domus* in Latin refer to the house and the household respectively. This concept also occurs in Galatians and 1 Thessalonians in the New Testament.

b) The position and function of *Christ*

Jesus is depicted as the Son of God (3:8; 4:15; 5:5, 10, 12, 13, 20; 2 John 3) and is eternal life personified (1:1-2). He is righteous (2:1; cf. also 3:7) and pure (ἀγνός, 3:3), because he is without sin (3:5). Therefore, he is also referred to in functional terms (Van der Watt 1999, 502) in relation to God's children: he is the believer's atoning sacrifice (ἱλασμός, 2:2; 4:10), therefore through his 'blood' people are cleansed from all sin (1:7). As advocate (παράκλητος, 2:1), he restores broken *κοινωνία*. He gives God's children understanding to know him who is true (5:20).

c) The position and function of the *Spirit*

This new existence of God's children can be experienced in a concrete way by the Holy Spirit, who carries out the redemptive work of the Father and the Son (2:20). He also constitutes the presence of God (4:13; 3:24) and guides and educates his children (2:27) in the *familia Dei*. Other functions of the Spirit are those of teacher (2:27), empowerer (3:24 in the context of obedience; 4:13, in the context of love), confessor (4:2) and witness (5:7f.; cf. Kenney 2000a, 47). The Spirit becomes the guiding influence in the lives of God's children (2:20-27; 5:7), influencing their conduct and sustaining the *κοινωνία* in the family. The Spirit will give God's children knowledge (2:20). The Spirit witnesses to the truth (5:6a) and will guide God's children in the truth (5:6; see also Von Wahlde 1990, 126ff.).

d) The position and function of the *children of God*

The adherents of the Elder are depicted as God's children who abide (μένειν) in Him, and in whom He abides (3:24; 4:13, 16). When they became part of the *familia Dei*, major fundamental changes took place in their lives. They know the Father and do what pleases Him (3:22), therefore, they ought to walk as Jesus walked.

2.1.2. Ethics and ethos in the *familia Dei*

The ethos of the ethics in 1 and 2 John is a matter of having fellowship (*κοινωνία*) in the *familia Dei*. Fellowship between God's children and corporate fellowship with God (1 John 3, 6, 7), constitute the character

of existence in this family. Plutarch, a contemporary of the Elder,⁷⁹⁴ refers to this aspect when he accentuates the parent-child and the brother-brother relationships equally, and demonstrates how closely linked these two relationships were in first-century Mediterranean family life. This 'mutual' and 'corporate' fellowship is what the Elder tries to explain to his adherents when he talks about how life should be in the *familia Dei*.

However, the Elder does not always see eye to eye with Plutarch: Plutarch does not regard these relationships as functions of each other, as the Elder does. The Elder tried to prove that the one constitute the other and is dependent of the other. Whereas Plutarch does not simply subsume brotherhood under a patriarchal kinship system (cf. 482F, 483B-C), the Elder does. Because a believer is born (ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται) into this *familia Dei* and has to take on the same 'life' as the Father, the believer is expected to conduct him/herself in a specific way: his/her conduct should be such that it does not harm (ἀμαρτία) the fellowship, but should strengthen (*κοινωνία*) it. It should be constituted through and characterised by love (ἀγάπη) (compare Van der Watt 1999, 491-511; Schulz 1987, 512-526; and Johnson 1993, 7f.18-19; cf. also Brown 1982, 79ff.). These fundamental ethical aspects (*κοινωνία*, ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται, ἀμαρτία, ἀγάπη) will now be discussed.

2.1.2.1. Ethics, a matter of *κοινωνία*⁷⁹⁵

The noun *κοινωνία* is a significant theological term in 1 John.⁷⁹⁶ It occurs twice in the *prooemium* (1:3[bis]) and two more times in the rest of chap-

⁷⁹⁴ Plutarch is favoured due to his contemporariness (50-120 AD) to the writings of 1 and 2 John and his ethics on family life. He was probably the most famous biographer (and historian) of the Ancient Mediterranean World in that time. He was, for many years, a priest at the famous oracle at Delphi and the author of a famous collection now known as *Plutarch's Lives*. Plutarch's other famous work is his *Morals*, now known collectively as the *Moralia* (<http://www.e-classics.com/plutarch.htm>, 10 March 2006, 22h45).

⁷⁹⁵ Within scholarship two distinct and disparate views have developed concerning the message of 1 John. They have arisen as a consequence of two variant perceptions of the purpose of the epistle. The one comprises 'salvation' (5:13, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον) and the other 'fellowship' (1:3, *κοινωνία*); see Derickson 1993, 89-105; cf. also Smalley 1984; Kenney 2000a. In fact, they complement one another. Both these themes are mentioned in the prologue to 1 John, where the Elder gives, as we may expect, a synopsis of his principal motifs. In this chapter the emphasis falls on the 'fellowship' perspective.

⁷⁹⁶ This is indicated by all the references to τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, ἀλλήλους, plural personal pronouns, and verbs in plural. Although the formulas of immanence refer primarily to fellowship with God, fellowship with one another is also implied.

ter one (1:6, 7) to create a chiasmic pattern. The function of the chiasmic structure is to emphasise the interrelatedness and interdependency of the *κοινωνία* among believers and their corporate fellowship with God. The one kind of *κοινωνία* demands and constitutes the other⁷⁹⁷. The Elder makes the primary reference: 'we have fellowship with one another' (*κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων*, 1:7), and this is dependent on 'you may have fellowship with us' (*κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ' ἡμῶν*, 1:3), which opens up *κοινωνία* with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ (cf. Painter 2002, 128; Rusam 1993, 182; Westcott (1982, 11). Both these forms of *κοινωνία*, which reflect, influence and constitute each other, occur throughout the epistle in other formulas and related deeds and imaging.

a) *Κοινωνία* as a matter of 'knowing', 'having',
'being in', and 'abiding in'⁷⁹⁸

These formulas of immanence (*Immanenzformeln*, Schnackenburg 1992, 63-69; cf. also Lieu 1991, 31-48; Strecker 1996, 44) express the character of *κοινωνία* from various perspectives that explain the qualitative life-style of the children of God in the *familia Dei*. All these closely related formulas of immanence show the central significance of this concept (*κοινωνία*) in these two Johannine epistles, which have a strong connection with other leading concepts, especially that of 'children of God' (3:1-3), which has strong ethical implications (cf. Lieu 1991, 42).

⁷⁹⁷ According to Danker 2000, 552, the Greek word *κοινωνία* lexicographically means 'close association involving mutual interests and sharing, association, communion, fellowship, close relationship'. The semantic meaning, according to Louw and Nida 1988, 446, relates to Danker's definition, 'an association involving close mutual relations and involvement - "close association, fellowship"'. Founded on the above related definitions and based on the adjective meaning 'common' (*κοινός*), the noun *κοινωνία* then denotes the active participation or sharing in what one has in common with others: doing something together or sharing something Haas *et al.* 1972, 27. The nature of what is mutually shared moulds the character of the group. In this context it refers to the 'new life' (cf. 1:1, 2; 2:25; 5:11-13) the believers share with Christ (and God) and with one another. This 'new life' in Christ creates and stimulates the desire for such fellowship and calls not for isolation, but for *active participation with other believers in this 'new life'*.

⁷⁹⁸ 'Knowing' (*γινώσκειν*, 1 John 2:3, 4, 13, 14; 3:6; 4:6-8), 'having' (*ἔχειν*, 1 John 2:23; 2 John 9; cf. also 5:12), 'being in' (*εἶναι ἐν*, 2:5; 5:20) and 'abiding in' (*μένειν ἐν*, 2:6, 24; 3:24; 4:13, 15, 16). Methodologically, within this purview, the formulas of immanence should also include the 'abiding' in other entities which are also closely connected with God, such as: 'truth' (1:8; 2:4; 2 John 2); 'his word' (1:19; 2:14; cf. 2:24; 5:10); his 'anointing' (2:27); 'his seed' (3:9); 'eternal life' (3:15); and 'love' (4:12; cf. 2:5; 3:17); the Spirit (3:24; 4:13); God self (3:24[bis]) abiding in the believer and reciprocally the abiding of the believer in the Son (2:6, 24, 28; 3:5, 24). Mutual abiding is referred to in 4:13, 15, 16 and 2 John 9.

In the sphere of family life parents educate the children according to their own standards and beliefs. Therefore, 'knowing the Father' will lead the children of God to correct conduct (according to his character [cf. 1:5; 2:29; 4:8, 16] and will [2:17]). Such knowledge of God comes through the Son of God who gives believers understanding (5:20). 'Knowing Jesus' (2:3-5) is related to knowing and keeping his commands and his Word. Hence, knowledge of the Father and his Son constitutes the basis on which the individual family member and the family as an entity should live. To know God and his Son is also to know the Spirit of God (4:2) who is the Spirit of truth (5:6; cf. also 4:6). Know the truth implies knowing what kind of conduct is expected in the *familia Dei*.

The phrase 'being (*εἶναι*) in God' semantically relates to 'abide (*μένειν*) in God' (they are parallel in 2:5f.). The same applies in the case of 'having' (*ἔχει*) the Father or the Son (2:23; 5:12; 2 John 9).⁷⁹⁹ In 1 John, abiding is a reciprocal experience and a uniquely Johannine expression of personal fellowship. When the children of God obey his commands or live in love, they abide in God as God abides in them (3:24; 4:12-16).

By using these formulas the Elder encourages his adherents to get their relationship (*κοινωνία*) with God right. This will obviously strengthen their *κοινωνία* with the other members in the family. The child of God can only make these claims of immanence when these claims are justifiably matched by a life of obedience and love (2:5f.; cf. Lieu 1991, 41f.).

b) *Κοινωνία* as a matter of acting (*περιπατεῖν*)
according to one's immanency.

Throughout the epistles the Elder emphasises the need for the children of God to act according to their status and knowledge.⁸⁰⁰ The conduct of God's children has to relate to the social conduct (rules and values) of the family into which they are born.

The Elder uses the verb *περιπατεῖν*⁸⁰¹ (translated as 'walk' or 'live') as one of the etiquettes to describe such conduct in the *familia Dei*. In 1

⁷⁹⁹ 'Having' is virtually synonymous with 'believing'. See the parallel between 'believing in' and 'having the Son' in 5:10, 12.

⁸⁰⁰ See 1 John 1:6, 7; 2:3-5, 9-10; 3:16; 4:11; 2 John 6, 9; cf. also 1 John 2:29; 3:6, 9-10, 18; 4:7.

⁸⁰¹ The verb *περιπατεῖν* occurs 5 times in 1 John (1:6, 7; 2:6[bis] and 2:11). In 1:6, 7 *ἐν τῷ φωτὶ* (*σκοῦται*) *περιπατῶμεν* is directly linked with *κοινωνία*. This implies that when the *τέκνα θεοῦ* walk in the light, they have fellowship with God and with one another. When they walk as Jesus walked, they also walk in the light. In 2 John

John it is used five times in connection with 'having fellowship' with God and one another (1:6, 7; 2:11) and 'imitating' Christ (2:6). For 'living' in the light the Elder suggests actions that correspond to God's actions (cf. Schnackenburg 1967, 312). In 2:6 he states that the lifestyle of believers should correspond with that of Jesus: καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιπάτησεν καὶ αὐτὸς [οὕτως] περιπατεῖν. This happens when believers act according to God's commandments (2:3, 4; 2 John 6).⁸⁰² They should 'obey' (τηρεῖν) the commandments (2:3, 4; 3:22, 24; 5:2, 3; in 2 John 6, ἵνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ) or God's word (2:5). According to Van der Watt (1999, 504f.), the verb τηρεῖν indicates 'an obedient orientation towards the will of God the Father' (5:1-5).

c) Κοινωνία, a matter of *Imitatio Christi*: '...ought to walk just as (καθὼς)⁸⁰³ he walked' (2:6)⁸⁰⁴

According to Plutarch, older brothers should not behave in a fatherly fashion towards younger brothers, but should treat them in a way that is characterised by comradeship and consideration. Younger brothers should treat the older ones not as rivals, but as models, with respect and obedience (486F-87B). In such a group situation a dyadic personality is one that constantly needs another person to know who he/she is. Such a person perceives him/herself as always interrelated to others (Malina & Neyrey 1993b, 73-74). Thus, within the framework of the identity and behaviour of the other members of the group, the most important and prominent members (the father and eldest brother), individual members find their self-definition (Van der Watt 1999, 501).

This is probably what the Elder had in mind in his two 'ought to' (ὀφείλει, 2:6; 3:16) references to Christ. According to the Elder, Christ,

περιπατεῖν occurs thrice to characterise this life in the *familia Dei* as περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ (v. 4) and περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ (v. 6).

⁸⁰² See also 2 John 4 and 3 John 3, 4, 8 for περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.

⁸⁰³ This καθὼς concept focuses, according to the Fourth Gospel, on the following basic aspects concerning the *imitatio Christi*: dependence ([5:19-15:5]; 6:57; 15:15; [12:49; 14:10-17:8]); mission (13:20; 17:18; 20:21); knowledge (10:14, 15); love in obedience ([15:9; 15:10; 13:34f.; cf. 15:12]; [5:20-14:12]; 17:23); unity (14:10f.; 14:20; [14:10-15:4]; 10:30; 17:11, 21-23); glory (15:8; 17:1-5, 22-24); obedience of Jesus' commands (15:10) and life (6:57); also 1 Corinthians 11:1. See Van der Merwe 2001, 131-148.

⁸⁰⁴ The obligations of the children of God in the family are spelled out in all three Johannine epistles and in each case contribute to an understanding of the behaviour of these children, which is associated with walking. 1 John 1:6 speaks of the right conduct as walking in the light, whereas 2 John 6 specifies the commandments as the sphere of walking, and 3 John 3 identifies truth as the sphere of behaviour Kenney 2000a, 117. See also, καθὼς (2:6; 3:3, 7; cf. also 3:23; 4:17) in the comparison of the believer's life with the life of Jesus.

the Son of God, is the template for the conduct of believers. Through their active participation or sharing in the way Jesus lived they have a 'common' (κοινός) ground which not only moulds the character of the children of God, but also constitutes the κοινωμία in the family. Therefore, the Elder has pointed out that ethics in 1 and 2 John is not a matter of a set of rules; it is an existential way of living that is established by the attitude and behaviour of Jesus, the Son of God. This 'way of living' can only actualise in believers through the Spirit.⁸⁰⁵ Through the existential guidance of Jesus and the spiritual guidance of the Spirit, the believer, as a child of God, finds his/her own way to please Him (3:22; cf. Van der Watt 1999, 506).

In his portrayal of Jesus in relation to the Father, the Elder, in 1 John, points out the following acting qualities in Jesus' life to which believers must conform.

1) In 1:5 God is depicted as the light (ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστίν) in whom there is no darkness. In Jesus there is also no sin (3:5). Therefore, the same must be true of God's children. This implies that they must 'walk in the light' as Jesus 'walked in the light' and 'purify themselves, just as he is pure' (3:3).

2) God (1:9; 2:29)⁸⁰⁶ and Jesus (2:1; 3:7) are both depicted as being 'righteous' ([ὁ θεὸς] δίκαιός ἐστιν, 1:9; 2:29; Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον, 2:1). Jesus has shown that righteousness is a quality of God (2:1). A person is known by his/her deeds. Only through faith in Jesus (5:1), through birth from God (2:29; 5:1), can a person act according to the example of Jesus. Such behaviour lies in the familial bond (Van der Watt 1999, 506).

3) In 4:8, 16 God is depicted as love (ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν). According to 3:16, Jesus shows what that love is by laying down his life for humankind (3:16; cf. also 4:9, 10, 14). Therefore, believers 'ought to' lay down their lives for one another. In this way the love of Christ (and God; cf. 4:9-14) will be continued through believers into the lives of other believers. Jesus acts in love (3:16). Believers are exhorted to love (3:16; 4:12). Thus the *familia Dei* is a family of love, the sphere where God's love is communicated, shared and experienced.

It is frequently attested in the New Testament tradition that the exemplar of Jesus must lead to *imitation*.⁸⁰⁷ The indicative of the Jesus

⁸⁰⁵ On the role of the Spirit regarding this cf. John 14:15-19; 15:26-27; 16:5-16; 1 John 2:20, 27; 3:24.

⁸⁰⁶ Scholars are divided regarding the question whether the verb ἐστίν refers to God or to Jesus. See Brown 1982, 382 for a discussion on the different opinions. In this chapter Painter's point of view 2002, 214f. is accepted. His arguments that 'God' is implied are convincing.

⁸⁰⁷ Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:15; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 6:12-13; 1 Peter 2:21-24; Hebrews 13:13-14. Also see Schnackenburg 1992, 182. The most important ancient rhe-

event 'ought to' (ὀφείλειν) effect the imperative of Christian life (cf. 1 John 4:11; 5:12-13).⁸⁰⁸ In comparing Christian behaviour with that of Jesus, part of the Elder's rhetoric is to motivate God's children to live in the *familia Dei* as Jesus did.⁸⁰⁹

The above-mentioned *familia Dei* qualities in Jesus' life are also discussed by the Elder in relation to the lives of the children of God. These qualities will now be discussed under the headings: 'live in righteousness', 'live in the light', and 'live in love'.⁸¹⁰

2.1.2.2. Live in righteousness: 'everyone who does right has been born of him' (2:29)

To become a member of the *familia Dei*, a person has to be born into it. This happens through faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (4:15; 5:5). Through such a rebirth through God they have been legitimised to be children of God⁸¹¹ with everything that it involves, especially on the social level. In the new birth and implanting of the divine seed, the Elder clearly sees something more than a new relationship. It means, according to Ladd (1998, 664), that a new dynamic, a new power, has entered

torical handbooks that discuss the use of examples (παράδειγματα, *exempla*) as a rhetorical device are Aristotle's *Rhet.*, Quintilian's *Inst.*, and two anonymous treatises, *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. A lengthy discussion of what each of these rhetoricians says in regard to *exempla* has already been done by Cosby 1988:93ff. The question concerning the use of 'examples' as rhetorical devices, was whether they had a probative or an illustrative function.

808 The verb ὀφείλειν with an ethical obligation also occurs in 1 John 2:6; 4:11; 3 John 8; John 13:14.

809 All this is a matter of doing the will of God the Father (2:17). Ethics in the *familia Dei* is determined by what the Father of the family requires. Therefore, the conduct of all the members of the family should reflect the character of the family as it is personified in the head of the family; cf. Van der Watt 1999, 506.

810 The following scholars basically use the same structural division for 1 John, based on the three above-mentioned characteristics about God. Cf. Malatesta 1978, xvff.; Culpepper 1998, 269; and Tollefson 1999, 84; Von Wahlde 1990; Kim 1998; Kenney 2000a and Painter 2002. Also see Brown 1982, 764 for a list of scholars who made a three part division of 1 John in relation to these characteristics. According to Tollefson 1999, 88, 'the epistle is a commentary concerning three significant choices of *conduct* (my addition) in life: walking in the light – walking in darkness, works of righteousness – works of unrighteousness, and a love that produces life – or a hate that produces death'.

811 It should be noted that all five the texts in which the phrase τέκνα θεοῦ is used, occur in contexts where the clause ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται (born from God) is also used (2:29; 3:1, 2, 9, 10; 5:1, 2, 4, 18, 19; cf. also 4:7). Not only are believers 'born of God' or called 'children of God'; they are simply 'of God' (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, 4:1, 4, 6; cf. 4:3, 6) because 'God's seed abides in them' (3:9). These phrases point to divine origin; cf. Lieu 1991, 39.

the human personality, which is confirmed by a change of conduct. The new birth will reorient the person's thinking and conduct. When a person accepts this new way of life, new rules and new values replace previous traditions, rules and values. The child of God has to take on the same life as the Father, which must be evident in the conduct of the family. This 'family life' then implies specific ethical conduct as spelled out in 2:29 by the Elder as 'everyone who does right has been born of him'. Similar statements also occur in 3:9, 10; 4:7; 5:1-2. From these verses it is clear that to be born into a particular identity constitutes a particular ethical way of acting (cf. 3:1-2).⁸¹² This is integral to the Johannine reflection on ethics. Such people will act right⁸¹³ (2:29; 3:7): do the will of God (2:17) or walk as Jesus did (2:6; 3:3, 16).

2.1.2.3. Live in the Light: 'if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another' (1:7) and 'with him' (1:6)

This statement is made in a context where the Elder talks about sin (1:5-2:2). According to the context it infers that sin in the *familia Dei* does not only hamper fellowship with God, but also with fellow family members. This implies that believers who sin will taint the honour of the Father and the *familia Dei*.

Honour was, according to Malina (1993, 31ff.; also Malina & Neyrey 1993a, 25),⁸¹⁴ the primary good in the ancient Mediterranean world. This is the positive value of a person in his or her own eyes, together with the positive appreciation and acceptance of that person by his/her social group. What is honourable is what people (in the group or family) consider valuable and worthy (cf. Malina & Neyrey 1993a, 26). To maintain that honour is the responsibility of all the members of the family (Malina & Neyrey 1993b, 76).

812 In this epistle, the picture of these children (adherents of the Elder) is clearly contrasted with a similarly developed picture of those ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου (opponents of the Elder). In the Elder's comparison of the believers with the world, they become aware of the existential differences concerning status and behaviour between them and the world. This is one of his rhetorical devices.

813 See Du Rand 1981, 31-33 and Kotze 1981, 78 concerning filiations in the 'family of God' according to 1 John.

814 The author of this chapter is aware of the fact that socio-historical treatment of ancient 'group' dynamics and 'family' life in first century Mediterranean world, is much more complicated as treated in this chapter. Each time when references occur, the underlying principle has been interpreted and stated in order to make it applicable and relevant to promote a better understanding of 'family metaphoric' in the Johannine text.

For the Elder God's character, to which his children must conform, is the manifestation of the honour of God and the *familia Dei*. Therefore, he is outspoken about sinful acts that disturb the fellowship in the *familia Dei*. However, what if a member of the family fails and brings shame on the family? The Elder addresses this problem from two antithetical perspectives.

a) καὶ ἐάν τις ἀμάρτη (But if anyone does sin, 2:1).⁸¹⁵ In 1 John 1:8-9 the Elder infers that, even though they are part of the *familia Dei*, children of God do continue to sin.⁸¹⁶ 'The strong social conventions did not succeed in eliminating disobedience in practice' (Van der Watt 1999, 497). Even though there was strong social or religious pressure on people to obey their parents and live according to the traditions of the family, disobedient children were a reality. Where a father was disobeyed, he would be dishonoured or shamed, for his claim would not be acknowledged. He would suffer shame, which comprised the loss of honour, reputation and respect (Malina & Neyrey 1993a, 26, 27). Disobedience was regarded as reprehensible, because it destabilised relationships within the family and because it dishonoured the character of that family.

For the sake of the group, the individual who transgressed might be, on the one hand, ruthlessly ejected from the group (cf. Malina & Neyrey 1993b, 77). However, within the family, on the other hand, there was the chance that mistakes made could be corrected to restore the honour of the family. In 1 John something similar occurs. Through their confession of sin, regretfully acknowledging trespassing and again declaring loyalty to the will and commandments of the Father and the family, the believers are granted forgiveness and purification by the Father (1:9). The Father will also restore the relationship between Him and his children (cf. παράκλητος in 2:1; cf. also κοινωνία in 1:3, 6-7 in connection with the restoration of relationships) and the relationship between his children. When a child of God confesses his/her sin and

815 Although the noun ἀμαρτία (sin) has not specifically been defined in 1 John (cf. 1:9; 3:4), it seems to relate to the conventions of the day. The Elder also discusses sin in 3:4-10 (with an explication in 3:11-17) and 5:16-19. See Van der Merwe 2005a, 543-570 for a more thorough discussion on sin in the Johannine epistles.

816 The position of this announcement on sin in the letter (before his announcement that children of God 'do not/cannot sin') is a matter of rhetoric. The Elder emphasises in the unit, 1 John 1:5-2:2, that the children of God are not without sin and that they must acknowledge and confess it. These statements address the claims of the deceivers that they do not sin. The next unit where he contemplates on sin (3:7-10) is to exhort his adherents not to sin because it does not befit the children of God to continue to sin.

when the Father forgives him/her, the normal order within the family is restored. Then the believer who has been unrighteous becomes righteous again (1:9). This infers that transgressions do not invalidate the existing relationship between God and his child. That is why personal confession (ὁμολογῶμεν, 1:9) and the advocacy (παράκλητος, 2:1) of Jesus⁸¹⁷ can restore the strained relationship.

b) Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ (Those who have been born of God do not sin, 3:9).⁸¹⁸ In 1 John 3:9 the Elder makes an antithetical statement (to the previous one in 2:1) that 'Those who *have been born of God* do not sin, because God's seed abides in them;⁸¹⁹ they cannot sin, because they *have been born of God*'. This verse is constructed chiasmatically with the focal point in this verse on ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει (because God's seed abides in them). The reason why children of God cannot sin is 'because God's seed abides in them'. This verse refers to their identity as part of the *familia Dei*, because God is their Father (they have been born of him, and his seed abides in them) and prescribes what their actions ought to be: not to sin.

In the ancient Mediterranean family, children owe honour to parents, and brother owes honour to brother (Plutarch, 479D) and parents are owed the greatest honour after the gods (479F). Therefore, obedient children remain completely focused on acting according to their identity. They do not even consider acting contrary to their identity and thus harming or dishonouring the family.⁸¹⁹ This is what the Elder had

817 Jesus' role and function as παράκλητος have to be understood within the framework of the 'family court' (family *concilium*). Such a court served as an organ of discipline that was constituted by the core unit of the family. Normally, the male head of the family conferred with other members before deciding how to react against a member of the family who had trespassed. The noun παράκλητος may suggest such a judicial situation. Jesus' advocacy is needed when a family member has sinned; he must then approach the Father; cf. Van der Watt 1999, 500. Plutarch also points out that when conflicts between brothers arise, it is preferable that they are solved internally, between those involved, and with justice as judge (483D, 488B-489B). If necessary, others can be present, as arbitrators or witnesses, but these ought to be friends which they have in common (483D, 490F-491A).

818 These 'children of God' are labelled 'they cannot sin'; if they obey his word (2:5), if they love one another (4:12) and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them (4:17), then in this person the love of God has reached perfection.

819 Cain is referred to in chapter 3 as one who betrayed his family by killing his brother (3:11-12). By doing this he illustrates that he did not belong to the *familia Dei*. According to the context of chapter 3, he is a 'child of the devil'. The two brothers belonged to different 'spiritual' families and acted accordingly. Their natural love for one another as brothers was overpowered by their allegiance to their real 'fathers'. That is why Cain committed murder, and why people of the same earthly family can turn against one another. Van der Watt 1999, 504. This then implies that the spiritual fam-

in mind when he states that a child of God 'does not/cannot sin' (3:9; 5:18; cf. 2:29; 5:4). In hyperbolic language, the Elder seeks to promote right belief and proper conduct. He definitely does not believe that those under instruction are actually perfect; but sinlessness is what is expected of God's children (Edwards 1996, 102).

The point the Elder wants to make is that a person who 'carries God's seed in him/her' cannot continue to live in sin because a new principle of life has been implanted in that person (Strecker 1996, 100). There must be an obvious change in the person's conduct. It involves a reorientation – an orientation towards God and an orientation away from Satan, the world and selfishness.

2.1.2.4. Live in Love: 'let us love *one another*' (1 John 2:10; 3:10, 11, 14, [18], 23; 4:7, 11, 12, 21; 5:1-3; 2 John 5).

In his *Peri Philadelphias* ('On Brotherly Love') Plutarch discusses how brothers in the *family* should treat one another.⁸²⁰ Plutarch regards brotherly love as an important element within kinship ethics. According to him, the fundamental and most important reason for brotherly love is based on nature, as they have the same biological origin: 'Nature from one seed and one source has created two brothers, or three, or more, not for difference and opposition to each other, but that by being separate they might the more readily co-operate with one another' (478E). Thus brothers should love one another out of respect for their common parents (480A-C). Moreover, love of brothers is proof of love of parents (480F). You do not love brothers, but are born into community with them, and thus under obligation to love them (482B).

In 1 John the community is also called upon to love one another (and God by implication, 2:15; 4:20; 5:20) as brothers and sisters belonging to the same family, the *familia Dei*. The reason given for this love in

ily supersedes, existentially and ethically, the physical family to which a person belongs.

⁸²⁰ Plutarch's *Frat. amor* is particularly useful here since it was written in the first century A.D. and its author essentially offers a collection of stock morality covering both Greece and Rome on the subject of how brothers should treat one another. It is the only extended and systematic presentation of what Antiquity had to say about what Betz 1978, 232 calls, the 'ethics' of brotherly love. See Esler 1997, 127. Hierocles, a second-century Stoic, also devoted a part of his *Elements of Ethics* to conduct towards brothers (see the translation of his *Anthologium* 4.25.53 and 4.27.20 by Malherbe 1986, 93-96. Plutarch bemoaned the fact that during his day brotherly hatred was much more common than brotherly love (478C) and offered detailed and shrewd advice on how and why it might be encouraged.

1 John differs from that given by Plutarch. In 1 John the Elder grounds the obligation to 'love one another' in God: 'God is love' (4:8, 16), 'love is from God' (4:7) and '...since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another' (4:11). The obligation is grounded in the loving act of God in Jesus (4:10; cf. also 4:9, 14) and is expressed in the love command (*ἐντολή*). Therefore, according to Painter (2002, 101), must 'those who bear the message of that love assert that acceptance of the message is the means by which the love of God becomes effective, creating community (*koinōnia*): 1 John 1:3, 6, 7. Community with God does not bypass community with believers, and that community is expressed in love for one another'.

In both 1 and 2 John, the object of the believer's love is indicated as ἀλλήλους⁸²¹ (one another). More important than the number of times ἀλλήλους is used, is the concentration of the command to ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους (*love one another*).⁸²² This formulation, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, is exclusive to the epistles (and the Gospel) of John. The mutuality is grounded in the love command, but the love command is itself grounded in the loving action of Jesus (Painter 2002, 100). In other cases, only in 1 John, the object of love is more closely referred to as τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ (translated and improvised in the NRSV in the plural as 'their brothers and sisters'). Thus, the consistent use of the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλους seems to be a conscious delimiting of the scope of love.⁸²³

⁸²¹ This reciprocal pronoun is used 100 times in the New Testament. Of these occurrences, a great concentration is found in the Fourth Gospel (15x). 1 John uses the term 6x (1 John 1:7; 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12) and 2 John once (v. 5).

⁸²² 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5 (cf. also John 13:34[bis], 35; 15:12, 17).

⁸²³ Bultmann and others, Kuhl 1967, 196-207; Schnackenburg 1967, 183.328, endeavour to understand ἀλλήλους to include the believer's 'neighbour'. According to him is the Christian commandment to love one's neighbour 'neither limited nor annulled by the Johannine commandment to "love one another"'. For him 1955, 82; 1971, 527ff.; 1973, 28; cf. also Kuhl 1967, 104: 'the world constantly has the possibility of being drawn into the circle of mutual love'. Others, like Preisker 1968, 205; cf. also Brown 1982, 527ff.; Haenchen 1984, 118, have recognised clearly that the intention of the Johannine writers for Christian love was to be exclusive. Even Käsemann 1969, 59 states that 'there is no indication in John that love for one's brother would also include love toward one's neighbour'. In analysing the situation in 1 John, the conflict situation in which early Christianity stood with Judaism, Hellenism (paganism) and Christian Gnosticism narrows the view, so that the Elder sees only his own Congregation; cf. also Klauck 1991a, 279. Even if we should follow the majority of scholars who think that the Elder means primarily 'fellow Christians', we still must, in reply to Sanders' 1975, 100comment, point out it is not suggested anywhere in the Johannine literature that a Johannine Christian would neglect a dying stranger. Other references, ἀδελφοί (2:9, 10; 3:12, 13, 15, 17; 4:20, 21; 5:16) and ἀγαπητοί (2:7; 4:1, 7; ἀγαπητῶ, 1 John 3:2; 3 John 1; also τεκνία, 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21; ἐκλεκτῶ, 2 John 1; φίλοι, 3 John 14) that occur, are forms of address when the Elder speaks to his ad-

Two texts in 1 John cast some light on what is meant by existentially loving God the Father and fellow members within the *familia Dei* (cf. Schulz 1978, 524-527; also Brown 1987, 83-86; Van der Watt 1999, 508-510).

a) The first text is 1 John 2:15-17, where 'love for God' is described in terms of its antithetical, not to 'love the world or the things in the world'. Clearly, loving ὁ κόσμος stands in contrast to loving God, described here in terms of ethical conduct. Love of ὁ κόσμος refers to the desire (ἐπιθυμία) of the flesh, the desire (ἐπιθυμία) of the eyes and the pride of life (ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου). Such characteristics are typical of the selfish person who seeks his/her own gain at the expense of others in the family. The phrase ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου means 'the material possessions of this world, the physical resources, which one could use to help people in need' (Johnson 1993, 53; Danker 2000, 177; see also 3:17 where the noun βίος is used). In 2:16 the Elder indicates that he knows people, likely the deceivers, who boast of 'the world's goods' (τοῦ βίου). They boast of what they have, and do not share it with others who are in need (3:16, 17). They also deliberately 'shut off a feeling of compassion that the needy would instinctively arouse' (Brown 1982, 450).

Believers should not be enticed into such lust, desire, or pride, which will draw their attention away from the Father's will. Such an approach to life is self-centred: the thoughts, decisions and activities of everyday life are dominated by the cravings of a person's own flesh. Here the inference is that believers should live in a way that will not result in their priorities and orientation towards the family and fellowship within the family being adversely affected by the worldly things (cf. Van der Watt 1999, 510). Such a life endorses one's love for God.

b) The second text is 1 John 3:11-17. Here we find a description of two existent possibilities of living, with and without love (3:12-15), a de-

herents. They also spell out some characteristics of being τέκνα θεοῦ. Ἀδελφοί in the New Testament denotes 'fellow-Christians' or 'Christian brothers'. In John 20:17 Jesus calls his disciples his brethren, and he uses the same term to describe the relationship between the disciples (Mt 23:8; Lk 22:32). Ἀδελφοί refers to their relationship with other believers belonging to the same family, while ἀγαπητοί refers to the believers' relationship of love with God and fellow believers (cf. 2:5, 10; 3:1, 11, 14, 16, 23, etc.). Consequently, it can be deduced that the meaning and assessment of ἀδελφοί and ἀγαπητοί (also ἀλλήλους and τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ) are determined more closely by τέκνα θεοῦ. This contains a qualitative indication of the believer's new identity and status as part of God's family (*familia Dei*), which is, in principle, a *communio sanctorum* (holy community).

scription of what love is (3:16) and a practical implication (3:17; cf. Klauck 1989, 154).⁸²⁴

A description of two existent possibilities of living (assassination or love): In 3:11 the 'love command' is stated: that 'we should love *one another*' which is repeated in 3:23; 4:7, 11-12. With regard to love, two possible ways of existing ('existenzweisen', Klauck 1989, 160) are spelled out in verses 3:12-15. Cain is presented as an 'Urbild und Symbolfigur des Bruderhasses, der sich steigert bis zum Brudermord' (Klauck 1989, 156). When one reads 3:8, it can be deduced that he was from the devil, and 3:10 states that he was a child of the devil.⁸²⁵ Therefore, his unethical conduct that is the slaughtering (σφάζειν) of his brother can be related to his kinship.

In 3:13, 14 reference is made to an 'alternative existenzweisen' (Klauck 1989, 160). In verse 12, Cain is compared to 'his brother' (bis), Abel, whose name is not mentioned, but who personifies another possible way of existence. In 3:13-17 the noun ἀδελφούς is used four times to become a *terminus technicus* (Klauck refers to it as a 'Leitworte') in this context, for this 'alternative existenzweisen', which is characterised by the Elder as 'righteous' (δίκαια).

The Elder is radical in his descriptions of these two possible ways of existing (σφάζειν versus δίκαια). In the admonitions, throughout the Epistles, there are no grey areas or middle ground: a person is either one or the other (Schnackenburg 1967, 316), either alive or dead. People who have love for one another have passed from death to life.

In the depth structure of the text, 'no love' is identical with *hatred* and *death* (Klauck 1989, 162). Whoever does not have love, abides in death (3:14). All those who hate a brother or sister are murderers (σφάζειν), and eternal love cannot abide in a murderer (3:15). This *lebensraum* in which love is actualised, is said to be a community that exists in opposition to 'the world'. What the Elder tries to point out is that if believers do not love the other members in the *familia Dei*, they are no better than murderers and children of the devil.

A description of what love is ('... we ought to lay down our lives for one another', 3:16b). In contrast with 2:16, love is here described in terms of action taken in response to the needy. The self-sacrificing action of Jesus is used by the Elder as an example of what such love comprises and has a twofold orientation. Firstly, it refers to God's love (4:9-

⁸²⁴ Klauck 1989 uses 1 John 3:11-17 as basic text on which he did a discourse analysis. This analysis is used in the discussion here with some changes. See also Painter 2002, 348f. for a discussion on 2 John 4-6, showing how closely it relates to 1 John 3:17-18.

⁸²⁵ See Klauck 1989, 156-159 for a theological discussion on Cain and Abel in Gen 4:1-16 and other early Judaic and Gnostic literature. Also, see Callahan 2005, 32-34.

10) as the basis and qualitative determinant for the functioning of love in the *familia Dei*. God's love is demonstrated by his gift of his Son for the expiation (ἰλασμός, 2:2; cf. also 4:10) of the sins of the world. In Christ believers experience the love of God. According to 1 John this act defines what love comprises. Secondly, it serves as an example for believers to follow. In 3:16, as in 4:9-11, the revelation of what love is becomes the basis for the obligation 'ought to love one another', or 'ought to lay down our lives for one another'. Here, love is given concrete meaning in terms of laying down one's life for fellow-members of the *familia Dei* (Painter 2002, 241f.).

In 1 John, the verb ὀφείλειν ('ought to') is used three times in connection with love (2:6; 3:16; 4:11).⁸²⁶ What was been said in 2:6 is concretised in 3:16 and grounded in 4:11. The character of the obligation is demonstrated by the love of Jesus, 'to walk as (καθώς) he walked', which is summarised in the love command. This command has left its mark on 1 John, which has developed a καθώς-ethic (2:6; 3:3, 7; 4:17). In this ethic, the subordinating comparative particle, καθώς, draws attention to both the 'motivation' (4:11, 'love one another as I have loved you') and the 'manner' ('love in the same way as I have loved you'). 'Those who are touched by the love of God may not withdraw from their obligation to make the love they themselves have experienced a reality for others' (Strecker 1996, 115).

'To lay down our lives' (τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι) is to become involved in the lives of those in need in the family. According to Painter (2002, 235), in 1 John 3:16 (ἔθηκεν, θεῖναι), the use of τίθημι (lay down, 3:16[bis]) in the aorist, in both cases 'denote a specific act of giving ['he gave ... we ought to give']'. This point of view is supported by the Elder's use of ψυχή instead of ζωή (cf. Mk 10:45). Klauck (1989, 164) points out that 'ψυχή meint vom atl. Sprachgebrauch her (cf. Gen 2:7LXX) die Lebendigkeit, die Lebenskraft, die Lebensenergie'. In essence this means that he gave 'himself' (ψυχή) for the sake of those in need, as described by the Elder in 3:17-18.

A practical application of love ('...who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister? in need... let us love... in truth and action', 3:17-18; also 2 John 6).⁸²⁷ According to these verses, love comprises an

⁸²⁶ The sense of mutual responsibility (responsibility because the relation is signified by 'attitudes and actions' not 'blood' or 'biogenetics') that exist between 'brothers and sisters', raises an 'ought to' emphasis that bears upon the preservation of the relationship and introduces a dimension of 'caretaking' to what can be viewed as the beginning point of 'love' (or 'hate') cf. Adams 1983, 57.

⁸²⁷ See Callahan 2005 for an excellent explanation of practical and concrete love in the Johannine literature.

honest physical activity (see also 4:9, 10). 'The Elder argues that compassion is not merely an emotional response, grief elicited by someone else's grief. It is material relief, the concrete expression of mercy' (Callahan 2005, 38). The double emphasis of the opening clause of 2 John 6 (ἵνα περιπατῶμεν), as well as the last clause (ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατήτε), reminds the reader that love is not just words or feelings, but involves actions (cf. 1 John 3:17, 18). Even the repetition of ἵνα περιπατῶμεν... ἵνα... περιπατήτε stresses practice (Painter 2002, 348f.).⁸²⁸

Van der Watt (1999, 509) points out that this remark should be understood in the light of the ancient communal and familial way of thinking about property. Sharing common ownership of resources⁸²⁹ (κοινωνία) is seen as part of the natural cosmic order and is described as 'friendship' (φίλος), which is destroyed by the man seeking personal possession as referred to in 2:16. Esler (2000, 145) confirms this when he explains that a characteristic aspect of the centrality of the family in the Mediterranean cultures is a determination to share all available goods and benefits.

This indicates that love is not expressed through material necessities: it exists in them. To live is to love. We can therefore say that the Elder covers *all* the possible situations in which believers can aid one another and shows that Johannine fellowship is corporeal, carnal and fleshly (Callahan 2005, 38f.).⁸³⁰

2.2. Ethics and those who are not part of the *familia Dei*

The main social value in the Mediterranean region, as has already been stated above, is honour. Accretions of honour of one family member add to the honour rating of the whole family. On the other hand, where one family member is shamed, the whole family is shamed (Esler 2000, 152). Where a father is disobeyed, he would be dishonoured or shamed, which comprises the loss of honour, reputation, and respect (Malina & Neyrey 1993a, 26-27). Disobedience was regarded as reprehensible, because it destabilised relationships and fellowship within the family, and because it dishonoured the character of that family.

⁸²⁸ Compare Deuteronomy 15:7; Mark 10:21; Luke 10:25-37; James 2:15-16; *Didache* 13.3-7 for probably what is meant by these 'actions'.

⁸²⁹ According to Haas *et al.* 1972, 90 can 'the world's goods' (τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου) be understood as reference to 'the ordinary things of life'. In 2:16 τὸν βίον is used in a negative sense. For Schnackenburg 1992, 182 βίος means in this context, as in 2:16 (and Mark 12:44; Luke 21:4; 15:12, 30), 'livelihood', 'possessions'.

⁸³⁰ Foundationally is the exhortation for solidarity and approach of the poor anchored in the biblical tradition (cf. Deut 15:7-11; Jas 2:15-16).

Compliance with the rules in the *familia Dei* was crucial for the Christian fellowship, honour and the identity of this family, which can be regarded as introversion in its preoccupation with its own holiness (cf. Esler 1994, 90). Anything that should threaten this, like false doctrine or related behaviour, was severely frowned upon.⁸³¹ In 1 John the condemnation of those who deny sinning, who do not keep the commandments, who love the world, who do not denounce a false doctrine, who do not love a brother, is extremely severe (Cf. also 2 John 9-11). Therefore, those who had been guilty of these things and had caused a schism in the community are described by the Elder in the harshest terms.⁸³²

Within the family, when any member misbehaved, there was a chance that the mistake could be corrected and the honour of the family restored (cf. Plutarch, 483D, 488B-489B, 490F-491A; 1 John 1:9). The harsh terms used by the Elder to describe these deceivers, provide a clear indication that he has already accepted that they will not be able to correct their mistakes and can no longer be part of the *familia Dei* (2:19). Therefore, he labelled them to be ejected from the Johannine community as in the Christian excommunication procedures described in 1 Corinthians 5:5, 13 and Romans 16:17; see also Matthew 18:15-18 (cf. Malina & Neyrey 1993b, 77). Consequently, he urges his adherents in 2 John 10-11: 'Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who

831 This strong group sense and allegiance occur also elsewhere in the New Testament. In Revelation 3:15f., neutrality is strongly condemned. In the synoptic Gospels Jesus remarks that: 'Whoever is not against us is for us' (Mark 9:40). Botha 2005, 396 pointed out that: 'Belonging to a specific (fictive) kinship group in antiquity implied absolute loyalty, and compliance with the conditions set out for members of that community. No individual action or interpretation or deviance was allowed'.

832 These 'deceivers' are depicted and treated as existing outside the *familia Dei* (outside the group) and are (1) labelled according to the deeds they committed at the ethical level, on account of which they are called murderers (ἀνθρωποκτόνος, 3:15; see also 3:12, ἔσφαξεν) and who do not love a brother (4:20; also cf. 2:11; 3:15), and at the doctrinal level, on account of which they are depicted as deceivers (πλάνοι, 2 John 7; also 1 John 2:26; 3:7), antichrists (ἀντίχριστοι 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 8), liars (ψεύστης, 2:22) and false prophets (ψευδοπροφήται, 4:1). (2) These deceivers are also described within specific relationships: concerning the devil they are seen 'as children of the devil' (3:8, 10); in relation to God they are depicted 'as not from God' (3:10; 4:3, 6), 'do not know Him' (God) (3:1), and 'do (not) have fellowship with Him' (1:6); and finally they are seen as 'to be in the world' (4:5). (3) Metaphorically, in a reciprocal sense, it is said that they walk in the darkness, and do not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness (2:11). (4) In probably the harshest description it is said that they 'do not have life' (5:12; also 3:15) and 'abide in death' (3:14). In most of these references the harsh depiction of those 'outside the family' is contrasted with the characteristics of those 'inside the family' (group). Van der Merwe 2005, 550.

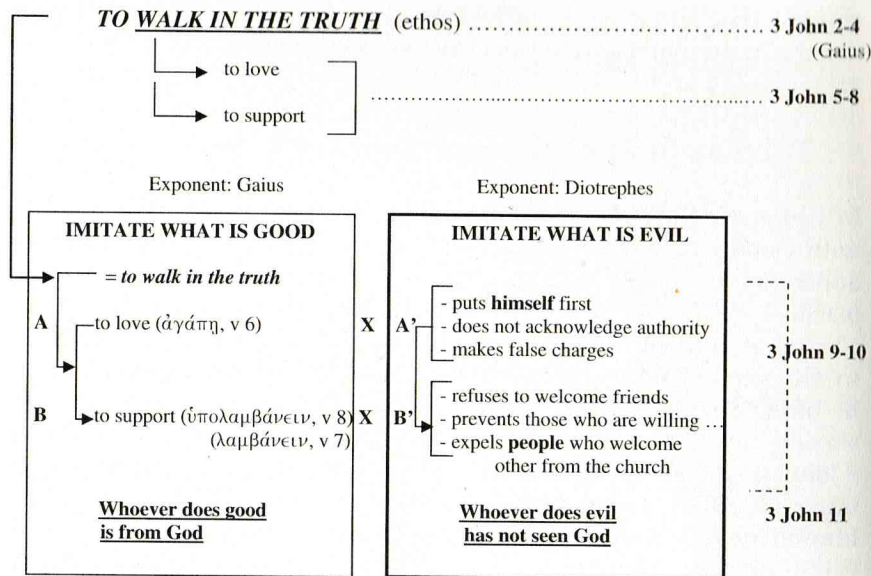
comes to you and does not bring this teaching; for to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person'.

3. Ethics in 3 John: The encouragement of fellowship

In 1 John the Elder discusses the interwovenness of 'having fellowship with God' and 'having fellowship with one another' and exhorts his adherents to comply to it; in 2 John he 'forbids fellowship with false teachers', and in 3 John he 'encourages fellowship (hospitality)⁸³³ with Christian brothers' (ἀδελφούς, vv. 3, 5, 10; also called φίλοι in v. 15[bis]). In order to encourage fellowship among Christian brothers in 3 John, he offers a stark contrast between two men who respond in opposite ways to travelling Christians⁸³⁴ who have been sent out by the Elder. In 3 John, the opposite ways in which they conduct themselves are used to illustrate ethics. The Elder points out that the way Gaius conducted himself demonstrated correct moral conduct. He expressed joy over Gaius' persistent walk (present active participle, περιπατοῦντα) in truth and over the manner in which he showed hospitality and support for travelling Christians who came to his church (vv. 5-8). However, he uses the example of Diotrephes, as indicated in the following diagram below, as a demonstration of conduct that is not moral (vv. 9-10).

833 See Malherbe 1977, 222; Edwards 1996, 25; Culpepper 1998, 278; Painter 2002, 362; cf. Schnackenburg 1992, 290.

834 Scholars differ with regard to the way they refer to the people mentioned in verse 5 as τοὺς ἀδελφούς καὶ τοῦτο ξένους. Johnson 1993, 171 refers to them as the Elder's allies, not personally known by Gaius. Grayston 1984, 160 refers to them as 'traveling missionaries' who are strangers. Schnackenburg 1992, 290ff. refers to them as 'itinerant preachers' or 'itinerant missionaries'. Culpepper 1998, 280 calls them 'itinerant Johannine Christians', and Achtemeier *et al.*, Green and Thompson 2001, 551 describe them as 'travelling prophets', 'emissaries', and 'itinerant teachers'. Whether they were Christian preachers, teachers, missionaries or simply Christians, is uncertain. The only thing that we can be certain of is that the Elder regarded them as brothers, and Gaius received them as strangers, Painter 2002, 371. In this chapter they will be referred to as 'travelling Christians'.



According to the diagram, 'walking in the truth' is explained as 'to love' and 'to support'. The statements next to A and B, relate to those mentioned in A' and B' respectively. This implies that 'to love' (A) is stated against 'puts himself first', 'does not acknowledge authority', and 'spreads false charges' (A'). The implication is that when a person acts according to A', there is no love present in that person. Such conduct results in the acts conducted in B', which contrasts with the act, 'to support', in B.

From this analysis it is evident that the ethos of the ethics in 3 John is defined as *walking in the truth*⁸³⁵ (ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ⁸³⁶ περιπατοῦντα, 3 John 3, 4). This phrase, in which Gaius is described as exemplary, is a matter not only of right doctrine, but equally and especially of right moral action:⁸³⁷ to support (προπέμπειν v. 6; λαμβάνειν, v. 7; ὑπολαμβάνειν, v. 8).

835 Family metaphoric, especially evident in 1 and 2 John, such as 'Father', 'Son of God', 'children of God', 'born of God', 'seed of God', and 'commandments' does not feature in 3 John at all. Thrice the Elder uses the noun Ἀγαπητέ (vv. 2, 5, 11) as a form of address when he addresses Gaius and the adjective ἀγαπητῶ (v. 1) having called him 'beloved Gaius'. Three times he only refers to 'God' (vv. 6, 11[bis]) and twice (vv. 6, 10) to 'church'.

836 The noun ἀληθεία occurs six times (vv. 1, 3[bis], 4, 8, 12) and the adjective ἀληθής once (v. 12) in the very short epistle of 3 John. This proves to be the intrinsic nature of the ethics. In 1 John 2:11 love is defined as 'to walk in the light', in 2 John 6 as 'to walk according to his commandments' and in 3 John 3, 6 as 'to walk in the truth'.

837 Cf. Malherbe 1977, 227; Edwards 1996, 25; Strecker 1996, 258; Culpepper, 1998, 280.

Such action, which demonstrates affection and care for fellow Christians, is the realisation and outcome of ἀγάπη (v. 6; cf. 1 John 3:17f.); it is an activity carried out in the realm of truth (cf. Strecker 1996, 258). This 'truth', which has been practised and made concrete through 'love', is attested by the Christian strangers, who praise Gaius' Christian way of life 'before the church' (v. 6).

Gaius's ἀγάπη consists in προπέμπειν⁸³⁸ (v. 6), which comprises, assisting, outfitting, and sending forth these travelling Christians on their journeys (Strecker 1996, 259). The verbs λαμβάνειν (v. 7); ὑπολαμβάνειν (v. 8) complement this conduct, meaning to 'welcome as guests' (Haas *et al.* 1972, 153). By supporting these Christians who are ministering for Christ, Gaius has become a fellow worker of the truth. In his reference, 'walking in the truth' (v. 3), the Elder characterises this as 'doing good' (v. 11, ἀγαθοποιῶν) which is from God. This verifies that moral virtue has its grounding in the character of God (see also Ps 136:1; cf. Painter 2002, 377).

In opposition to this, the way Diotrophes conducted himself is condemned by the Elder as having no Christian foundation. Both the adjectives πονηροῖς (v. 10) and κακός (v. 11) denote moral evil (Painter 2002, 377). He is held up as a model of how *not* to behave. His life and actions do not illustrate love. The description of Diotrophes' negative conduct towards the travelling Christians, complement, from a negative perspective, what the Elder views as 'walking in the truth'. With regard to the negative way in which these people were treated by Diotrophes, he emphasises the fact that such conduct does not demonstrate love, which puts others first, takes care of their needs, acknowledges authority, speaks the truth, welcomes travelling Christians and supports those who want to demonstrate Christian love through welcoming others.

Of those who live in truth (ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖν, v. 3) it can be said that they will practise love (v. 6) and good (v. 11); they are from God (v. 11). By contrast, those who do evil show that they have not seen God and have not recognised the truth (v. 11).

838 Danker 2000, 873 defines προπέμπειν lexicographically as 'to assist someone in making a journey, send on one's way with food, money, by arranging for companions, means of travel, etc.'. Louw and Nida 1988, 191, in conformity with Danker, define it semantically as 'to send someone on in the direction in which he has already been moving, with the probable implication of providing help - "to send on one's way, to help on one's way"'. For greater clarity, compare this kind of conduct inter-textually with *Didache* 11.12 (where conduct towards 'Travelling Teachers - Apostles - Prophets' [*Didache* 11] and 'Travelling Christians' [*Didache* 12 is discussed]).

4. Conclusion

The above investigation proves the ethos of the ethics of 1 and 2 John to be a matter of *κοινωνία*. A network of metaphors are used by the Elder to describe this distinctiveness of Johannine ethics in the setting of ancient Mediterranean family life. Such family life, familiar to the adherents of the Elder, was adapted to the *Lebensraum* of the *familia Dei*. Relational imagery is conjured by the Elder in order to encourage his adherents to strive for family unity and *κοινωνία*. Relational images and concepts are used to provide powerful bases of motivation that act to bind his adherents together by arousing in them a familial orientation. Such an orientation is rooted in the norms and ethics associated with the modes of relationship and constitutes the cultural construct, 'family', to evoke lines of attitudes, emotion and conduct that are consistent with them. However, it is the presuppositions in dialectical discourse, concerning what is correct and incorrect conduct in family relationships that determine the quality of *κοινωνία* and the meaning of ethical actions motivated by these terms (cf. also Adams 1983, 56).

In order to honour the *familia Dei* into which a person was born, (ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται) he/she has to take on the same 'life' as the parent of the family (which, in the case of a Christian, is God the Father). Specific forms of conduct that relate to the believer's nature and the identity of the family are expected. This must be ethical conduct that will not harm (ἁμαρτία) the fellowship. Such conduct is constituted through and characterised by love (ἀγάπη). It can be briefly summarised as abiding in Jesus and walking (περιπατεῖν) as he walked.

Ethics in the Johannine epistles culminates existentially when the Elder addresses two concrete opposite situations of ethical conduct in 3 John, ending with the emphatic and pregnant statement in verse 11: 'Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God' (ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν· ὁ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἑώρακεν τὸν θεόν). In order to encourage such ethical conduct in the Johannine community, the Elder rhetorically employs praise (of Gaius) and disapproval (of Diotrophes).

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