Atonement and Ethics in 1 John: A Peacemaking Hermeneutic

Chris Armitage BA LlB BTh (Hons 1)

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Certificate of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously written or published by another person nor material which to a substantial degree has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University and elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purposes of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of theses.

Dated 2014.

_________________________
(Christopher John Armitage)
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Abbreviations

Bib – Biblica
B Sac – Bibliotheca Sacra
CBQ – Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CTM – Concordia Theological Monthly
DSD – Dead Sea Discoveries
Exp Tim – Expository Times
Euro J Th – European Journal of Theology
Ev Q – Evangelical Quarterly
HTR – Harvard Theological Review
Int – Interpretation
JBL – Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS – Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JHS – Journal of Hebrew Scriptures
JSJ – Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods
JSOT – Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JTS – Journal of Theological Studies
LXX – The Septuagint
Nov T – Novum Testamentum
NRSV – New Revised Standard Version
NT – New Testament
NTS – New Testament Studies
Numen – Numen – International Review for the History of Religions
OT – Old Testament
SJT – Scottish Journal of Theology
Tyn Bul – Tyndale Bulletin
VT – Vetus Testamentum
Abstract

Among biblical theologians who oppose violence, some seek a corresponding hermeneutic of non-violence grounded in the NT. Some refer to it more positively as a “peacemaking hermeneutic”. I prefer this term for that reason. These interpreters, of varying theoretical standpoints, often use texts from 1 John as an “epistemology of love”, to borrow René Girard’s phrase, and of non-violence, relying particularly on the pejorative use by 1 John of the Cain and Abel story to condemn hatred. The problem about such uses, not fully faced in peacemaking theology, is that 1 John was written at a time of hot theological dispute. The author writes against what he sees as destructive and dangerous tendencies, which he identifies as a defective, seemingly docetic Christology and moral indifference, identified with opponents who have recently left his community. His rhetoric is strong, using strong terms of condemnation such as “antichrists”. It may appear difficult to read 1 John, even through modern eyes far removed from the conflict, as a tract centred on love and peace. This study nevertheless argues that a peacemaking hermeneutic of 1 John is in harmony with its key ideas.

In short, this study contends that a peace-oriented reading of 1 John is viable, in view of the “weapons” John deploys against his opponents – not hatred and combat, although he is deeply opposed to their theological ideas, but a “new commandment” which is yet an old one, of mutual love and avoidance of hatred, which leads ultimately to murder. On the surface, the castigation used against the author’s opponents looks like hatred, but the overarching love he enjoins his community to practise as the antidote to the opponents’ sectarian divisions is the dominant theme of the epistle.

The point of view of this study is that because 1 John was written in a milieu in which his audience, if not comprised of converted Jews, were thoroughly familiar with the OT, echoes of it, beyond the explicit reference to Cain, are ever-present in 1 John. It therefore examines central themes in 1 John, represented by five key words, ἱλασμός, σφάζω, ἀνθρωποκτόνος, ἀγάπη and ὀδελφός, by looking at their background and use in the OT,
in both the Hebrew and LXX versions, the intertestamental pseudepigrapha and the Qumran literature, in order to cast light on their use in 1 John. By so doing, this study argues that these central themes presuppose a God whose engagement with the world is not assuagement of divine anger, nor ferocious defence of truth at the expense of love, but rather peace and avoidance of hatred, which leads to violence and death. First John, in its use of the OT ideas underlying the five key words identified in this study, Ἰλασμός, σφάζω, ἄνθρωποκτόνος, ἀγάπη and ἀδελφός, exposes the key connection drawn by the author between God’s love in the gift of Jesus and the love he enjoins in his community as central to their understanding of God’s own nature and purpose for the world. A peacemaking hermeneutic of 1 John is not only feasible, but integral to reading the epistle.

When work on this study was complete, and submission was imminent, Toan Do’s admirable 2014 study, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, came to hand. Do examines 1 John’s use of Ἰλασμός and ἀγάπη in 2:1-2 and 4:7-10, as does this study. This necessitated extensive alterations, with much interaction with Do. This study largely agrees with Do’s conclusions. But it finds more definite assistance in LXX use of Ἰλασμός than Do has, and it largely confines itself to the use of this term, rather than its cognates. Unlike Do, this study refrains, apart from comment ing in passing on Do’s work in this regard, from exegesis of Ἰλασμός in 1 John by reference to its cognates in non-Johannine NT texts, because its scope is confined to the question whether peacemaking theologians’ use of 1 John is validated by exegesis of certain key themes represented by particular words, against their background in the LXX and in certain intertestamental literature and first century Jewish writings which might reasonably have been available to the author of 1 John. Also, unlike Do, this study does not deal with 2 and 3 John, because its scope does not include common authorship of 1, 2 and 3 John, and is confined to examining whether use of 1 John in peacemaking theology is viable.
Introduction – Some Peacemaking Hermeneutical Approaches to 1 John

Genesis of this Study

First John, on the face of it, is a text riven by underlying conflict with opponents, displaying hostile rhetoric against them. The dominical, Johannine formula ἵρην ὑμῖν, “peace be with you” (John 20:19, 20:21, 20:26),\(^1\) nicely taken up in the early Church’s liturgical Greeting of Peace, is not found in 1 John. Nor are the other uses of ἵρην in John’s Gospel (John 14:27 [twice], 16:33). True it is that ἵρην appears in 2 John 3 and 3 John 15 in greetings, but it appears nowhere in 1 John. With the possible exception of Revelation, 1 John might seem the very last text on which to build a theology of peacemaking or non-violence.

Yet peace-oriented or non-violent hermeneutical approaches to 1 John are not uncommon in recent peacemaking theological and NT ethical studies. This poses the question whether such approaches are exegetically, or even hermeneutically legitimate in light of the background and purpose of 1 John, and indeed the way it approaches the problem of dissension over theological differences in the community to which it is addressed. This study will address that question. First, it examines the background and purpose of 1 John. Then it examines key ideas in 1 John, represented by certain Greek keywords in 1 John against the background of their use in the Septuagint (LXX) and in some intertestamental pseudepigrapha and Jewish historical texts written reasonably contemporaneously with 1 John. Finally, deploying its findings in earlier chapters, it presents an original peacemaking hermeneutical approach to 1 John.

\(^{1}\) In Hebrew, it was (and still is) the traditional, everyday greeting of Jews in Israel: George R Beasley-Murray, John (New York: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2nd ed., 1999), 378.
This introduction presents a survey, which for reasons of space will be anything but exhaustive, of recent use of 1 John by those writing peacemaking theology. Some writers whose work is examined are theologians, and others are biblical scholars, but their work is written more from a theological perspective. Some other writers’ work is presented, although they do not appeal to 1 John, in order to ask whether their argument may be supported by 1 John. Some writers would not identify themselves as peacemaking theologians, and some indeed oppose some of the ideas of that school, but they are included because their ideas harmonise in some areas with peacemaking theology.

Here “peacemaking theology” refers to the work of writers within the Christian tradition who enjoin abstinence from violence and warfare and the attainment of peaceful reconciliation among families, communities and nations. The term “hermeneutic” is employed in the more modern sense of seeking to derive from the text theological principles which may be supported by a particular interpretation of the text itself. What is not intended by the term “hermeneutic” in this study is a philosophical grid whereby an a priori hermeneutical principle is applied to a text, which is then made to fit that principle. Any hermeneutical enterprise encounters the problem of the “hermeneutical circle”, whereby we bring to a text all kinds of predetermined understandings, used by us to shape our questions of the text, which then suggest the answers we derive from it. Ricoeur seeks to avoid this by interpreting the outside world through the lens of the text: “for us, the world is an ensemble of references opened up by the texts”. An instructive example of this technique is Paul Ricoeur’s essay on the sixth Decalogue commandment, “thou shalt not kill”, where he sets it against Genesis 22, in which the Lord’s command to Abraham to kill his firstborn,

2 For a good but brief discussion of this issue, see Werner Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 1-5.

3 *Ibid,* 5-6.

Isaac occurs: here Ricoeur shows that the ideal of “loving obedience” underlies God’s relationship with humanity here. Following Ricoeur, may we exercise some leverage against the literal text of 1 John, in order to derive an overarching ethic from it?

It is indeed an age-old practice to ask of a text whether an overarching a posteriori hermeneutical principle can be derived from it. A good example is Augustine’s standpoint, that the love of God and of others is the proper perspective of a Christian in reading scripture, so that when adjudicating on competing interpretations of it, one must ask which is favoured by the hermeneutical rule of charity. This study has a similar methodology: its principal aim is to ask whether various uses of 1 John in peacemaking theology to promote mutual love and oppose violence can be founded on its text, having regard to the theological aims and historical situation emerging from it.

Barth’s well-known warning on this subject needs heeding here:

> The irremediable danger of consulting Holy Scripture apart from the centre, and in such a way that the question of Jesus Christ ceases to be the controlling and comprehensive question and simply becomes one amongst others, consists primarily in the fact that (even supposing a strict and exclusive Scripture principle) Scripture is thought of and used as though the message of revelation and the Word of God could be extracted from it in the same way as the message of other truth or reality can be extracted from other sources of knowledge, at any rate where it is not presumably speaking of Jesus Christ.

Barth is speaking here of a “transition from biblical to biblicist thought” by the development in the “older Protestant orthodoxy” of the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture, which, he said, was no doubt developed as a bulwark against rationalism, but which in fact was a product, not of “an over-developed faith of revelation”, but of “rationalistic thinking — the

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7 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV/1 (trans. GW Bromiley; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), 368.
attempt to replace faith and indirect knowledge with direct knowledge”. This study does not advocate an approach which *reifies* Holy Scripture, which holds that Scripture itself is not only its best, but its sole interpreter, any more than does Barth. Such an approach puts aside any solid attempt to employ the tools of sociological and even historical enquiry, which in recent times have cast so much light on the situation in which Scripture was produced and on the communities from which it arose.

There is a corresponding danger in peacemaking theology of employing references to peace and mutual love in Scripture literally, without attending to the genre of the text, the historical situation in which it was written, and its overall theological aims. In the case of 1 John, such a literalistic approach risks failing to give weight to the Christology of the letter, thus missing the “question of Jesus Christ” which Barth rightly holds to be central to any hermeneutical question asked of the NT in any field, including ethics, as in this study.

Obviously, the *whole* NT needs to be examined to see whether it provides support for a peacemaking hermeneutic, before one may claim to have developed a truly NT theology of peacemaking. That is beyond the scope of this study. But in such an endeavour the “difficult” NT texts need examination as well. First John may be one of these, because of its hostile rhetoric. The contribution this study aims to make is to examine some key words, ἱλασμός, σφάζω and ἀνθρωποκτόνος, and ἀγαπάω and ἀδελφός, often used in 1 John, which appear to stand for key ideas in the epistle, against the Jewish background against which it was written, to see if some recent peacemaking hermeneutical approaches to 1 John are supported by its text.

Peacemaking theology has often found support in the synoptic gospels, especially in Matthew and Luke. As but one example, Richard Hays, a NT

biblical scholar and ethicist, has sought to demonstrate, in a careful exegesis of Matthew 5:38-48, that it teaches non-violent love of enemies as normative. Similar uses of 1 John have been less common, but there are still many, as we shall see. The present study therefore asks whether a peacemaking or non-violent hermeneutic built on citations of 1 John has sure foundations. The textual context, from which citations from 1 John are taken to support such theologies, may or may not be consistent with the hermeneutical use of such citations.

Some uses of 1 John to support a peacemaking hermeneutic, particularly by theologians rather than biblical scholars, tend to avoid the more painful aspects of the letter – particularly the hostility the author shows to his secessionist opponents, and their ideas. In a theological work, where the main object is to engage with Scripture to provide apt illustrations of themes which the author has developed in his or her cultural context, this is understandable. Other writers, often themselves biblical scholars, have used 1 John in a similar way. By the nature of their discipline, their examination of the text of 1 John is closer.

In biblical scholarship, however, the question still needs to be asked: are these uses of 1 John entirely appropriate in light of what we know, almost entirely from the text itself, about the conflict which engulfed the Johannine community, its causes and the antidote offered by its author to it? Before attempting an answer to this question in the chapters which follow, we must first examine how 1 John has been used in peacemaking theological and NT ethical studies, and the extent to which such uses may have passed over the difficulty of applying a hermeneutic of non-violence to a text replete with hostility, stemming from theological conflict. The purpose of this chapter is to identify some peacemaking hermeneutical approaches to 1 John. The question asked by this study is whether 1 John supports or stands in opposition to such approaches.

Perhaps the most notable example of use of 1 John in support of a theology of non-violence or peacemaking is the work of René Girard, which will be examined first. After that, the work of some Girardian interpreters, including James Alison, Raymund Schwager and Willard Swartley\(^\text{10}\) will be examined in relation to 1 John. Following that analysis, this introduction will engage with non-violent interpretations of 1 John by other theologians, biblical scholars and Christian ethicists, including John Howard Yoder, Richard Burridge, Richard Hays and others. It has also seemed appropriate to include in this chapter some brief analysis of the use of the thought of 1 John by two other theologians, Hans Urs von Balthasar and George Hunsinger, who have been critical of Girard, but whose work has to some extent arrived at a similar result – a peacemaking theology of non-violence – by a different route. What follows is a selective but representative sample of the work of some peacemaking theologians, NT ethicists and biblical scholars insofar as it relates to 1 John, and of others who are relevant but who do not traditionally sit within the peacemaking tradition. Because of the focus of this study, it does not undertake an evaluation of their work as a whole.

**René Girard**

René Girard, literary critic, anthropological philosopher and Christian convert, believes that humans desire and mimic each other’s longing for a particular object. There is no sacred reality, no religion, no language before sacrifice. A “founding murder” (for example, that of Abel by Cain) by one person of another who desires the same object gives birth to the sacred. The awe the victim provides in this crisis provokes worship. The original violent sacrifice gives birth to the development of culture – of myth and ritual, law and taboo. So propitiatory sacrifice is a device sanctified by religious

\(^{10}\) “Girardian interpreter” is a convenient but somewhat inadequate label for Swartley, as his work also ranges well beyond Girardian interpretation, especially when dealing with the work of John Howard Yoder.
practice to defuse violence otherwise arising between humans competing for the same object. They offer a sacrificial victim or *scapegoat* to a deity, to propitiate its anger, so the deity will smile on them and restore their fortunes. To Girard, the story in Genesis 27 of Jacob’s theft of Esau’s birthright embodies *sacrificial substitution*.\(^{11}\) A people thinks that “the surrogate victim alone can save them; almighty violence may judge the ‘guilty’ parties to have been sufficiently ’punished’”.\(^ {12}\)

Girard uses OT stories, including the Genesis account of Abel’s murder by Cain\(^ {13}\) – referred to in 1 John 3:12-15 – to illustrate his proposal that violence arises from mutual envy by humans, in which both desire the same object, and one must destroy the other to secure it.\(^ {14}\) This desire, according to Girard, “does not arise because of the fortuitous convergence of two desires on a single object; rather, *the subject desires the object because the rival desires it.*”\(^ {15}\) This is Girard’s concept of “mimetic desire”, from the Greek verb ἰμίησωμαι, “to imitate”.

To Girard, the origins of violence between humans lie in *mimetic desire*, competition for the same object by imitation of one another’s deep wishes. People are brought to desire the same object, and into conflict when they cannot both attain it, because “in desiring an object the rival alerts the subject to the desirability of the object”.\(^ {16}\) Using his concept of *mimetic doubling*, through OT stories and Graeco-Roman mythology – including the story of Cain and Abel\(^ {17}\) – Girard holds that an eternal, triangular struggle occurs in which both desire an object they cannot share – which can only end in the death of one or the other.\(^ {18}\) In fact the story of Cain and Abel is


\(^ {12}\) *Ibid*, 259.

\(^ {13}\) *Ibid*, 4.

\(^ {14}\) *Ibid*, 145.

\(^ {15}\) Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 145.

\(^ {16}\) *Ibid*, 145.

\(^ {17}\) *Ibid*, 61.

central to Girard’s thought, because upon Cain’s murder of Abel, and Cain’s subsequent protection by God, who placed the “mark of Cain” on him to prevent others from killing him in turn (Genesis 4:15), there was founded a town, built by Cain and named after Enoch, his son. Thus, says Girard, was a civilisation, a culture, built on the founding murder of Abel by Cain. However, one must remark in passing, for Israel the mark of Cain is ambiguous, because the Israelite genealogy in Genesis 5 is founded not on Cain, but on Seth, Adam’s younger son born “after he knew his wife again” (Genesis 4:25-26).

The resulting disorder, says Girard, caused by rivalry between mimetic doubles, then threatens the society in which it occurs. That society’s answer, according to Girard, is that “the old pattern of each against one gives way to the united antagonism of all against one”. This is Girard’s concept of scapegoating, whereby one person or people is made responsible by a society for all the evils which beset it: that person or people becomes a surrogate victim.

Because this pattern entrenches violence in a community, it is then transmuted and re-enacted in religious sacrifices, in which a victim, originally an animal, is sacrificed, and in which the object of the rite “assumes, not some vague and ill-defined sins, but the very real (though often hidden) hostilities that all the members of the community feel for one another”. The object of the ritual becomes a substitute for the surrogate victim. Girard explains:

All sacrificial rites are based on two substitutions. The first is provided by generative violence, which substitutes a single victim for all the members of the community. The second, the only strictly ritualistic substitution, is that of a victim for the surrogate victim.

20 Ibid, 78.
22 Ibid, 269.
To Girard, Deutero-Isaiah predicts the “innocent servant”, one whose death initially renders him “similar to a certain type of sacrificial victim within the pagan world”. In reality, the servant would have “no connection with violence and no affinity with it”, the one of whom Isaiah said, “we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted” (Isa. 53:4), which signifies that “it was not God who smote him; God’s responsibility is implicitly denied”. Crucially for Girard, Matthew places Psalm 78 in Jesus’ mouth, where he predicts that he will “utter what has been hidden from the foundation of the world” (Mt 13:35), reading καταβολῆς there as signifying the foundation of the world.

Girard sees Jesus’ tomb as a metaphor for the “mythic process of conjuring away man’s violence by endlessly projecting it upon new victims”: murder “calls for the tomb”, which “is built around the dead body it conceals”, so that the tomb is “the prolongation and perpetuation of murder” (citing Luke 11:47-48). For Girard, the meaning of Jesus’ passion is not that “the victim should inherit all of the violence from which the victim has been exonerated”, but that the text “lets the violence fall upon the heads of those to whom it belongs”, so that the “founding murder” (i.e. of the innocent Abel) is repeated. Girard writes that “there is nothing in the Gospels to suggest that the death of Jesus is a sacrifice, whatever definition (expiation, substitution, etc.) we may give for that sacrifice”.

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25 Providing Girard with the title of his book *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*!
27 “Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your ancestors killed. So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your ancestors; for they killed them, and you build their tombs”.
Girard identifies 1 John as a “genuine epistemology of love”, citing 1 John 2:10-11. He says the love of which John speaks here “reveals the victimage processes that underlie the meanings of culture”, which is “no purely ‘intellectual’ process”, because “the very detachment of the person who contemplates the warring brothers is an illusion”. So “love is the only true revelatory power because it escapes from, and strictly limits, the spirit of revenge and recrimination”, and “only Christ’s perfect love can achieve without violence the perfect revelation to which we have been progressing – in spite of everything – by the dissensions and divisions that were predicted in the gospels”. To Girard, 1 John 3:15, “all who hate a brother or sister are murderers”, shows that “every negation of the other leads … towards expulsion and murder”.

Girard’s linkage of 1 John’s contrast between love and hatred towards a brother (2:10-11) and John’s use of the Cain and Abel analogy to demonstrate the end result of hatred (3:12) with the “founding murder” of Abel by Cain, on which an unredeemed, warring civilisation has been built, and to which the love command is the antidote, is central to his thinking, and an insight of pure genius. Only a truly original thinker could paint on so large a canvas a picture of an OT culture built on rivalry, hatred and murder, redeemed by God’s love in Jesus, which redeems and saves us from our own mutual envy, hatred and warfare.

But it must be said that Girard engages not so much with the hostility evident in 1 John towards its opponents, but rather with the antidote, the

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30 In what follows, the author of 1 John will on occasions be referred to as John, for convenience. No assumption as to his identity is implied, as the authorship of 1 John, and the question of its common authorship with John’s Gospel, are outside the scope of this study.
31 Girard, Things Hidden, 277.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid, 214.
35 One must add here that such a proposal may have its problems in the “rivalrous” relationship it sets up between the OT and NT, and in the standpoint Girard adopts as to Jesus’ historical role, not least in view of Matthew, that most Jewish of gospels, where at 5:17 Jesus proclaims that he has come, not to abolish but to fulfil Torah, the law.
“new commandment” the author gives to his community, to protect itself against the defective Christology and ethical indifference of the secessionists: that as in Jesus the love of God has reached full perfection (1 John 2:5), they must love their brothers and sisters, and live in the light (1 John 2:10). Certainly Girard recognises that hatred, love’s opposite, leads to violence and murder (1 John 3:14-15). And he sees that Jesus is the “model of holiness” whom we must imitate, but whose “denunciation of sacrificial mechanisms constantly exacerbates violence by those outraged by it”.

Girard sees that John’s Gospel condemns imitation of the devil in his desires, and those who acknowledge God’s fatherhood will love Jesus himself (John 8:42-44). This passage contains a linkage almost identical to that in 1 John 2:15.

As one might expect – writing as an anthropological philosopher – Girard does not, in his citations of 1 John, exegete its polemical tone toward opponents, and the theological “warfare” this implies. His use of 1 John unfolds an alternative universe in which mimesis of Jesus’ love might abolish rivalry and death-bringing hatred. This may unintentionally divert attention from the very real hostility 1 John displays toward its secessionist opponents, and indeed on occasions toward “the world” (ὁ κόσμος) in general (cf. 1 John 2:15-17; 3:13; 4:9), and from the possible negative implications of this outward-directed hostility for the practice of love outside John’s community, rather than inside.

To be fair, Girard has engaged more directly with hostility to opponents evident in 1 John where he uses the term “antichrist” to denote “the ideology that attempts to outh christianize Christianity, that imitates Christianity in a spirit of rivalry”, referring here to what he terms the “totalitarianisms of the right”, which find Christianity “too soft on victims”.

and those of the left, which attempt to “outflank” it, both of which he sees as “ultrachristian” caricatures, noting the use of “antichrist” in 1 John 2:18-19 and 2 John 7.

This may be a rather strained linkage. But insofar as 1 John 2:18-19 warns the faithful remainder in the Johannine community against “antichrists” among the secessionists from the author’s community who may deceive them, Girard refers here to the danger that totalitarian ideologies may occasionally mask themselves in the language of Christian apologetics. Thus Christian believers might think such ideologies are “from God”, i.e. fulfilling the divine purpose, when they are really not so (cf. 1 John 4:3). In that way Girard implicitly acknowledges that 1 John, too, was written in a time of ideological crisis, with deceptive opponents at the door, although he does not address the manner in which this crisis is met.

Girard’s view of murder as the end result of hatred, bolstered by his reference to 1 John, is better understood in light of his explanation of John 8:42-44. There, in the context of a discourse with “the Jews who had believed in him” (8:31), but who questioned his teaching and protested their sonship from Abraham (8:39), Jesus accuses them of being descended from Satan, who “was a murderer from the beginning” and “a liar and the father of lies” (8:44). Girard maintains that these Jews took the devil as the model for their desires, rather than God: God and the devil are two “arch-models”: thus, if people do not imitate Christ in their desires, but rather Satan, they “become the playthings of mimetic violence”. Therefore there is a linkage in Girard’s thinking between mimetic desire directed towards Satan and both violence and murder. To Girard, mimesis of Cain has the same end result, as 1 John 3:13-15 shows. And in 1 John 3:8-10, in the immediately preceding pericope, the children of God and those of the devil are also brought into opposition in typically Johannine dualistic terms.

Nevertheless the question must still be asked, is 1 John an appropriate vehicle to convey and support Girard’s overarching message of liberation from rivalry, hatred and murder, if it was in fact written against theological rivals towards whom the author obviously feels great hostility? Can it be shown that the antidote offered by the author of 1 John, a Christology and soteriology which gives proper weight to Jesus’ humanity and identification with, and love for, us, and a consequent command that we love one another as he has loved us, may be extended hermeneutically – if not exegetically – to embrace all humanity? If so, Girard’s use of 1 John is supportable, even taking into account its author’s hostility toward opponents. In particular, Girard’s interpretation of 1 John 3:12 may be supportable if in v12c the text, ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν, τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια,41 “because his own deeds were evil but those of his brother were righteous”,42 connotes brotherly rivalry. Some answers to these questions will be offered later, after an exegesis of 1 John’s use of a number of key words, in this case ἀγαπάω and ἀδιέλθος and their derivatives.

Girard’s system is attractive. One does not have to be convinced that it is a universal answer to human violence to see that it is one of the major contributions in the last century to the theological debate concerning the meaning of the death of Jesus and its implications for Christian ethics. Many of Girard’s critics have concentrated on what they see as the deficiencies of Girard’s atonement theology. Having concluded that his theological ideas are deficient in this way, they then suggest that the ethical implications said by Girard to flow from the unmasking of human mimetic violence in the death of Jesus, centring on deliverance from envy and hostility between humans, cannot be validly inferred from the religious

41 The Greek NT text in this study is taken from Novum Testamentum Graece (ed. Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M Martini, Bruce M Metzger; Münster/Westphalia: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 28th revised edition, 2012).
42 Here and elsewhere, the translation of the OT and NT is the author’s own – though on occasions it mirrors that of the NRSV (Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version (London: HarperCollins, 1998)) where this cannot be bettered. The non-gender specific translations of the NRSV have been avoided for accuracy, not from any opposition to its laudable aim of showing that all are “one in Christ”: Galatians 3:28.
mechanism Girard identifies, and Jesus’ final exposure of it. Does this follow? It is legitimate to ask whether deficiencies in Girard’s Atonement theology, if such there be, necessarily mean that his whole system collapses.

Crucial to Girard’s argument is his identification of Cain’s murder of his brother Abel as the “founding murder” upon which all sacrificial violence and therefore all “religion” as the very basis of civilization has been built. As we shall see, that event forms a central plank in the argument of the author of 1 John. Further, the meaning of the Atonement is directly addressed in 1 John, as is the connection between Jesus’ death and John’s love command, in terms of love as being constitutive of the very nature of God. Clearly 1 John is crucial to Girard’s argument, and close exegesis of some key terms in the epistle may provide support for it.

James Alison

James Alison, theologian and one of Girard’s foremost interpreters, sees the apostolic witness as casting unredeemed human desire as a scandalon, a stumbling-block, “by which we receive death from each other and mete out death to each other by our involvement in mutual victimisation”.43 So, therefore, in 1 John 2-3 love is defined as “a reciprocal relationship between brothers”, and the stumbling-block as “the relationship of hatred between brothers” (2:7-11), which is then shown in the hatred of Cain leading to murder (3:11-15). So “this is the real content of the sin of the devil from the beginning: hatred between brothers leading to murder”, from which scandalon Jesus has come to set us free.44 Thus, as does Girard, Alison picks up the connection between Satan, the murderer from the beginning, and hatred between brothers and its end result, illustrated in 1 John by the Cain and Abel example. Elsewhere Alison portrays a fearful Cain wandering the earth (Genesis 4:18) “only half-protected” by the law God

44 Ibid.
gave (Genesis 4:19) to “contain the violence of reciprocal vengeance”. In this way Alison seeks to demonstrate the self-perpetuating nature of violence, and of the fears it generates, with these fears themselves then leading to further violence.

Alison argues that there is a crucial difference between this “foundational mentality” which is at its root an “envious culpabilisation of some other”, and the new one in 1 John 3:2, “we are all God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”. To Alison, the self-giving nature of God is shown in 1 John 4:7-11, in that God’s love was made manifest in sending God’s son into the world as the expiation for our sins. Thus Alison founds his use of 1 John on its intimate connection between ethics on the one hand and Christology and soteriology on the other: “as God has loved us so much, so we must love one another”.

Alison writes as a theologian, but the biblical scholar needs to ask how the God who has wrought this potential fundamental reorientation of human desire and destiny is portrayed in relation to the hostile rhetoric against opponents in 1 John. Is God’s wrath called down upon the opponents? Does the Christology and soteriology of 1 John signal that God as portrayed in 1 John loves the whole world in Jesus, and extends his salvation to all? May the love command the author pronounces therefore extend hermeneutically to humanity at large, even given his attitude to his opponents? If Jesus died for the sins περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, “of the whole world” (1 John 2:2b), does this ultimately govern the scope of the author’s love command? If so, Alison’s use of 1 John may be both legitimate and persuasive. If not, much of the support for his peacemaking theology from 1 John falls away. An

48 1 John 4:11.
answer to this question is offered later in this study after exegesis of 1 John’s use of ἰλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10.

Alison is one of many theologians whose use of 1 John is, by the very nature of his discipline, hermeneutical rather than exegetical. That is to be expected. As with Girard, his vision of human brotherhood and sisterhood, united with Jesus and with each other through the love of God as constitutive of God’s own nature, seems to fall naturally from the pages of 1 John. But does it? The situation of the epistle is one in which hostility and seductive argument from John’s secessionist opponents, who were originally part of his community but who are now outside it, create the need for internal solidarity within the remaining community. Intuitively, one might expect that any explanation of Jesus’ death written for this purpose might encourage the belief that it was of benefit to those inside the community, to the exclusion of those outsiders who opposed it. One might expect that any command to love one another might be restricted to that community, with hostility and resistance being directed to those outside it. As we shall see from our exegesis of this love command later, much ink has been spilled on these questions. Until we answer them, we may not hazard whether 1 John truly supports the sort of ideas Alison’s theology presents.

**Raymund Schwager**

Alike with Girard himself, Raymund Schwager, another eminent Girardian interpreter and theologian, finds a connection between John 8:44, where Jesus condemns Satan as a “murderer from the beginning” and “the father of lies”, and 1 John 3:11-12. To Schwager, John 8:44 shows that “perpetrators of violence always try to hide the truth of their actions from others as well as from themselves”. Elsewhere Schwager points out that John 8:44 is not in itself anti-semitic, since it is addressed to “the Jews that had believed in

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him”, but is “nevertheless directed in the first place inward”,⁵⁰ which is an important insight, for otherwise John could be seen as advocating violence toward the Jews – a common modern perversion of this verse. Therefore, Schwager writes that it would be “astonishing” if John’s Gospel did not refer to “the same murderous spirit” when speaking of the hatred of the world; and 1 John also establishes “an explicit relationship between hatred and murder”, which are “identical”.⁵¹

Thus, to Schwager the Cain allusion in 1 John 3:11-12 teaches that hatred is the opposite of love; fratricide is directly opposed to it. And, he points out, 1 John 3:15 shows that hatred and murder are indeed ultimately identical. Hatred is never “a purely psychical affair”, and the statement in 1 John 3:14 that everyone who does not love remains in death is “much more than a noncommittal, rhetorical image”.⁵²

As does Alison, Schwager rightly sees in 1 John the very kernel of Jesus’ teaching about violence and its antidote, love, in imitation of the godhead in giving God’s Son to save us. However Schwager’s use of the epistle, to derive from it a universal ethic of love and non-violence, still may be seen to conflict with the letter writer’s aim to confute and isolate theological opponents who had once been part of his community.

If, as suggested by Schwager, 1 John’s Christology and ethics can be seen, hermeneutically if not exegetically, as aimed at all humanity, rather than the author’s own remaining community, Schwager’s project receives the support he seeks from the letter. Again we note that 1 John 2:2c affirms that Jesus died for the sins περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου. Again, exegesis of 1 John’s use of ἰλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 will help to answer these questions.

⁵¹Schwager, Must there be Scapegoats, 162.
⁵²Ibid.
Schwager’s observation that 1 John 3:14 contains more than a rhetorical image, where it affirms that everyone who does not love remains in death, is extremely significant. It connects Christian ethics with eschatology, in that it concerns the divine future of those who love, and those who do not. One may see in Schwager’s insight an implicitly trinitarian idea, in that it suggests a connection between God’s love in and towards Jesus and the mimetic conduct of the true disciple, and the consequences of failure to conduct oneself in this way. Investigation of the emergence of these ideas in 1 John through exegesis of some central ideas connoted by particular key words may illuminate and provide support for the ideas of the kind that Schwager presents.

**Willard Swartley**

Willard Swartley, New Testament scholar and Girardian interpreter, brings biblical scholarship to bear on the work of Girard and others in writing peacemaking theology. He writes specifically of the conflictual ethos in the Johannine corpus, including 1 John, and derives from it a vision of an alternative community as a foundation for peace. Unsurprisingly, his use of 1 John is extensive.

Swartley in his work *Covenant of Peace* characterises love as the mark of the Johannine community, referring inter alia to 1 John 4:21, writing that:

> In John’s narrative world and community, love for one another makes peace in the community first of all. That peace includes the shalom of the neighbour in need, as extended homilies in 1 John make clear (3:14-18; 4:19-21). This love for the neighbour extends to its ultimate expression, laying down one’s life for the brother or sister (1 John 3:16; 4:11 in the context of Jesus giving his life as an atoning sacrifice and the model of the good shepherd in John 10:11-18; cf. 15:13).

But who is the neighbour to whom the peace extends? Swartley does not shrink from that difficult question, acknowledging that these “homilies” enjoin love within the community, and asking whether they “serve a

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positive or negative function in relation to the world, specifically those beyond the borders of the community".  

Swartley’s answer is to employ John’s Gospel in a hermeneutical, rather than strictly exegetical explanation of the scope of the love commandment in 1 John. For example, he places alongside one another John 3:16 and 6:51 and 1 John 4:7-11, 16, 19 as demonstrating how the model of shared love between Father and Son is a gift to the community, so that:

To answer the question whether love for one another extends to those outside the community, the model of God’s love for the world set forth in the gift of the Son says yes.

Whether such a hermeneutical move is supportable in light of the theology of 1 John will be examined in detail in this study, by examining the picture of atonement and ethics presented in 1 John by a study of some key words presenting central theological concepts in the letter, in particular ἱλασμός and ἀδελφός.

Swartley sees Girardian imitation, “good mimesis” of Jesus’ own behaviour as enjoined by 1 John, as endorsing John Howard Yoder’s work in identifying “texts that speak of believers sharing the divine nature” in “light and purity”, referring to 1 John 1:5-7, 3:1-3 and 4:17. He notes also Yoder’s citing of 1 John 1:6 as showing that the disciple participates in the life of Jesus, exempling Yoder’s citation, inter alia, of 1 John 3:11-16 as portraying the disciple “loving as Christ loved, by giving himself”. Swartley then brings together his understanding of “good mimesis” in imitation of Christ with Girardian theory:

My contribution, which examines the NT teaching on “imitation of Christ” as well as Jesus’ teachings on discipleship, shows clearly that Jesus in his revelation of God presents a model of desire and imitation that does not lead to rivalry and violence.

But how can this model sit alongside the hostility to theological opponents that leaps from the pages of 1 John? Is there rivalry and violence in John’s
treatment of his opposition? One raises these questions regretfully, given the appeal of Swartley’s vision of “good mimesis” as our deliverance from mimetic violence. But they can only be answered by a detailed study of 1 John’s picture of the atonement, and of the love command as the antidote to hatred within his community – and possibly outside it.

These same questions are prompted by Swartley’s fruitful use of 1 John in his earlier essay “Discipleship and Imitation of Jesus/Suffering Servant”, placing at the beginning of his essay Girard’s use of 1 John 2:6 to illustrate “good mimesis”.

Swartley’s thesis is that Luther’s negative reaction to *imitatio Christi* as undermining justification by faith through a “works theology” is unjustified, because, by atonement theology that separates Jesus’ death as “so unique to the salvific purpose”, it “disconnects discipleship from salvation”. Was this link ever broken in the atonement theology of 1 John? Does it not intimately connect Jesus as atoning sacrifice for us (1 John 2:2; 4:10) with the command to love one’s brother, which marks that we are in the light (1 John 2:10) and born of God and knowing God (1 John 4:7)? These questions will receive attention later in this study.

Swartley’s vision of universal brotherhood and sisterhood and non-violence based on 1 John is extremely attractive. Its use of 1 John, supporting an ethic of love for one’s neighbor, not traditionally associated with the Johannine corpus, as opposed to the synoptic Gospels, especially Matthew and Luke, is worth exegetical exploration against our key ideas in 1 John.

**William Klassen**

William Klassen undertakes a detailed critique of Bultmann’s view that the love command in 1 John is universal and includes love of neighbour and of enemy, holding that although a scholarly consensus rejects this view, the

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evidence supports it. Klassen, another biblical scholar, argues that while the commandment to love the enemy is not found in 1 John, the injunction against hating the brother is strong, finding in its reference to Cain (1 John 3:12) a joinder of hatred and manslaughter, which he connects to Matthew 5:22, where Jesus himself consigns to Gehenna anyone who calls his brother a fool. Is this linkage of 1 John’s prohibition on hatred for the brother with Matthew’s gospel, where there is an undoubtedly universal command to love the enemy (Matthew 5:43-48), permissible? The answer may lie in the scope of 1 John’s love command. If it is universal, it then becomes legitimate to argue that there is in 1 John a correlative prohibition of hatred which is also universal in its scope.

Klassen finds in 1 John 3:16 a direct relationship between Jesus’ laying down of his life and “the believer’s response to the brother or sister in material need”; he notes that 1 John 3:16 affirms that those who do not love their brother are not from God, interpreting this as meaning that “love and doing justice reveals whether we have our origin in God or in the devil”. Granted, 1 John 3:17 may support emphasis on “doing justice”, which may imply a universal command. But is the “brother” the neighbour in general, or one’s fellow in a Christian community? Exegesis of 1 John’s use of ἀδελφός will help to answer this.

Klassen argues that in 1 John 4:7-21 we find an affirmation of God’s very nature as ἅγιος – the Spirit, he argues, is our guarantee of this (4:13), and that we have seen and testify that God has sent his Son as saviour (4:14). So love marks God’s nature and the unchanging way God deals with the community, and the whole world (5:2). Klassen therefore argues that “John’s agenda is to restore love as the central reality of his community”.

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64 Ibid, 15.
65 Klassen uses “brother” in a generic, non-gendered sense, to include “sister”. This study adopts the same usage, where “brother” is required for textual accuracy.
67 Ibid, 16-17.
68 Ibid, 17.
and that those who have left (the secessionists) are not therefore condemned to damnation or told they cannot return; rather, John addresses the topic most pressing at the moment, while affirming that the whole world can be redeemed (2:2) and that God sent his Son into the world so we may live (4:9).\(^{69}\)

This reasoning might be supported by 1 John 5:1-5, where we find in 5:4a ὅτι πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ νικᾷ τὸν κόσμον, “for that which is born of God conquers the world”, and in 5:5 ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, “that Jesus is the Son of God”. What is the effect of η πίστις ἡμῶν, “our faith”, in 5:4b? It is that ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ θεῷ μένει καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, “those who abide in love abide in God, as God does in them” (4:16b). So, it may be argued, John may be read as affirming here that love conquers the world, in Jesus. How? By those who confess Jesus as Son of God abiding in love, that is, loving the “brother”, whoever he or she be, inside or outside one’s community. Again, whether this interpretation is defensible can be answered only by detailed exegesis of 1 John’s use of ἄγαπη and ἀδελφός in their scriptural context, later in this study.

Klassen’s connection through 1 John 3:16 between Atonement theology and Christian ethics is an all-important insight. But may we find exegetical support in 1 John for Klassen’s advocacy of universal love and non-violence towards humanity as a whole? On the face of it, the hostility to outsiders in the epistle might contraindicate this. A closer look at some of the keywords the author uses to express prominent ideas in his epistle will advance this inquiry.

**Pheme Perkins**

Pheme Perkins, another biblical scholar, notes that neither John’s Gospel nor the Johannine epistles repeat Jesus’ teaching on love of enemies, and holds that the epistles portray plainly sectarian conflict in the communities

claiming the Johannine heritage. To Perkins, the author’s dualistic language, defining the church over against “the world”, ὁ κόσμος, as a place of hatred and death (1 John 3:14-15), is a clear indication that the love command extends only to fellow Christians within the church (1 John 2:9-11; 4:20-21), so the language of communal encouragement is the rhetoric of apocalyptic condemnation, with the secessionists’ false teaching equated with false prophets leading people astray in the end-time.

Perkins replies to some scholars’ attempt to ameliorate John’s restricted love command by noting that 1 John nowhere counsels hatred of the secessionists; she argues that “hate language” refers to the community’s experience of the world, and to the Christian community member who does not love fellow Christians. Perkins therefore argues that for the author, the secessionists’ being identified with the lawlessness of the last days (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:1-5) means that they cannot be the object of love – and that therefore the author’s focus is on love between believers, not love of outsiders. Thus Perkins states an acute problem for Christian ethicists, and for any peacemaking theology founded on 1 John: how can a love command intended for the remaining Johannine “insiders” extend to all humanity? Perkins is firmly of the opinion that this conflict is insoluble – it is simply there. Can it be resolved?

Perkins’ opposition to any universal love hermeneutic in 1 John, and to any universal ethic of non-violence in it, may profitably be brought into conversation with the views of those scholars who advocate such an approach. Her closely-argued theses need evaluation and testing against more optimistic views as to the scope of 1 John’s love command.

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71 Ibid. 290-291.
72 Ibid. 290.
73 Ibid.
Wayne Northey

Wayne Northey, another theologian and Girardian interpreter, is of quite a different view. He adopts Girard’s view that seeing Jesus’ death as a blood sacrifice in our stead misreads the NT, finding support in 1 John 2:2, read in light of 1 John 2:3-11. Northey sees Jesus’ death as “effective in all humanity”, harmonising love doing no harm to its neighbour as the fulfilment of the law (Romans 13:10) with 1 John’s love command (1 John 4:20-21), holding that these texts show that “the biblical test case for love of God is love of neighbour”, and that “failure to love the enemy is failure to love God”.75

As does Girard, Northey presents an inspiring picture of a God who does not demand retribution from humankind, sated by the death of that same God’s own Son, but who rather loves humankind and gives that Son as innocent victim to rid the world of hatred and violence. But the obvious problem about such harmonising is that it fails to give due weight to the context of John’s love command, and unintentionally evades the question of whether John directs it to – and within – the community to whom he writes, or whether it is universal. Again, this underlines the need for close examination of 1 John’s love command in its context to answer this question. This will occur later in this study.

Kharalambous Anstall

Kharalambous Anstall, an Orthodox theologian, argues that the Orthodox tradition has never taught a juridical, price-paying model of the atonement. He condemns the use in the Latin tradition of the sign of the cross merely as

75 Ibid, 373.
a reminder of Jesus’ suffering, to teach us of the ransom, the “blood money”, paid for us by him.\textsuperscript{76}

Anstall presents God as love through 1 John 4:8, 4:16 and 4:7, and teaches that to be godlike we must love God, who is love, and also one another, because God in a \textit{kenosis} has descended to our level and offered the Son for us to save us from our selfishness.\textsuperscript{77} To Anstall it is “oxymoronic” and “shocking” to the Orthodox mind that such a God should be presented as “cruel, capricious, judgmental and vindictive”.\textsuperscript{78}

But is 1 John inherently vindictive towards the secessionist opponents against whom its author writes? Is his love command primarily intended to bolster his community against false teaching from without? Any hermeneutic of universal love and non-violence as godlike, derived from 1 John must wrestle with these questions, which will receive attention later.

\textit{Glen Stassen, David Gushee}

Glen Stassen, a recently deceased and much-mourned Christian ethicist and peacemaking theologian, and David Gushee, philosopher and Christian ethicist, make use of 1 John to argue cogently from 1 John 4:7-11 that “the once-for-all drama of the cross has far deeper meaning than any one interpretation of the meaning of the atonement can exhaust”, so that “there is spiritual and experiential meaning in all the classical interpretations of the atonement”, including “the \textit{Christus Victor}, satisfaction, penal substitution, moral, governmental and ransom theories”.\textsuperscript{79} But they add that understanding \textit{agapē} as delivering love “sets the cross in the context of the incarnation”, in that in bringing love, God breaks down the barriers between us and God, and between each other, “establishing fellowship and presence with us on

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 497-498.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 498.
\textsuperscript{79} Glen H Stassen and David P Gushee, \textit{Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context} (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 342.
our side of the walls, since we cannot climb over them to God (1 John 4:9-11), and “Jesus did not die merely for the sake of sacrifice, but to deliver us into community with himself”.  

These are deep sayings indeed, but it may be argued that they do not engage sufficiently with the contradictory portrayals of the divine nature inherent in penal substitutionary atonement theory, as against others more centred on God’s love in sending the Son as a demonstration of divine love for humankind, to cleanse it from sin and bring about reconciliation between humans and God and with one another. This study will seek to grapple with this difficult question.

Stassen and Gushee observe that followers of Jesus know the truth (1 John 2:21; 4:6), and the truth abides in them (1 John 1:2), in the context of an argument that God is reliable and trustworthy, that Jesus is the ultimate bearer and communicator of truth, and that therefore failure to “live the truth” by people raises doubts about whether the truth exists in such persons (1 John 1:8; 2:4). The authors frankly face the fact that in a battle over contradictory truth-claims, John was adamant that he and his community were “in the truth” and their adversaries were not. Nevertheless they argue that for today, the truth is not simply a matter of intellectual conviction, but something that dwells in one’s inner being, and may be verified by deeds. Therefore, they contend, “the inbreaking of the kingdom heightens the urgency of participation in God’s redemptive will as taught by Jesus Christ”. Their larger argument is that truthtelling can involve resistance to political oppression, even to the point of death, without compromising the

80 Ibid., 342-343.
81 Ibid., 378-379.
82 Ibid., 279.
truth of the Gospel by participating in acts of deception to justify repression or war.83

True it is that Stassen and Gushee acknowledge the situation of theological conflict in which 1 John was written, but their use of it provokes the difficult question whether it is a suitable foundation for an ethic of non-violent truth-telling in opposition to repression and violence when 1 John’s own polemic in condemning opponents is so vehement and, arguably, sectarian. This study will seek to engage with this difficulty.

John Howard Yoder

John Howard Yoder, a pre-eminent recent Mennonite theologian, uses 1 John, among other biblical texts, in The Politics of Jesus to illustrate what he means by the strand of the apostolic ethical tradition which he terms “correspondence”, whereby the believer’s attitude corresponds to or reflects or partakes in the same nature as that of their Lord, by following after or learning from that person.84

Yoder cites, with other texts, 1 John 1:5-7 and 3:1-3 to support the notion that what is in the OT a universally presupposed concept, following God, becomes in the NT “a new reality with the Holy Spirit”.85 He puts aside notions of sinless perfection as Hellenistic and mediaeval importations into Scripture, as both impossible and crushing, citing the simplicity of the gospel demand that because God does not discriminate in the object of God’s love, neither should we.86 To illustrate the inclusive nature of this demand, he cites 1 John 4:7-12.87

83 Ibid, 380-388.
86 Ibid, 116-117.
87 Ibid, 117.
One finds oneself reflecting here that as God’s atonement for sin through Jesus is universal, περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου (1 John 2:2b), may one argue, building on Yoder, that the proper function of the word πᾶς in 1 John 4:7b is to signify that the part-verse embraces as ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ γινώσκει τὸν θεόν, “born of God and knowing God”, everyone who is truly ὁ ἀγαπῶν, “the one who loves”? Surely to argue that it means the converse, that to love one must first be a child of God, stands the verse on its head! When we pass to a detailed exegesis of 1 John’s use of ἀγαπάω and its derivatives, this possibility will be evaluated. It requires that we take into account the author’s hostility to the opponents against whom he is writing. Does he condemn them for lack of love, a universal command, or does he seek to “arm” his community with love only for one another, as a defence against opponents?

Yoder speaks of “being in Christ as the definition of human experience”, citing 1 John 2:6, and of “loving Christ as Christ loved, giving himself”, citing 1 John 3:11-16, comparing it to 4:7-10, to be discussed later. He writes that it is a mistake to say that the key statement of the Christian ethic is the “golden rule” of doing unto others what you would have them do unto you, which Jesus defines as the cornerstone of the Law, not the sum of his own teaching; he says Jesus, by contrast, offers a “new commandment”, citing John 13:34 and 1 John 2:18, meaning “do as I have done for you”, or “do as God has done for you in sending his Son”.

Looking at 1 John 3:11-16, again building on Yoder, might one argue that because in 3:13 the author defines his community over against the world, and urges them μὴ θαυμάξετε, ἀδελφοί, εἰ μισεῖ ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος, “do not be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you”, he does not counsel reciprocal hatred – quite the reverse? Does the author’s love command (3:13) extend to ὁ κόσμος, for whom Jesus died (2:2)? Again, to answer this question properly, one must pay serious regard to John’s condemnation of the

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88 Ibid.
89 Ibid, 118.
90 Ibid, 119.
opponents’ theology: does this extend to the opponents themselves? Later we shall attempt to answer this question after examining 1 John’s use of ἀγαπάω and its derivatives.

Yoder notes that 1 John 3:16, like Ephesians 5:1-2, commands that we give our lives for others, as Jesus did, combining this with the suggestion that Jesus requires suffering servanthood, not dominion, in order to argue that these imperatives are founded, not on Jesus’ imminent self-sacrifice, but on his posture in his earthly life as a servant.91 Similarly, Yoder writes elsewhere, citing 1 John 4:17, that ‘“as he is, so are we in this world’ cannot be said without including reference to the earthly life of Jesus’’. 92

This argument would seem somewhat problematic at first sight, when linked with 1 John 3:16, which relates to imitation of Jesus after – and indeed consequent on – his death, although to be fair, Yoder deploys other gospel citations to suggest that Jesus’ servanthood acts as an example to the church after his death.93 But is it possible from 1 John 3:16b to say that ἡμεῖς ὀφείλουμεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι, “we should lay down our lives for our brother”, signifies that in identifying with Jesus’ non-resistance to his violent death, we may in defence of others offer only non-violent resistance?94

Is this compatible with the situation of conflict with the secessionists in which 1 John was written? Is active resistance to violence in defence of one’s loved ones – or for that matter of one’s country – permissible? Later in this study, after an exegesis of ἀγαπάω and ἀδελφός and their derivatives, and some hermeneutical reflection on 1 John alongside John’s Gospel, some answers to these questions will be offered.

91 Ibid, 123.
93 Yoder, Politics of Jesus, 124.
Gordon Kaufman

Gordon Kaufman would vie with Yoder for the title of “pre-eminent modern Mennonite theologian”, and is certainly a theologian of non-violence. He has as his central thesis that “God”, the symbol, to whom we attach anthropomorphic qualities such as “all-powerful”, “sovereign” and “king of the universe”, is to be contrasted with the reality of God, who is transcendent, infinite, eternal and all-powerful – insofar as we can describe God at all: these are descriptors which themselves emphasize that the reality of God is beyond our comprehension or understanding. 95

Kaufman therefore cites 1 John 4:12, “no-one has ever seen God”, as proof that even to the early Christians, God was not directly experienced by humanity: he cites 1 John 4:13 to show that we experience God as abiding in us when we love one another: hatred of the brother (1 John 4:20) is proof that God’s spirit is absent from us. 96

Kaufman also cites 1 John 4:7-8 and 12 as evidence that love, as a quality of life present within a Christian community, is itself to be identified as “the very presence of God”. 97 So Kaufmann writes that “it is finally possible to conceive of God as love (1 John 4:7-12) in a very radical sense”, which is “non-resistance to all aggressive power”, citing also Matthew 5:39-48. 98 This is a direct linkage between the Sermon on the Mount and 1 John’s moral preaching, directed at “my little children”, τεκνία μου in 1 John 2:1.

Is this hermeneutical move defensible? Perhaps John’s attitude to ὁ κόσμος may be seen to shift here – is it possible to see him as affirming the world as worthy of love, through Jesus as ἰλασμός (1 John 2:2, 4:10) for ὅλου τοῦ

96 Ibid, 333.
98 Kaufman, God, Mystery, Diversity, 150.
κόσμου (2:2)? Exegesis later in this study of ἱλασμός in 1 John may provide some answers to these questions.

**Stanley Hauerwas**

Stanley Hauerwas in his work in the theology of non-violence cites 1 John 4:13-21 to illustrate his proposition that “because we Christians worship a resurrected Lord, we can take the risk of love”.99 So, he argues, we are a forgiven people, who “have learned not to fear one another”, because “love is the non-violent apprehension of the other as other”, as opposed to seeing others as frightening, challenging our way of being.100

This has some Girardian echoes, although Hauerwas is no Girardian! Fear of the other leads to rivalry, and rivalry to conflict. How does the author’s teaching that ἡ τελεία ἀγάπη ἔξω βάλει τὸν φόβον, “perfect love casts out fear”, in 1 John 4:18a stand alongside his evident hostility to the secessionists who “went out from us” (1 John 2:18)? Does John hate or fear the secessionists? Exegesis of ἀγάπη as used in 1 John, especially at 4:18-19, may answer this question. Hauerwas is a very fine writer, and his theology is deep indeed, but the difficult question of 1 John’s hostility to the secessionists, which reflects the situation in which it was written, means that one must ask if the texts Hauerwas uses really support his argument.

**Darrin W Snyder Belousek**

Darrin W Snyder Belousek, in a project similar to, but not identical with the present one, sets out to demolish a penal substitutonary model of the Atonement, and draws out the implications of a sacrificial and cleansing model (which is that adopted in this study) for peacemaking theology, and for a model of restorative, rather than retributive justice.101

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100 Ibid, 91.
His uses of 1 John are many and there is space here only for some. For example, he maintains that in 1 John 2:2, the use of term ἡλασμός is connected to the statement that Jesus’ blood cleanses us from sin (1:7), and that its use here parallels that in Ezekiel 44:27 where it is used to connote purification from sin, not divine propitiation.\textsuperscript{102} This study will show that there are other examples of the OT use of this term, with similar meanings.

Belousek refers again to the use of ἡλασμός in 1 John 2:2, and in 4:10, comparing it to the use of ἡλασμός cognates in Hebrews 2:17 and Romans 3:25, and contending that in each case, Jesus’ life and death effects expiation rather than propitiation of human sin. He says the statement in 1 John 2:2 that Jesus is the ἡλασμός, “atoning sacrifice” for the sins ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, “of the whole world” refutes a Calvinist Atonement, effecting forgiveness of the sins only of the “elect.”\textsuperscript{103}

Belousek argues that the divine motivation for redemption of the world is solely love, comparing John 3:16 and 1 John 4:9 with Romans 5:8, suggesting that Jesus’ death for us was not to fulfil some legal requirement, because God’s wrath demands propitiation, but a revelation of divine love for creation and for God’s creatures.\textsuperscript{104}

Belousek’s project is similar to our own. The additional contribution sought to be made by this study is to draw out further the OT background against which 1 John was written, suggesting that not only ἡλασμός but other Greek keywords in the LXX supply potent clues that a peacemaking hermeneutic is integral to a proper reading of 1 John.

\begin{footnotesize} 
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} Ibid, 248.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Ibid, 333, 500-501.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Ibid, 609.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Richard Hays

Richard Hays, a NT ethicist, seeing John’s Gospel and 1 John as “a common stream of tradition”, even if not written by the same person, maintains that in both, the love command is applied only within the Johannine community, noting that this has led some scholars to label the Johannine tradition morally deficient in this respect.\(^{105}\) He asks whether this is fair, and whether in Johannine studies, ethics have been “crowded out” by Christology.\(^{106}\)

Hays notes elements of the portrait of Jesus in John’s Gospel of his supernatural knowledge of people’s hearts (John 2:23-25), his lack of hunger for material food (John 4:31-34), his mysterious disappearance from hostile crowds (John 7:30, 8:59), his greeting of Lazarus’ death as a “useful teaching aid” for his disciples (John 11:14-15), his miracles as “signs” triggering long meditative interpretations (for example, the “bread of life” discourse in John 6), and his many Christological discourses proclaiming his identity and oneness with God.\(^{107}\)

Consequently, Hays argues, the author of 1 John stigmatises “docetic schismatics” who “took their cues” from these elements in John’s Gospel as denying that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (1 John 4:2-3), noting that John therefore claims to have touched the Word of Life “with our hands” (1 John 1:1), and that indeed in John’s Gospel there are anti-docetic elements: Jesus thirsts and asks a Samaritan woman for drink (John 4:7), weeps at Lazarus’ grave (John 11:35), washes the feet of the disciples (John 13:3-5) and is “the word made flesh” (John 1:14).\(^{108}\) Thus, Hays says, the Johannine tradition claims for Jesus many Christological titles and supernatural roles, yet proclaims him as a historical person who lived an earthly life, and whose flesh could be handled and wounded.\(^{109}\) Rightly, Hays does not set John’s Gospel and 1 John over against each other as in fact conveying opposing views of Jesus’ nature.

\(^{106}\) Ibid, 140.
\(^{107}\) Ibid, 141.
\(^{108}\) Ibid.
\(^{109}\) Ibid, 141-142.
Against this background, Hays refers to the “new commandment” in John 13:34, then yokes it to 1 John 3:11 and 3:16-18, noting that this identifies such love as a matter of action, not of mere warm feelings.\footnote{Ibid, 145.} To Hays, this admonition to love within the community is not trivial, and is a good place to start discussing Christian ethics.\footnote{Ibid, 145-146.} He argues that the historical setting of this commandment is that within a closely-knit group of Jewish Christians, tensions over the continued observance of Jewish festivals emerged, leading to expulsion from the synagogue (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:20), so the Johannine community was led to define itself against the synagogue and “the world”, expecting its hatred (1 John 3:13-14; 5:19), warning itself not to love the world (1 John 2:15), so that love within the community became a guarantee of its preservation, excusable as a “response to a communal crisis of identity”.\footnote{Ibid, 146-147.}

In response to Hays here, while conceding that in 1 John 3:13 the author defines his community over against the world, and urges them μὴ θαυμάζετε, ἀδελφοί, εἰ μισεῖ ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος, “do not be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you”, one must again ask whether his love command extends to ὁ κόσμος, for whom Jesus died (2:2). Because the author does not in 3:13 counsel reciprocal hatred for ὁ κόσμος, might there be a creative tension between Jesus’ love for ὁ κόσμος and John’s admonition to his community not to be surprised by hatred stemming from ὁ κόσμος, just as there is a creative tension between the Johannine tradition’s affirmation of Jesus’ divinity and of his humanity, as Hays indeed identifies? Might the author’s love command extend beyond his community, towards ὁ κόσμος, while at the same time he remains conscious of the moral degradation into which it has fallen, and of its enmity towards his community? Or is the thought in 1 John 3:13 simpler, and similar to that in John 1:13, that just as ὁ κόσμος did not receive Jesus, his followers should be unsurprised if they
encounter similar hostility? Some answers may appear after an exegesis of 1 John’s use of ἀγάπη and its derivatives later in this study.

Hays argues that 1 John 3:14 portrays a community already living in the fullness of eschatological life, having passed from death to love because they love one another, and that the failures of love and schisms within the community threaten this realised eschatology.\textsuperscript{113} While Hays sees this as a reason for the author to confine the love command to his community, might one not argue the opposite, that this verse also invokes eschatology, a future in which ὁ κόσμος, for whom Jesus died (2:2), is brought from death into life by universal love? Again, an exegesis of 1 John’s use of ἀγάπη may clarify this.

\textit{Richard Burridge}

Richard Burridge, NT scholar and Christian ethicist, in a chapter on Johannine ethics, appeals to 1 John repeatedly as evidence for the necessity for Christian love. He notes 1 John’s use of “paraclete”, παράκλητος in 1 John 2:1, linking this to its use in John 14:16 to show that as Jesus has lived among us as a manifestation of divine love, so ἄλλον παράκλητον, “another advocate” (John 14:16) will continue to offer that love.\textsuperscript{114}

Building on this, the usage of παράκλητος to depict Jesus in 1 John 2:1 is to show not only that if \textit{we} sin, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα,” we have an advocate with the Father”, but that “if \textit{anyone} sins”, ἐάν τις ἁμάρτῃ, the παράκλητος, Jesus himself, can be trusted to cleanse, deal with that sin: τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας, “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all our sin” (1:7b). Therefore, wreaking vengeance on others for sins against us is inappropriate for Christians, because we should forgive as God forgives, by cleansing, through Jesus the παράκλητος.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, 150.
Burridge at first asserts that the love commandment of 1 John is not new, instancing Leviticus 19:18 on loving one’s neighbour as oneself. But he then notes that in 1 John 4:19 the love we are to have for one another is “based on the prior love of Jesus himself”, noting that the “essential novelty” of the Johannine love commandment is “the Christological reference”. Precisely! But one must surely be careful in equating this commandment with love of neighbour simpliciter, for this may obscure the question whether the Johannine love command is universal. Again, this will be dealt with later in this study by exegesis of our key words in 1 John.

Burridge passes to the idea of imitation of Jesus, pointing out that John’s Gospel is the only one to use the word ὑπόδειγμα, “example”, at the footwashing (John 13:15): he links this to 1 John 2:6 and 3:7 and 16, using Girard’s word, mimēsis, and notes examples in the Apocrypha of exemplary death (2 Maccabees 6:28 and 6:31; 4 Maccabees 17:22-23). Might it be argued that in 1 John 3:16b the admonition that ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖαι, “we should lay down our lives for the brother”, another exemplary death is portrayed? Exegesis later of our key words in 1 John might clarify this.

Burridge cites Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s reliance, in his defence in 1982 of his actions before a commission of inquiry in Apartheid-era South Africa, on 1 John 3:15-18, among other texts, as showing that practical action was – and is – needed to reconcile all people to each other as beloved children of God. This text seems to speak to us loudly and unequivocally in just the way Desmond Tutu interpreted it – but again a difficult question cannot be dodged: who is the ὀδηλῴς in 1 John? And can this key word in 1 John be interpreted as a reference to all humanity? This requires later examination.

115 Ibid, 326.
116 Ibid, 327.
117 Ibid, 344.
118 Ibid, 373-374.
As Burridge says, the mimetic aim, found amongst others in the NT text, is made clear, inter alia, in 1 John 2:2 and 3:3, 7.\textsuperscript{119} And, as he says, 1 John 3:11-24 encourages us to live in love as Jesus loved us.\textsuperscript{120} But is the mimesis advocated in 1 John simply a defence against opponents, or a stance advocated towards all humanity? Again, exegesis of our key words in 1 John will help answer this question.

\textit{George Hunsinger}

Hunsinger is a vigorous critic of Girard. He says that because it is a consequence of Girard’s view of the crucifixion, as the final revelation of human violence and of God’s non-violent nature, “sacrificial motifs must simply be purged from the Gospels if Girard is to maintain his thesis”, so that “resorting to statements that are as sweeping as they are untenable, he thus proceeds to purge them”.\textsuperscript{121} Hunsinger says Girard offers “a ‘Pelagian’ solution to an ‘Augustinian’ problem”.\textsuperscript{122} He characterises the problem as Augustinian because it “roots the problem of ‘covetousness’ (the biblical name for ‘mimetic desire’) in the perversity of the human heart.”\textsuperscript{123}

Hunsinger stigmatises Girard’s solution as “Pelagian” because, he says, all Girard offers is the unmasking of the scapegoating mechanism, the expulsion of violence by violence, which is then rendered impotent by the very fact of its unmasking, so that the Gospels’ message is that loving one’s brother completely is the antidote to mimetic violence.\textsuperscript{124} Hunsinger characterises Girard’s solution as Pelagian because it relies on humanity to “do the rest”, as it were, once mimetic violence is unmasked by Jesus’ complete love in his self-offering on the Cross.\textsuperscript{125} Thus, says Hunsinger,

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid}, 391.
\item\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid}, 392.
\item\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Ibid}, 69.
\item\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Ibid}.
\item\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Ibid}, 69-70.
\item\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Ibid}, 70-71.
\end{itemize}
what we are left with is a “low” Christology which reduces Jesus to “little
more than a moral exemplar”.  

This may be a vast over-simplification of Girardian theory. But again it
raises immediately what is signified by ἀγάπη and ἱλασμός in 1 John. Does
ἱλασμός signify a “transaction” between God and the Son in which the latter
offers to placate an angry God, who is bound by God’s own system to
punish humanity for its sins unless someone else pays the price? Or is the
author’s use of the verb καθαρίζω in 1 John 1:7 and 9 a clue that God is the
actor here, and that God’s love for the world, not punishment for sin, is the
main focus here. Exegesis of ἀγάπη and ἱλασμός in 1 John will assist
resolution of this question.

Hunsinger looks at Atonement doctrine in Von Balthasar’s writings,
showing how Von Balthasar trenchantly criticises what he sees as Girard’s
failure to come to grips with the connection between the “vertical”,
Christological dimension of Trinitarian theology and the “horizontal”
dimension or historical aspects of the cross. Next Hunsinger shows how
Torrance, in a reflection on Jesus as prophet, priest and king, shows how
Jesus breaks our bondage to sin and death by objectively removing the guilt
which separates us from God. Hunsinger agrees with Von Balthasar,
using Torrance’s insights to critique Girard’s atonement theology,
preserving some of Girard’s insights, but avoiding what he sees as Girard’s
deficiencies.

Hunsinger maintains that “enemy love in Karl Barth’s theology is at the
heart of the Gospel”. Hunsinger appropriates Barth’s notion that in the
Cross, God makes God’s own self vulnerable to enemies: he cites Barth’s
well-known statement that “in giving Him – and giving Himself – He
exposes Him – and Himself – to the greatest danger” and that “He sets at

126 Ibid, 71.
127 Ibid, 71-74.
128 Ibid, 74-77.
129 Ibid, 71.
130 Ibid, 77.
stake His own existence as God”.  

131 Hunsinger quotes Barth as asserting that “in this radical sense God has loved first (prōtos, 1 John 4:19)”.

Therefore, Hunsinger argues, God does not meet God’s enemies by brute force, but by “the mystery of suffering love”.  

133 There is here drawn a nexus between 1 John and Barth’s theology of enemy-love, as seen by Hunsinger. In 1 John 4:19 we indeed read that God has loved us first, πρῶτος. Exegesis of 1 John’s use of an ἀγάπη derivative here, in showing the priority of God’s love, how it preceded God’s people’s love for God, with the consequence that our love for God must be essentially mimetic, will illuminate whether Hunsinger’s characterisation of Barthian theology as non-violent, and rooted in enemy love, has support in 1 John. Hunsinger’s reliance on Von Balthasar and Torrance leads us naturally into a brief examination of how these writers either use 1 John or reflect the ideas in it.

**Hans Urs von Balthasar**

Hans Urs von Balthasar’s primary critique of Girardian theory is that Girard is too dismissive of Jesus’ death as sacrificial. Von Balthasar poses a stark dilemma for Girard: how can it be said that Jesus’ self-surrender is offered to the Father if “the latter, no longer an Old Testament God, has ‘no pleasure’ in it, since he did not want the cross, and even less commanded his son to accept it”?  

134 He concedes that Girard allows of a sacrificial interpretation of Jesus’ death, but only “on condition that we maintain the abyss between this latter self-sacrifice and the old ritual sacrifice, which is intended to placate a god who requires violence”.  

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131 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 72, quoted in Hunsinger, “The Politics of the Nonviolent God”, 78.


133 Ibid.


135 Ibid, 310.
One of Von Balthasar’s criticisms of Girard’s system is that for Girard the concept of sin is secondary, so that it is not clear how Jesus, the ultimate scapegoat, may bear the sin of the world, unless the world itself loads it onto him.\textsuperscript{136} Thus, he says, to Girard what happens on the cross is the transferral by the world of its guilt onto Christ, while a powerless God demands nothing by way of “atoning sacrifice”.\textsuperscript{137}

Here Von Balthasar unmistakeably uses the ἴλασμος language of 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. Crucial to his critique of Girard is that in some way Jesus being a ἴλασμος for the whole world, περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου (1 John 2:2) involves a sacrifice which is \textit{something more} than self-giving which “unmasks” the Satanic notion of scapegoating, which formed the basis of all religion until that time. Exegesis of ἴλασμος in 1 John may cast light on this problem.

Von Balthasar also criticises Schwager, pointing out that for Schwager, the only answer to the question “why the Cross?” is that in order to get rid of their sin, humankind must transfer their hostility to God concretely to Jesus through the crucifixion by unloading “their innermost desires on Jesus”.\textsuperscript{138} Von Balthasar asks, “why the Cross, if God forgives in any case?” and criticises Schwager’s answer as concerning only humanity’s attitude to Jesus, not God’s attitude to him.\textsuperscript{139} Von Balthasar suggests that God’s forgiveness and Christ’s bearing of sin in the cross cannot be left in isolation, and that while Schwager’s “discovery” that not only the punishment for sin but also the \textit{sin itself} are transferred to Jesus in the Cross brings “the final element in the drama of reconciliation”, it provides no satisfying answer.\textsuperscript{140}

Von Balthasar does not adopt specifically the thought of 1 John, but one might think he is very close to the idea in 1 John 4:10, that God’s love, ἀγάπη is shown in his sending of his Son to be the ἴλασμος for our sins.

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Ibid}, 309.  
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Ibid}, 309-310.  
\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Ibid}, 311; and see Schwager, \textit{Must There be Scapegoats?}, 214.  
\textsuperscript{139} Von Balthasar, \textit{Theo-Drama} Vol IV, 312.  
\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Ibid}, 312-313.
The author’s use of the plural ἁμαρτιῶν here may indicate that what the author conveys here is not a state of sin, but specific acts of rebellion against God by humanity. If this is correct, God’s ἵλασμός in Jesus is to be seen as a bearing of all humanity’s acts of rebellion rather than an assumption simply of humanity’s brokenness, its mortal clay, its inevitable tendency to sin, to rebel. In that Schwager speaks of the sin of humanity itself, as well as the punishment for it, being assumed in the Cross, he may give insufficient weight, in light of 1 John 4:10, to Jesus as bearer of the sins of humanity. This need not be resolved now, but exegesis of ἵλασμός and ἐγκατάπησιν in 1 John later in this study will be a useful tool in providing some answers.

**Thomas Torrance**

In a huge statement, Thomas Torrance holds that to understand the Atonement we must see that “through the Son and in the Spirit God has given himself to us”.\(^\text{141}\) Earlier he explains what this means: no explanation is ever given in the NT, or for that matter in the OT, why Atonement for sin requires the blood of sacrifice, so God’s atoning act, as with God’s love, “knows no ‘Why’”\(^\text{142}\). Therefore:

In him priest and sacrifice, offering and the offeror are one, so that he constitutes himself the new and living way opened up for us into God’s immediate presence. He is our Forerunner, our High Priest, in whom our hope is lodged as an anchor sure and steadfast that reaches beyond the veil of sense and time into the heavenly world. In him God has drawn near to us, and we may draw near to God with complete confidence as those who are sanctified together with Jesus, and who are included in his eternal self-presentation through the Spirit to the Father.\(^\text{143}\)

Torrance does not cite 1 John here, but 1 John 4:10-12 comes to mind: God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, as ἵλασμός for our sins, and as he loved us, so we ought to love one another: the unseen God may live in us so God’s love may be perfected in us.

With Torrance, one may say that any attempt to define a precise mechanism by which God extends forgiveness to us through the atoning gift of God’s

\(^{141}\) TF Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 123.

\(^{142}\) Ibid, 114.

\(^{143}\) Ibid, 114-115.
own Son in his Incarnation, life and death runs the risk Barth foresaw when he spoke, as we have seen, of the situation where:

...Scripture is thought of and used as though the message of revelation and the Word of God could be extracted from it in the same way as the message of other truth or reality can be extracted from other sources of knowledge, at any rate where it is not presumably speaking of Jesus Christ.144

So God’s Atonement in Jesus is at bottom a mystery, as is Jesus’ own nature, truly God and true human. This, as we shall see, is also the final viewpoint of 1 John.

**Gustav Aulen**

Gustav Aulen – and in this important respect he stands foresquare with Barth – maintains that the Atonement is at all times to be seen as God’s work alone.145 He seeks to retrieve, from mediaeval speculation about God’s “justice” being “satisfied” by Jesus’ atoning death for human sin, what he calls the “classic” view of the Atonement.

Aulen explains that this “classic” idea may be described as a drama, in which the evil powers of the world are vanquished by Jesus as *Christus Victor*, so that in his victory over the “tyrants” under which humankind is suffering, God reconciles the world to God’s own self.146 To Aulen the background of this idea is dualistic: Jesus’ victory is over powers of evil that are hostile to God’s will, and this victory brings to pass in a cosmic drama a relation of *reconciliation*,147 i.e. between God and humanity.

Aulen sees this view of the Atonement as “classic” because it appears in Irenaeus’ *Recapitulation*, in which, as Aulen sets out from Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses*, Irenaeus answers the question, *ut quid enim descendebat?*148 by the propositions that:

144 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 368.
147 *Ibid*, 4-5.
Man had been created by God that he might have life. If now, having lost life, and having been harmed by the serpent, he were not to return to life, but were to be wholly abandoned to death, then God would have been defeated, and the malice of the serpent would have overcome God’s will. But since God is both invincible and magnanimous, He showed His magnanimity in correcting man, and in proving all men, as we have said, but through the Second Man he bound the strong one, and spoiled his goods, and annihilated death, bringing life to man who had become subject to death. For Adam had become the devil’s possession, and the devil held him under his power, by having wrongfully practised deceit on him, and by the offer of immortality made him subject to death. For by promising that they should be gods, which did not lie within his power, he worked death in them. Wherefore he who had taken men captive was himself taken captive by God, and man who had been taken captive was set free from the bondage of condemnation. 149

This quotation has been rendered in full as it reveals how Irenaeus creates a dramatic picture of the action between the dramatīs personae in his Atonement theology. Aulen then traces how this “dramatic” idea of the Atonement was taken up by the Fathers in both east and west, exempling Origin, Athanasius, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem and John Chrysostom. 150

One may detect immediately how congenial Johannine dualism might have been to such an idea. Indeed Aulen notes its prominence in Johannine writings, in particular 1 John where in 5:19 it is said that “the whole world lies under the power of the evil one”, so that “the purpose of Christ’s coming is summed up in 1 John iii.8: ‘To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil’”. 151

A Christus Victor model of the atonement finds favour with Aulen, and there are at least echoes of it in Girard. Is 1 John congenial to it? How may it avoid a picture of a violent, retributive God, if at all? Our contextual exegesis of key words underlying the principal ideas in 1 John will provide some answers to these questions.

Conclusion

We have seen a tendency discernible in the work of peacemaking theologians who advocate a non-violent approach both to the Atonement

149 Ibid, 19-20, quoting Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses, II., 23.1.
150 See ibid, Ch 2, “The Fathers in East and West”, 38-60.
151 Ibid, 74-75.
and to ethics to cite the more general statements and injunctions, somewhat as proof texts, in 1 John, such as “God is love” and “love one another”, without tying them to the context in which the epistle was written, and thus to its proper exegesis. This is understandable in eminent writers whose concern with 1 John, and indeed with Scripture as a whole, is hermeneutical and illustrative, rather than in any way exegetical. Some biblical scholars, as we have also seen, approach hermeneutical questions prompted by the key words in 1 John identified above in greater exegetical depth, as one would expect of their calling. But most citations of 1 John by biblical scholars identified above, again in service of a peacemaking or non-violent approach to scripture, have been incidental. The wider projects undertaken by these scholars, in the works where these citations occur, have themselves no doubt prevented close exegesis of them to see if they support the hermeneutic in support of which they are deployed.

We have seen too that Von Balthasar and Hunsinger in their critiques of Girard and his interpreters have relied in part on 1 John in their Atonement theology. Their use of 1 John differs radically from that of Girard and his interpreters. One possibility is that Girard’s critics might stand together with Girard and his supporters in justifying, in different ways, a peacemaking theology derived from 1 John. Exegesis of some key words in 1 John, having regard to the situation of John’s community, will help decide whether a peacemaking hermeneutic of 1 John holds water.

What is at stake here is not only the proper use of Scripture but our very picture of God. But one must not approach Holy Scripture in general, and 1 John in particular, as if it were a quarry, with the anterior, hermeneutical motive of proving that a peacemaking, non-violent picture of God, with consequences for our picture of the Atonement and Christian ethics, may validly be found there. One must approach Scripture empirically, with an open mind, to see if it will bear such a hermeneutic. This may only be done through an open and honest view of the situation in which 1 John was written, and by bringing this to bear on the exegesis of some key words in 1 John which we have already identified. Exegetical study abounds in all
schools of biblical scholarship, but without any attempt at deriving meaning from the circumstances in which a particular text was written, one is limited to simple word studies, which examine the use of particular language in a text in one tradition, such as the Johannine corpus, and then infer that a similar usage is intended in another text within that tradition.

This sort of wider exegetical enquiry into the circumstances within which 1 John was written, as revealed in its text, is what is needed if we are to determine whether a peacemaking hermeneutic may be derived from 1 John. What the author really meant is obviously not the end of the hermeneutical enquiry; the so-called “intentional fallacy” is an ever-present danger. But if it can be shown that the author meant the precise reverse of what is portrayed by hermeneutical use of his words in service of a peacemaking theology, in both Atonement and NT ethical studies, there is a very large problem. This study aims to elucidate whether or not such a problem exists, and if it does, to attempt to solve it.
Chapter 1 – The Background, Purpose, Literary Structure and Reception of 1 John

Introduction

Writers advocating a peacemaking or non-violent hermeneutic of the NT make much use of 1 John. This study asks whether it is exegetically legitimate, or even possible, to do so. The following chapters of this study will suggest an answer, by undertaking an exegesis of some keywords standing for central ideas in 1 John. But before beginning that project we must first ask, and attempt to resolve, a number of broad preliminary questions. To whom and why was 1 John written? Is the conflict with opponents seen in it present or past? What is its literary structure? When and how was it received in the early church? Put simply, we must examine, in a survey of some representative scholarship, the background, purpose, literary structure and reception of 1 John.

Why is this needed in a study of the present type? As we shall see, the broad scholarly consensus, with some exceptions, is that 1 John was written as a response to tendencies within the Johannine community to adopt too high a Christology. This may have occurred in response to statements in John’s Gospel as to Jesus’ heavenly origin and nature, the purposes of which may have been in part to refute an overly low Christology, though not specifically to refute Ebionite tendencies.¹ These may have led some in the Johannine community to over-spiritualise Jesus’ teaching and to downplay the importance of his humanity and life on earth, and of the necessity for mutual love as the basis of a Christian ethic, in response to Jesus’ earthly life and his saving work in his death and resurrection. We must examine, therefore, how the general consensus as to the background, purpose, literary structure and reception of 1 John has been formed.

This study does not pretend to resolve these much-disputed questions. All that is attempted in what follows is a survey of but a few answers to these questions in the literature, and an indication of the stance adopted concerning these debates by this study, which underlie its later consideration of peacemaking theology and its relevance to 1 John.

**The Background of 1 John**

**(i) Jewish Influence in 1 John**

It seems that a “parting of the ways” occurred between early Jewish Christian converts and what became Rabbinic Judaism, perhaps as early as the first century, occasioned by early Christian teaching about the inauguration of the eschatological kingdom of God in the public ministry of Jesus. A second “parting of the ways” is also evident between Jewish Christian groups, consisting entirely of Jewish converts to “the way”, as portrayed for example in Acts 2:37-42, and Gentile converts, depicted in Acts 10:44-48. A short summary of some representative scholarship will suggest that a broad scholarly consensus has been reached that there is nevertheless considerable Jewish influence in 1 John.

Lieu asks whether this parting is a theological construct or an historical reality. She concludes that it was the latter, with the formation of separate identity and development, based on the literature of a number of brief case studies of early Christian communities in various places in the eastern Mediterranean area.

Writing in the early twentieth century, Law finds in 1 John 5:18-21 “alternating tristichs and distichs”, observing that whilst this may not represent conscious imitation of Hebraic forms, “no-one could have written

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2 For a good survey of scholarly use of this phrase see Judith M Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek?* (London & New York: T & T Clark, 2002), 11-29.
as our author does whose whole thought and style had not been unconsciously formed on Old Testament models”.⁶ As we shall see in a moment, this view is persuasive.

A difficulty for those arguing for Jewish influence on 1 John is that the only overt OT reference in John is the Cain analogy in 3:12, and that it contains no OT quotations. This may well indicate that the membership of the Johannine community was not predominantly of Jewish background. But we should not jump to the conclusion that this is evidence of absence of Jewish influence on 1 John. To Brown, the Cain reference shapes a whole section of 1 John, 3:12-24, and OT covenant themes have a strong influence on its ethical outlook.⁷ This is cogent: 3:11 refers to a message ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, “from the beginning”;⁸ 3:22 speaks of receiving whatever we ask because of obedience to τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ, “his commandments”; 3:23 speaks of an ἐντολὴ, “commandment” to love one another, and 3:24 says all who obey τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ, “his commandments”, abide in him and he in them.

Brown notes others’ views that the “from the beginning” formula used here is consistent with early Christian baptismal catechesis,⁹ but the better view is that by virtue of its association with ἐντολὴ, “commandment”, this formula reflects OT covenant theology. Exodus 24, where we see the people’s promise of obedience to all that the Lord has spoken (24:3, 8) – itself a reiteration of Exodus 19:8¹⁰ – and Moses’ offering of the blood of the covenant (24:1-8), also relates Moses’ receipt from the Lord of the tablets of stone containing the Decalogue, with “all the law and the

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⁸ This phrase, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς in 1 John 1:1 is a deliberate echo of Genesis 1:1: R Alan Culpepper, The Gospel and Letters of John (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 255. Its use in John 3:11 may be seen in the same light, except that in its use in 1 John, unlike John’s Gospel, it includes the appearance of Jesus and the beginning of teaching about him: D Moody Smith, The Fourth Gospel in Four Dimensions: Judaism, Jesus, the Gospels and Scripture (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 120, following Conzelmann.
⁹ Brown, The Epistles of John, 90.
commandments” (24:12). “Commandment” translates the Hebrew לְמַדְדָּהָ, which is translated in the LXX here as ἐντολὰς, “commandments”, the same word used in 1 John 2:7-8 and 3:22-24. It is indeed likely that the author of 1 John had this same idea of divinely initiated law and covenant in mind here. At the very least, OT covenant themes have a strong influence on 1 John’s ethical outlook, as Brown says.\textsuperscript{11}

Brown argues for Jewish influence on 1 John in parallel with the Dead Sea Scrolls. \emph{IQS} (the Rule of the Community) warns that no-one can enter the community who does not walk in the ways of God, “if seeking the ways of light, he turns towards darkness” (3:3): it teaches that such a person cannot be purified by atonement or cleansed by purifying waters (3:4), and that only the person who walks in the ways of God receives the true teaching, and is cleansed of sin, and is accepted by a pleasing atonement before God, and becomes part of the covenant of eternal communion (3:11-12). As Brown argues, these ideas are similar to those in 1 John 1:5-7 and 2:8-11.\textsuperscript{12}

There are parallels between the ideas in \emph{IQS} 3:17-22, where it refers to “two spirits in which to walk” and the “generations of truth” which “spring from a fountain of light” and “the generations of iniquity from a source of darkness”, and “the sons of righteousness under the rule of the prince of light” and “the sons of darkness under the rule of the angel of darkness”, and those in 1 John 2:8-11 and 3:12.\textsuperscript{13}

To Schnackenburg, many ideas in 1 John “can come only from a Jewish background”, suggesting that its author “had his roots in Judaism”; he refers to ideas such as sin as transgression of God’s commandments, atonement through the shedding of blood, and final judgment, arguing that even if the author was “indebted primarily to Christian kerygma and the Church’s

\textsuperscript{11} Raymond E Brown, \textit{The Epistles of John}, 28.
catechesis”, nevertheless “the acceptance and continuation of these ideas from Judaism is taken for granted”.14 This too is cogent. The similarity between the usage of ἐντολὴ, “commandment” in 1 John 2:7-8 and 3:22-24 and in the LXX in Exodus 24:12 is but one illustration of this phenomenon. Schnackenburg rightly sees a similarity between the Qumran texts and the Johannine writings, both linguistically and theologically, while conceding that it is unclear whether this is because of a common milieu, the world of first century Judaism, or whether the author of 1 John had contact with the Qumran community.15

However Painter refers to the “non-Jewish context” of John’s letters, pointing to their lack of OT quotations, and the warning to guard against idols (1 John 5:21).16 He argues that Jewish elements can occur in a writing for different reasons: the subject may be Jewish, or the author may be Jewish, or he may be writing to a Jewish audience, although he concludes that the lack of OT quotations in 1 John contraindicates the latter.17 As early as Westcott, the “thoroughly Hebraistic” tone of 1 John’s writing was noted.18 But Painter is less impressed by the linguistic similarities between 1 John and the Qumran texts: he notes them, but concludes that John’s letters were written to believers at a time when they were independent from Judaism, and that they reflect no specifically Jewish problems.19 He suggests that the Johannine letters were written to a predominantly Gentile readership, and do not use specifically OT language or thought.20 If this is so, the use of the Cain analogy is curious: it appears more likely that in this connection at least, the author assumed some knowledge of the OT in his readership. Painter sees the Cain reference as developing the tradition found in John 8:39-44, and refers to Philo’s sustained treatment of Cain, traced in

15 Ibid, 28.
16 John Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2008), 1.
17 Ibid, 19.
19 Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 12-13.
20 Ibid, 77-78.
chapter 4 of this study.\textsuperscript{21} Granted, 1 John does not deal with specifically Jewish problems, but its author's awareness of Jewish tradition concerning Cain still suggests that he was steeped in the Jewish faith and literature of his time.

To Lieu, 1 John is not more “Hellenistic” that John’s Gospel: even if Gnosticism was in view as the enemy, it was as much a Jewish as a Greek phenomenon.\textsuperscript{22} She points to the parallels between contemporaneous Jewish writings and 1 John, citing also The Rule of the Community (\textit{IQS}) in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which speaks of the Two Spirits that govern human behaviour (\textit{IQS} III.13-IV.7).\textsuperscript{23} That passage has some similarities to 1 John, especially in 2:8-11 and 3:12. Lieu’s reliance on another contemporary Jewish text, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, as a possible influence on 1 John is more problematical because, as she herself notes, unlike the Dead Sea Scrolls it survives only by Christian transmission, and so are proposals which seek to identify a “Jewish substratum” to 1 John, added by Christian editing.\textsuperscript{24} To Lieu, while 1 John cannot be given the label “Jewish Christian”, itself of little use, it can validly be said to reflect a thought pattern which is Jewish in ethos, even if it does not address the disagreements between Jews who believed in Jesus and those who did not.\textsuperscript{25}

In summary, the better view is that 1 John was probably written by someone steeped in Jewish scripture – even if he did not address specifically Jewish problems – and who wrote using Jewish thought patterns, one who did not hesitate to reach for the one OT allusion in 1 John, the story of Cain and Abel, as an example of deadly hatred which would be familiar to his audience. Those to whom he wrote may or may not have been predominantly Jewish converts, but they were probably familiar enough with Jewish scripture for such an example to be meaningful.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid}, 233.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid}, 24.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid}, 25. See generally also Stephen S Smalley, \textit{1, 2, 3 John} (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1984), xxiii.
(ii) The Johannine Community – John and his Opponents

Martyn finds in John 9, particularly in 9:22, referring to excommunication from the synagogue, indications of a Jewish Christian community confessing Jesus as Messiah which was formally expelled from the synagogue some time before John wrote.\footnote{J Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 2003), 46-47.} He finds similar indications in John 16:1-2, the warning about exclusion from the synagogue, that some members of the Johannine church had come to it from the synagogue through exclusion from it.\footnote{Ibid, 48.} He finds in John 12:42 a picture of those among the authorities who remain secret believers in Jesus, for fear of exclusion from the synagogue, implying an authoritative decision by that body, before the time of writing, to exclude those confessing belief in Jesus.\footnote{Ibid, 49.}

Building on Martyn’s work, Brown maintains that a separate Johannine community later arose which has been traditionally associated with the “beloved disciple” of John’s Gospel, who was its hero.\footnote{Raymond E Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979), 31; see also Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 54-61.} Dissensions and consequent splits then occurred in it, which are the subject of John’s first letter. Based on earlier work on John’s Gospel by Martyn, Brown postulates that this Johannine community consisted originally of Jews who held to a relatively low Christology, involving use of titles not specifically implying Jesus’ divine origin and destiny, but that this community later developed a higher Christology which brought it into direct conflict with Jews, who saw it as blasphemy.\footnote{Ibid, 25-51.}

This view of 1 John, as being the later product of a separate Johannine community, has not gone unchallenged. Bauckham makes a textual argument that the “we” of John 21:24 reveals the authorship of the apostle John, the “beloved disciple”, in that it is a “we” of authority, which stands
for “I”. As part of his argument, he proposes that the “we” in 1 John 1:1-5 is traceable to its use in 3 John 9-10, 12. He argues that the “our” and “us” of 3 John 9 and 10 must be different from the “brothers” of v.10, apparently travelling missionaries associated with the Elder, and that the “we” of v.12 must be different from the “all” used there, referring apparently to all Christians in the author’s and Gaius’ community. It is easiest, Bauckham concludes, to see the first person plural in all three verses as a substitute for “I”. He then argues from this usage in 3 John that the “we” in 1 John 1:1-5 is not associative (including John with his audience in the one group) but rather an authoritative “we” representing eyewitness testimony, introduced in 1 John 1:6-10.

There are three problems with this analysis. First, granted that the πάντων in 3 John 12 must be different from the ἡμεῖς, as shown by the δὲ, there is still no reason to assume that the ἡμᾶς of vv.9 and 10 must be different from the ἀδελφοὺς of v.10. It may just as validly be interpreted associatively, just as the elder associates himself with the ἀδελφῶν in v.3.

Second, the change from an authoritative we and “our”, ἡμῶν, representing “I”, in 1 John 1:1, and in vv.2-5, to an associative “we” in vv.6-10 is harder to accommodate than the simpler proposition that an associative “we” is intended throughout vv.1-10, meaning that the proclamation of what “we” must believe in vv.6-10 comes directly from what “we” have heard from the beginning in vv.1-5. It is only by interpreting “what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands” in v.1 literally, as indicating eyewitness testimony by John, the beloved disciple himself, that the “we” in vv.1-5 becomes an authoritative “I”. But this would crucially weaken the sense of the whole passage from vv.1-10, the whole point of which is to tie the theology of vv.6-10, which must be addressed to an

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32 Bauckham, Jesus and the Eyewitnesses, 372-373.
33 Ibid, 373.
34 Ibid, 374-375.
associative “we”, including John himself, to what the same “we” have heard from the beginning in vv.1-5. Of course it is not impossible that the beloved disciple himself wrote 1 John and/or 2 and 3 John, but it may not be possible by the textual arguments Bauckham raises to prove that he did.

Thirdly, the associative “we” is found also in John’s Gospel at 21:24b: those affirming καὶ οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἡ ἀληθὴς ἡ μαρτυρία ἐστίν, “and we know that his testimony is true”, are referring, not directly to ἡ μαρτυρία of Jesus, but to ὁ μάθητὴς ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων, “the disciple who is testifying to these things”, in 21:24a. 35

This is of course a brief summary of but a small part of Bauckham’s argument and it cannot do full justice to it. But insofar as it suggests that 1 John was the product of the beloved disciple himself, rather than of an author writing within a community, perhaps originally gathered around the beloved disciple, it downplays to an unacceptable degree the extent to which the epistle responds to conflict faced by the Johannine community.

Apart from these textual arguments, even a cursory examination of the themes of 1 John reveals polemic directed by the author toward opponents, relating both to direct theological, Christological questions – who was Jesus and what were his origin(s) and destination and purpose – and to ethical disputes – what is the controlling principle of Christian ethics, and what is their level of importance? This strongly suggests conflict between an “orthodox” group and a secessionist, dissident group which had both originally belonged to one community but later experienced schism. What therefore was the nature of the split between the author of the letter and his...

opponents, both as to the identity of the opponents and whether they were without or within the community to which the letter is addressed? Moreover, what were the views they held and which the author confronted?

Westcott sees the object of 1 John as being to confront external, Cerinthean error. ⁳⁶ But it was not long before scholars came to discern that it was written to confront Christian opponents, perhaps antinomian, or “docetic in doctrine and antinomian in practice”. ⁳⁷

Brooke sees it as aimed at those holding a “mixture of Jewish and Gnostic ideas which must have formed the most pressing dangers to the moral and spiritual life of a Christian community towards the end of the first century or the beginning of the second, or perhaps even later”. ⁳⁸

Dodd views the opponents confronted in John’s first letter as “associated with that tendency in the religious life of the time which is known as “Hellenistic mysticism” or “the higher paganism”, especially in its “near-Christian dress”, as “Gnosticism”. ⁳⁹

Bultmann sees 1 John as written in conflict with Gnostic opponents, although derived in part from a Gnostic source. ⁴⁰ However, commenting on 1 John 2:25, he contrasts the Gnostic position that “life” is “an assured possession” with John’s view that for the Christian, one is “on the way” to eternal life. ⁴¹ Bultmann’s position is nuanced, but commenting on 2:19, he claims the opponents never stemmed from John’s community, and were not truly part of it. ⁴²

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Strecker however considers that from 1 John 2:19 it may be seen that the author presumes that the false teachers originally belonged to the Johannine community, “no matter how much they ‘did not belong to us’ by their very nature”. In addition, he says, “it is presumed that the opponents separated from the Johannine community before the composition of 1 John.”

Schnackenburg postulates a community in an “advanced stage of development” lying behind 1 John, with the author “fighting on a single front” against “antichrists” (2:18) or “false prophets” who are “united in their denial of the church’s Christological confession (2:22; 4:2-3)”. He postulates heretical opponents who present both “Christological error and a false ethic” (1:5-2:11; to be inferred also from 3:4-24, 4:20-5:3) which come from the same source and form a united un-Christian stance. He thinks the opponents evidently came from a “Gentile Christian milieu”, judging from John’s argument that “Son of God” is the preferable title for Jesus, which uses no scriptural OT proofs – unlike “Son of Man” or “Messiah”.

Some earlier scholars, as noted above, acknowledge that John’s opponents may have been originally from his own community, if not a genuine component of it. Brown undertakes a detailed reconstruction of stages in the development of the Johannine community in order to demonstrate how it was that John’s opponents seceded from it, and thereafter threatened to subvert its Christological beliefs and ethical practice. Brown postulates four stages in the development of the life of the Johannine community from which John’s Gospel (and indeed 1 John) sprang, based on his reading of John’s Gospel itself. First is the pre-Gospel period, in which the community originated, which involves its relationship to mid-first century Judaism. Next is its situation at the time the Gospel of John was written, in about 90

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44 Ibid.
45 Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 17.
46 Ibid, 18.
47 Ibid.
48 Brown, Community, 22.
CE according to Brown. Next is the situation in the now-divided communities in which the Letters of John were written, in about 100 CE in Brown’s estimation. Last is the dissolution of the Johannine groups after the Johannine letters were written, with the final departure of all of the secessionists from the main community in the early second century.

Against this background, Brown postulates that John’s adversaries in his letters were distinct from his own group, yet still constituted a threat through their propagandists, who claimed to be teachers. He thinks there was most likely one adversary group rather than many, because the text of 1 John gives the impression that the Christological and ethical errors stigmatised in it were closely related. He cites 1 John 3:23 as yoking together both species of error: “now this is God’s commandment: we are to believe the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and we are to love one another just as he gave us the command”. Brown points to the same language of lying and deceit being used to condemn both Christological and moral error. He infers that John was attacking those who held too high a Christology, which stressed Jesus’ pre-existence to the point of neglecting his flesh or humanity, and who therefore had difficulty with the belief that Jesus, the earthly man, was the Christ, the Son of God. As we have seen, Brown’s view is that this Johannine community consisted originally of Jews who held to a relatively low Christology, but that it later developed a higher Christology which brought it into direct conflict with Jews.

Painter sees Brown’s reconstruction as “generally convincing”, although he sees the Johannine community’s “higher Christology” as not necessarily developing later, it being more likely to be a contribution of the evangelist himself in dialogue with the synagogue. He adds the important point that

49 Ibid, 23.
50 Ibid.
52 Brown, Epistles of John, 49.
53 Ibid, 50.
54 Ibid, 53-54.
55 Brown, Community, 25-51.
56 Painter, The Quest for the Messiah, 67.
the break from the synagogue “almost certainly opened the community to Gentiles” who understood the Johannine community’s tradition differently, which may have contributed to its later division. 57 He traces first the development of a group among Jewish converts which he loosely describes at the “Johannine School”, then, after a break with the synagogue, the shaping of a group of Christian Jews, gathered around the evangelist himself, into the “Johannine community”. 58 He postulates that at the break with the synagogue, reflected in John 9:22 and 12:42 (and, one might add, in John 16:2), some in the now-separate community of Jewish Christians “were wavering, undecided which way to turn”. 59 One can readily see in this situation, of wavering Jewish Christians facing the influx of Gentile converts, the seeds of future conflict within the new Johannine community.

Since Brown wrote in 1979, there seems to be broad scholarly consensus that John’s opponents were from within his community. Smalley speaks of a situation discernible first from 1 John 2:18-19 where John’s doctrinal and ethical opponents “withdrew”; after this, in 2 John 7, “many deceivers” defecting from John’s community are portrayed. 60 Grayston presents the letters as a product of the “third stage” of an episode in John’s community, the stages being dispute, secession and realignment. 61 Loader speaks of John writing in the letters to “a community which has experienced schism” and addressing the needs and concerns of those who remain. 62 Johnson too writes of schism, with a “large and influential group” leaving the original fellowship, the issues between them and John being both doctrinal and ethical. 63

Rensberger also sees John as responding in his first letter to a crisis caused by people from within his own community, wrestling with issues in

57 Ibid.
58 Ibid, 71; see also Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 75-77.
59 Painter, The Quest for the Messiah, 72.
60 Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, xxx.
63 TF Johnson, 1, 2, and 3 John (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1993), 5-6.
Johannine theology which the opponents have brought into focus. He sees the conflict with present opponents evident in Johannine rhetoric in 1 John as lying in “translating its message in various ways into the ‘cultural languages’ it encountered”, once the early church moved beyond the boundaries of Judaism, particularly in 1 John 4:1-6. He maintains that the opponents used the language of Hellenistic dualism to express the good news of eternal life, portraying it as redemption from the flesh, whereas to the author of 1 John, this surrendered the depth of divine love and sacrifice, and the possibility of a divinely-ordered life “within the human condition”.

Rhea Jones too sees 1 John as written during a historical crisis in a “splintering church”, to forge unity and fellowship in likeminded groups when schismatics “denied a corporeal Christ”.

Others deny that John was responding to opponents who were now outside his community. For example, Perkins writes that the letters do not “reply to the external pressures of Jews or Jewish Christians”, but arise from differing interpretations of the fourth Gospel’s picture of Jesus (assuming that it preceded the letters). This view has its difficulties, as we shall see.

There has been more recent criticism of Brown and Painter’s approach, on a different basis: that it focuses unduly on the historical background of the text of 1 John, in particular the situation within and without John’s community, at the expense of its rhetoric, which is “flattened out” in the process. Such criticism is misplaced, partly because 1 John’s rhetoric must be viewed through the prism of its historical situation in order for its

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66 *ibid.*
67 Peter Rhea Jones, *1, 2 and 3 John* (Macon, Georgia: Smith and Helwys, 2009), 1.
vehemence to be understood, and partly because Brown and Painter both give ample attention to the literary structure and rhetoric of 1 John.\textsuperscript{70}

This study adopts as broadly correct Brown’s analysis of the conflict reflected in 1 John as being with opponents originally from within his own community, and his delineation of the origin of, and the stages in the development of the Johannine community. It certainly creates difficulties for a peacemaking or non-violent hermeneutic of 1 John, which this study will have to face squarely.

\textit{The Purpose of 1 John}

As we have seen, Brown postulates that the conflict addressed in 1 John occurred when, as reflected in 1 John 2:19, a group went out or seceded from the Johannine community.\textsuperscript{71} This study adopts that widely accepted view. But who were they? Obviously the author’s purpose in 1 John cannot be defined without identifying the position(s) of John’s opponents. As Brown observes, the only way to ascertain their beliefs is to reconstruct them from the opinions inveighed against by John himself, a mirror-reading which has its perils, in that we cannot assume that every opinion John opposes was held by the secessionists.\textsuperscript{72} Similarly we cannot assume that a single set of opponents had a “single tightly held logical position”, or that 1 John is “intelligible entirely in the light of the threat of the opponents”.\textsuperscript{73}

There was a past tendency to identify the secessionists with Gnosticism, as for example Dodd and Bultmann did.\textsuperscript{74} Houlden’s position is more nuanced, seeing the opponents as unable to accept that the Messiah was identical with the human Jesus who suffered death.\textsuperscript{75} He does not directly assert that John’s opponents were Gnostic.

\textsuperscript{70} See Brown, \textit{Epistles of John}, 116-130, Painter, \textit{1, 2 and 3 John}, 84-87.

\textsuperscript{71} Brown, \textit{Community}, 103.

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Ibid}, 103-104.

\textsuperscript{73} Painter, \textit{1, 2 and 3 John}, 94.

\textsuperscript{74} Cf. Dodd, \textit{Johannine Epistles}, xviii-xxi; Bultmann, \textit{Johannine Epistles}, 38.

\textsuperscript{75} JL Houlden, \textit{A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles} (London: A & C Black, 1973), 35.
Law, writing much earlier, is of similar opinion, identifying John’s opponents with Docetism. He distinguishes two types, the first of which is the “crude, unmitigated” version Ignatius of Antioch describes, which held that Jesus only appeared to be a human being, but was not. The second was the type Irenaeus linked with Cerinthus, which denied Jesus’ virgin birth and Incarnation altogether, and that he was the Christ, holding that the Christ descended on him at his baptism and left him at his death. Law suggests that this second view alone is sufficient to explain the Christological refutations in 1 John.

Brooke links the opponents’ “Christological and ethical laxity”. He says “they could not tolerate a sharp distinction between Christian and unchristian in belief and practice”. He identifies at least nine “tests” offered by John as assuring his readers of the truth of their Christian position. He identifies the opponents as Gnostic.

As we have seen, Bultmann sees 1 John as written in conflict with Gnostic opponents, although derived in part from a gnostic source.

Strecker’s view is more circumspect than those who identify John’s opponents as either Gnostic or docetic. He explains that Docetism, from the Greek δόκησις/δόκειν, separated the earthly Jesus who suffered and died on the cross from the heavenly being who is of divine origin and ascended into heaven. Consequently, he says, “no doubt there was also a Gnostic Docetism, but Gnosis and Docetism should not be equated”. Strecker cautions against the assumption that John’s opponents considered themselves sinless, or as “libertines” who promoted an unethical way of

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76 Law, Tests of Life, 92-93.
77 Ibid, 92.
78 Ibid, 93.
79 Ibid, 93-94.
80 Brooke, Johannine Epistles, xxviii.
81 Bultmann, Johannine Epistles, 28 n.21, 38 (“the doctrine of the heretics is rooted in the duality of Gnosticism”).
82 Strecker, Johannine Letters, 71.
life”, seeing the split in the Johannine community as brought about by the secessionists’ offence against the commandment of ἀγάπη, seen by the author of 1 John as the determining principle of Christian life.  

Schnackenburg is even more circumspect. He too identifies the position of the opponents by the formulae John uses against them. He refers here to John’s references to the message they had heard “from the beginning”, citing 1 John 2:7 and 24, and 3:11. He postulates, as we have seen, that the secessionists were evidently from a Gentile milieu, but that there is no trace in 1 John of the characteristic Gnostic “charismatic enthusiasm” threatening the life of the Johannine community. Schnackenburg identifies the basic Christological tenets of the opponents or secessionists by the opposing formulae adopted in 1 John itself, in 4:2, “by this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is from God” and 5:6, “this is the one that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ”.

Schnackenburg’s point here is that John marks out the opponents as those who reject the central Christological tenets which are central to the faith he is defending. However he doubts that John opposed the Cerinthean notion of a Christ temporarily associated with Jesus. He finds in 1 John no trace of the Gnostic notion of two deities, a superior and inferior power. He prefers the view that Ignatius’ Docetic opponents, who denied Christ’s Incarnation, were identical with those opposed by John, finding striking similarity in the polemical language used by the martyr-bishop in his Letter to the Smyrnians and by John.

83 Ibid, 75.
84 Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 17.
85 Ibid, 18.
86 Ibid, 18-19.
87 Ibid, 20. As Do remarks, no-one has satisfactorily identified the opponents in 1 John with the systems of Cerinthus, the Docetists or the Gnostics: Toan Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Hilasmos and Agape in 1 John 2:1-2 and 4:7-10 (Leuven/Paris/Walpole, Ma.: Peeters, 2014), 21; similarly George L. Parsenios, First, Second, and Third John (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 24.
88 Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 21.
89 Ibid, 21-22.
Schnackenburg likewise identifies the opponents’ ethical deficiencies in this way, noting that like John’s opponents, Ignatius’ heretics “cared nothing about agapē or about the widows and orphans, the afflicted, the prisoners, the hungry and the thirsty”, and “here we find the same connection between Christological heresy and moral indifference, the same neglect of fraternal love”. This is a very important linkage, which is followed by later scholars.

Brown sees 1 John 4:2 and 5:6 as key indicators of the opponents’ deficient Christology, 4:2 as indicating that they did not accept Christ’s coming in the flesh, and 5:2 as signifying the crucifixion, in an echo of John 19:34, the salvific work of which the opponents denied. But Brown does not go so far as to identify the opponents with the “radical Docetism” opposed by Ignatius of Antioch; they did not deny the humanity of Jesus per se, but rather the “salvific importance of the flesh and the death of Jesus”. He also distinguishes the possible positions of the opponents from full-blown second century Gnosticism. Importantly, Brown traces the same connection as Schnackenburg does between Christological error and moral laxity in John’s opponents: “a theory that one’s moral behaviour has no salvific importance could flow from a Christology in which the earthly career of Jesus, the way he lived and died, had no great importance”. So “the author’s insistence of love of brethren…also makes sense in light of a theory that the adversaries were (former) Johannine Christians of too high a Christology”. In other words, devaluing Jesus’ humanity led to a tendency to devalue the moral importance of people’s earthly deeds.

A somewhat radical deviation from the emerging consensus that John’s opponents were Christian – Gnostic or not – is O’Neill’s thesis that John’s opponents were members of a Jewish sect who had failed to follow their

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90 Ibid, 22.
91 Brown, Epistles of John, 76-77, and see also Brown, Community, 110-112.
93 Ibid, 59-60.
94 Ibid, 55.
95 Ibid.
fellows into the Christian community, as demonstrated by self-contained sections in 1 John corresponding to “twelve poetic admonitions”, each reflecting a distinct source with its own pre-Christian theology. Painter’s objection to this thesis, following Barrett, that Jewish material may appear in 1 John for many other reasons, because after all the subject-matter is Jewish, as were the author and his audience, seems conclusive. Brown’s refutation of O’Neill’s thesis on the basis of 1 John 2:19, “it was from our ranks that they went out”, is also convincing.

Painter draws a somewhat more radical picture than does Brown of the opponents’ Christological views. He builds on the work of Law, Brooke, Dodd and Schnackenburg among others. He postulates that 1 John 2:22ff. suggests that the opponents indeed denied that Jesus was the Christ, by adopting the Cerinthian view, as described by Irenaeus and later by Law, that the higher power, “Christ”, came upon Jesus at his baptism and left him at his death. He directly says that the opponents denied the Incarnation, that Christ had come in the flesh. Painter identifies that “their denial of the author’s Christological confession shows that their faulty Christology was the basis for their defective understanding of God and their failure to acknowledge the obligation to love the brother”.

Painter further writes (referring to 1 John 2:9-11) that “the claim to be in the light is falsified by hating the brother or the sister, behavior that exposes a person who is in the darkness”, whereas “the person loving his or her brother or sister is in the light”. This too delineates the crucial connection in 1 John between theological and moral error. Building on the work of Law, Brooke and Schnackenburg, Painter sees the position of the author’s opponents in 1 John as shown by slogan-like assertions, seen in the “if we

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97 Painter, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 19.
98 Brown, Epistles of John, 46.
99 Painter, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 13.
101 Painter, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 91-92.
102 Ibid, 92.
say” formula in 1 John 1:6, 8 and 10, the “he who says” formula in 1 John 2:4, 8 and 9, and the “if anyone says” usage in 1 John 4:20. To him, these slogans show a coherent picture of the opponents.\textsuperscript{104}

This is convincing. What is opposed in 1 John 1:6, 8 and 10 is moral indifference, and any assertion of fellowship with God while remaining in darkness, in sin. In 1 John 2:4, 8 and 9, claiming to “know” God but not obeying God’s commandments, and claiming to be “in the light” while hating a brother, are stigmatised. In 1 John 4:20, those claiming to love God but hating a brother are condemned as liars. Tied to this is the testing of the spirits in 1 John 4, where in vv.2-3 the spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ – significantly, his full title is used here – is from God, whereas the spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.\textsuperscript{105}

As Von Wahlde aptly writes, the symbols of light, correct belief, love and ethics structure the letter around the two elements of the tradition attacked by the secessionists.\textsuperscript{106} The picture of the opponents emerging here is of a group that denies both the ethical importance of love of the brother (or sister) and the true humanity of Jesus, denials which are essentially an illegitimate extension of the high Christology of the Gospel, especially in its prologue, in the direction of devaluing the Incarnation and Jesus’ ethical teaching during his earthly life. As Kysar says, 1 John “emphasizes the reality of the humanity of Jesus against a Christology which apparently did not take the Incarnation as seriously as it should”.\textsuperscript{107}

Importantly, 1 John 2:19 affirms that it was the secessionists who “went out from us”, that is, from the remaining Johannine group to whom John writes,

\textsuperscript{104} Painter, \textit{1, 2 and 3 John}, 90.
\textsuperscript{105} As Burge says, \textepsilon\nu\omega\mu\alpha in 1 John is the “litmus test of the orthodox faith”: Gary M Burge, \textit{The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 171.
not the other way about. It points to a preceding shared history.\textsuperscript{108} John’s stance here may therefore be seen as defensive, not offensive, so that the trajectory of 1 John is not to seek to oblitera the opponents, but rather to point out the dangers in their theology and ethics to those remaining within John’s group. His advocacy of love, and the connection between Jesus’ divine love and that commanded of his followers, falls into place in this context, and it is in accord with John’s Gospel (John 13:1; 14:18-24; 15:9-10; 16:27; 17:22-26) but is still remarkable for its lack of overt aggression. Even if John does not extend the love command to the opponents, he does not counsel hatred of them. We shall come later to the significance of this observation for a peacemaking, non-violent hermeneutic of 1 John.

The resemblance of Painter’s views to Brown’s is obvious. Like Brown, he sees differences in ideas and vocabulary between John and 1 John as accounted for by differences in genre, situation and intention, so that although their authors may be different, their theological ideas and motifs are still similar. And, like Brown, Painter sees 1 John’s author, who is probably not the author of the Gospel but shares the principal features of his vocabulary and theological outlook, as writing after the Gospel and opposing an overly high Christology which secessionist opponents had built on that of the Gospel, so as to unbalance it and to render ethics – mutual love, in imitation of Jesus’ love for us – of minimal importance.

Lieu, however is unconvinced of Brown and Painter’s views. She writes of the situation in which 1 John was written that it “seeks to win its reader(s) in the face of a threat that challenges the author’s own standing”, and that “this threat is one that had its origins in a recent schism”.\textsuperscript{109} She considers that the author “apparently understands the problem to be centred on the proper acknowledgement of Jesus”, but that “whether Christology was the overt


cause of conflict and would have been identified as such by the other side is
less certain since the letter never reveals what they did claim, although it is
widely supposed that it was so”. Later, Lieu writes that in contrast to the
letters of Ignatius, where conflicts over Jesus’ nature are addressed by using
personal names, and particular churches the author has visited are
specifically addressed, none of these strategies occur in 1 John.111

This, it must be acknowledged, is a sober and conservative view, which
avoids pressing the text beyond its limits, in order to define a conflict by
inference from the views condemned in it. For example, speaking of the ὁ
λέγων [ὁτι] statements at 2:4, 2:6 and 2:9, Lieu says that there is “no
suggestion that there were those who did make these statements, and whom
the author is concerned to expose and refute”.112 She sees these statements
simply as engaging in debate within the author’s community, not with those
without it.113 Of the ἐάν τις εἴπῃ ὅτι formula at 4:20, Lieu contrasts it to the
more direct “if we say” formula in the debate about sin in 1 John 1:6-10,
and writes that “the more neutral ‘if anyone says’ carefully dismisses such a
possibility from the actual experience of his readers”.114

In this Lieu follows Perkins, who considers that the slogan “I have known
God” in 1 John 2:4 is not a slogan of the author’s opponents at all, but rather
one that had developed within the Johannine tradition.115 Perkins writes that
1 John 4:20 likewise does not stigmatise opponents having a piety of direct
vision of God which was undermining the teaching about love for fellow
Christians” because the evidence for this is too weak.116

110 Ibid, 9-10.
111 Judith Lieu, “The Audience of the Johannine Epistles,” in Communities in Dispute:
Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles (ed. R Alan Culpepper and Paul N
112 Lieu, I, II and III John, 67.
113 JM Lieu, The Theology of the Johannine Epistles (Cambridge: Cambridge University
114 Lieu, I, II and III John, 197.
115 Perkins, Johannine Epistles, 23.
116 Ibid, 57.
But the strength of Brown and Painter’s view is that it does not press the text beyond its limits either. It is difficult to believe that the ὁ λέγων [ὁτι] statements at 2:4, 2:6 and 2:9, and the ἐὰν τις εἴπῃ ὅτι formula at 4:20, particularly alongside the vehement ψεύστης, used five times in 1:10, 2:4, 2:22, 4:20 and 5:10, are mere literary devices to reinforce condemnation of views held only within John’s community. It is harder still to accept that they are not addressed to, or do not even refer to, real people who had seceded and were alive and active in opposing that community and its views. All Brown and Painter do is to seek to define the views against which John contends in his first epistle by the slogans defined by these formulae. This is based solidly on the work of Law, Brooke and Schnackenburg in defining what they are.

Other recent scholars are in broad agreement with Brown and Painter here. Smalley speaks of John addressing what he saw as deviant Christologies arising originally in his own community which had moved either in a low, Ebionite direction, tending to deny Jesus’ divinity, or in too high a direction, denying Jesus’ humanity, with a corresponding indifference to right conduct, because of a dualist view of the material, earthly dimension of human life as inherently evil, which he describes cautiously as a “Gnosticising tendency”\(^\text{117}\).

Marshall is reluctant to characterise John’s opponents as Cerinthean, on the basis that there is no echo in 1 John of the Cerinthean view that Jesus is the son of an inferior creator-God, nor of a “developed Gnostic cosmological myth with a series of aeons”\(^\text{118}\).

 CONTRA Smalley, Rensberger doubts that John’s opponents denied Jesus’ divinity, or that Cerinthus actually taught that he did not come in the flesh, but he still sees John’s opponents only as forerunners of later Cerinthean and Gnostic groups\(^\text{119}\). He warns against identifying John’s opponents as

\(^{117}\) Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, xxiii-xxiv.

\(^{118}\) Marshall, Epistles of John, 18.

\(^{119}\) Rensberger, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, 23-24; similarly Grayston, Johannine Epistles, 16.
Gnostics, and then interpreting 1 John “in terms of Gnostic traits which it does not even mention”.\textsuperscript{120}

Johnson still identifies the opponents as “Gnostics”.\textsuperscript{121} Loader asserts simply that they denied Jesus’ coming by “blood”, i.e. his suffering in the crucifixion.\textsuperscript{122} Rhea Jones sees the “critical Christological confession”, explicit in 1 John 4:2 and implicit at 4:3, as indicating Docetic denial by the opponents of Christ’s “fleshliness”.\textsuperscript{123}

The majority modern view seems to be that it is wrong to identify John’s opponents as Gnostic\textsubscript{per se}. It maintains that they most probably did embrace a Docetic viewpoint, although there is disagreement as to its exact type. It sees their ethical deficiencies as related to their defective Christology. This meant that they tended to place lesser importance on ethical conduct because of a view that Jesus’ earthly life, and his loving relationships in particular, were of lesser significance. The present study adopts this position, even though the conflict evident in 1 John with those of that view may pose difficulties for a peacemaking hermeneutic.

\section*{Conflict in 1 John – Present or Past?}

Was the controversy reflected in 1 John, between the author and his opponents, present or past at its time of writing? Scholarly division on this topic must be examined to evaluate properly whether the ethical injunctions in 1 John, the love command in particular, are likely to have been addressed only to those within John’s community, or to the Christian world in general. If this conflict was past and over, and 1 John was not written in the heat of battle, it becomes easier to see John’s ethics – and the love command in particular – as written in a more reflective frame of mind, with the needs of humanity in general, and not just John’s own beleaguered community, in mind. However Brown and Painter are firmly of the view that this conflict,

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{120}\textit{Ibid}, 24.
\bibitem{121}Johnson, \textit{1, 2 and 3 John}, 8.
\bibitem{122}Loader, \textit{Johannine Epistles}, xv.
\bibitem{123}Rhea Jones, \textit{1, 2 and 3 John}, 165.
\end{thebibliography}
though past, gave rise to painful differences which were still present and raw at the time 1 John was written, as will shortly be traced.

This view has early antecedents, and much support in more modern scholarship. Westcott’s view is that after the destruction of Jerusalem, “outward dangers were overcome”, and “the world was indeed perilous, but it was rather by its seductions than by its hostility”, and that “now the temptations are from within”. He implies that John was indeed battling with heretical opponents who were still active at the very time he wrote. However, Westcott tends to tone down John’s polemic, holding that “his object is polemical only so far as the clear unfolding of the essence of right teaching necessarily shews all error in its real character.”

Law writes that “there is no New Testament writing which is more vigorously polemical in its whole tone and aim”, and that the church or churches addressed “had lapsed into Laodicean lukewarmness”, so that “for them the absolute distinction between the Christian and the unchristian in life and belief had become blurred and feeble.” Obviously sharp and present conflict between John and his opponents is envisaged here.

With Westcott, Brooke considers that the real object of the Johannine epistles is not exclusively, or even primarily, polemical, because edification of his “children” in the true faith and life of Christians is the author's main purpose. But, Brooke writes, for John “the victory has been won, if only after a hard-fought battle”, and “the opponents, whose errors have been unmasked, ‘have gone out from among us’, or at least the leaders of the movement have withdrawn or been expelled, but “there is still strong sympathy for their views, and perhaps some acute danger of their return to power.” John’s battle may have been won in the short term, but theological war with active, dangerous opponents was still being waged.

124 Westcott, Johannine Epistles, xxxiii.
125 Ibid, xxxix.
126 Law, Tests of Life, 25.
127 Brooke, Johannine Epistles, xxvii-xxviii.
128 Ibid, xxviii.
Dodd speaks of the rise of “heretical Gnostic sects” in a “tunnel” period of church history after the apostolic age, and that “what is not altogether clear is the process whereby this situation came about”, but he asserts that “the First Epistle of John appears to reflect a critical moment in the early stage in the process”. Thus those who taught “new doctrines” seceded after failing to carry the church with them, and “found a wide hearing – indeed, a wider hearing than the orthodox teachers could command”. Thus “the fellowship of the church was rent” and “the rank and file may well be disturbed or perplexed”, and “it is to this situation that the epistle is addressed.”

Houlden’s position is similar. He sees the Johannine letters as “part of a campaign to put a brake on those who would ‘gnosticise’ the Johannine tradition”, in a situation where the developing church still lacked leaders in authority who “by their very position could at least claim a right to discipline those whose teaching deviated from the approved lines”. Schnackenburg too sees 1 John as reflecting a situation where “the apostasy and departure of the antichrists (2:19)” and “the intense activity of the false prophets (4:1)” have been followed by “the believing community’s fight for survival (4:4-6)”. As noted previously, he speaks of the author of 1 John “fighting on a single front” against “antichrists or false prophets” who, though diverse, are “united in their denial of the church’s Christological confession (2:22; 4:2-3)”.

Again Perkins is a different voice in this debate. She deals at some length with what she sees as the oral character of John’s mode of address to his readers. She writes that we must be careful not to read back the results of

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130 Ibid, xviii-xix.
131 Ibid, xix.
134 Ibid.
the NT canonical process to the period of John’s letters.\textsuperscript{135} We must remember that to John’s readers, texts only had life as they were read aloud, with no more authority than other words spoken solemnly in liturgy or preaching.\textsuperscript{136} Therefore, she says, “scholars who are not sensitive to the language of oral cultures often misinterpret statements about opponents in ancient writings”, and that “you would get the impression from reading some of the modern interpreters of the Johannine letters that the community was being violently ripped apart by the debate to which the author refers”.\textsuperscript{137} Despite John’s reference to the opponents having left the community, she sees his hostile language toward them as simply typical of the fierce rhetoric of the time,\textsuperscript{138} and finds “no indication that [the opponents] have really set up an opposition church”.\textsuperscript{139}

Brown argues that the hypothesis that John and the secessionists were writing against each other, “making the claim that their interpretation of the Gospel was correct”, explains both the secessionists’ views and “the author’s style of argumentation”.\textsuperscript{140} He points to 2 John 10-11, castigating secessionist emissaries for their deficient teaching, although he does not see Diotrephes in 3 John as a secessionist.\textsuperscript{141} Brown reconstructs a portrait of John’s adversaries, holding that they lay within one organised group, in that as Schnackenburg thought, John was fighting on only one front, based on suggestions in the text that John’s opponents’ Christology is at fault, that they refuse to listen to him, that they have left his community, and that they represent a threat through propagandists who claim to be teachers.\textsuperscript{142} He resists Perkins’ view that the rhetoric of 1 John does not reflect present conflict with opponents, referring to 1 John 5:16 where, he says, John refuses prayer for those secessionists who have committed mortal sin.\textsuperscript{143}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[135] Perkins, \textit{Johannine Epistles}, xviii.
\item[136] \textit{Ibid}, xviii-xix.
\item[137] \textit{Ibid}, xxi.
\item[138] \textit{Ibid}, xxi.
\item[139] \textit{Ibid}, xxi.
\item[140] Brown, \textit{Community}, 107.
\item[142] \textit{Ibid}, 49-50.
\item[143] \textit{Ibid}, 48.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The solution “may not lie in reducing it all to rhetoric with little foundation in reality”.144

Painter finds “strong affinity” between Law and Schnackenburg.145 He rightly notes that though published earlier in German, Schnackenburg’s commentary on 1 John did not receive due recognition among English-speaking scholars until its English edition was published much later, so that for some time, Brown’s work, built on Schnackenburg’s, was not fully appreciated.146 Painter maintains that Brown’s view that John was fighting vigorously on one front against present opposition, which imminently threatened the theological and ethical integrity of his community, is prefigured in, and strengthened by, strong earlier scholarship from Law, Brooke and Schnackenburg.147

Painter agrees with Schnackenburg that the polemic in 1 John was primarily addressed to those still within the author’s community after the secessionists had left, to discourage them from following them into schism, and to provide encouragement in the trauma left by the schism. So the letter is both didactic and polemical, directed against the opponents (cf. 1 John 1:6-10), and also homiletic and paraenetic, addressed to the remaining community.148 Painter notes that Law, Brooke and Schnackenburg “have made the point of the pervasive evidence of the conflict with schismatics in 1 John”, which was a “bitter and painful event”, so there is “polemic against their position”.149 To Painter, the opponents in 1 John had “seemingly been converted but held beliefs incompatible with the Christian faith”,150 and “the conflict with the ‘opponents’ runs through 1 Jn from the beginning, in the refutation of their boasts, to the end where the author opposes their position with antithetical statements”.151 Painter sees a “trend to minimise the

144 Ibid, 49.
145 Painter, 1, 2 and 3 John, 9.
146 Ibid, 14.
147 Ibid, 13-14.
149 Ibid, 16.
150 Painter, Witness and Theologian, 116.
151 Painter, Quest for the Messiah, 444.
controversial nature of 1 John by arguing that although there was a schism, it was of minor significance, past and over by the time the epistles were written”.

As Painter says, this trend may be seen in Perkins’ views which we have already noted. Perkins elsewhere offers an example to demonstrate her point: while the love command in 1 John “refers only to people within the church”, citing 1 John 2:9-11 and 4:20-21, this exhortation “treats the failure of love as ‘hatred’”, and as “evidence that such persons lack eternal life”. She sees Johannine Christians as “accustomed to read their sociological experience in theological terms”. So “the sociological correlation of Johannine symbolism is also evident in the use of apocalyptic images to describe the opponents in 1 and 2 John”.

Like Perkins, Lieu refers to rhetoric in 1 John which is aimed at “the dangers in his own pattern of thought with its strong emphasis on assurance that those who believe should experience”, so “there is no need to suppose that there were others that were making such claims but failing in appropriate behaviour: the argument is not directed outside (to supposed opponents) but within”. Lieu sees problems in viewing 1 John purely as polemic against opponents who seceded, seeing circularity in reconstructing their beliefs from John’s polemic, then using these beliefs to reconstruct the debate with them. She is not the only one to raise this potent point. But, problematic as this may be, how else can we reconstruct the views of John’s opponents at all if his literature, not theirs, is the only surviving source?

Lieu says that viewing John’s rhetoric in the literary context of its time, rather than as necessarily aimed at present opponents, springs from a more

152 Painter, 1, 2 and 3 John, 16.
156 Lieu, I, II and III John, 16.
157 Lieu, Theology of the Johannine Epistles, 15-16.
“text-centred” reading of 1 John. She says the results of rhetorical analysis of 1 John have so far been “meagre”. But as will be seen, rhetorical analysis of 1 John has not led entirely in the one direction, that John’s polemic is to be explained by the rhetorical conventions of the time, rather than by a fierce struggle with secessionist opponents who were still alive and threatening.

Griffith has attempted an entirely non-polemical reading of 1 John, to try to dispel the consensus that John’s rhetoric is aimed at opponents outside his community, both in its theological and moral dimensions. He argues that, contra Brown, the “slogans” or “boasts”, “if we say/claim”, ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι at 1 John 1:6, 1:8 and 10, “whoever says/claims”, ὁ λέγων [ὁτι] at 2:4, 2:6 and 2:9, and “if anyone says”, ἐὰν τις εἴπῃ ὅτι at 4:20, are contradicted by a “counterclaim”. This is related implicitly or explicitly to ethical conduct, and far from their being polemic aimed at opponents and their claims, “it is far more likely that 1:5-2:11, indeed the whole of 1 John, has a pastoral rather than a polemic outlook, since nowhere are the views of opponents positively stated or refuted”.

Griffith argues that the formula, “if we say/claim”, ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι is a pluralis sociativus often used in Greek literature to confront readers with their own actions. He offers apparently compelling instances of “Johannine” type rhetoric, for example the use of the ἐὰν τις εἴπῃ, “if anyone says” formula in Philo’s writings, to show that use of this and similar formulae by John need not lead us to presuppose present secessionist

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161 Ibid, 254-255.
162 Ibid, 256.
163 Ibid, 259.
opponents. Griffith quotes Lieu’s view that the moral debate in 1 John is not explicitly related to the schismatics and need not be seen as a reaction against them, and that by rhetorical persuasion the author seeks to lead his readers to conclusions made inevitable by his chosen starting point.\footnote{Ibid, 256-257.}

How may we resolve the scholarly conflict just set out? And of what significance is the solution for a peacemaking hermeneutic of 1 John? Divining who the author’s opponents were when 1 John was written, and whether his rhetoric is used in the heat of conflict with them, or at a time when such conflict was long past, so that the heat of the rhetoric is to be explained by the style and techniques of the time, is a task fraught with difficulty. Despite the confidence with which proposals are offered in the literature, the impression is unavoidable that any conclusions on these matters must be tentative, since they are based on analysis of the text of 1 John itself. The obvious danger is of circularity, of using the text to infer who the opponents were and whether the conflict was finished and done or still raging, and then analysing the text in light of one’s conclusions.

That said, there appear to be two problems with Perkins, Lieu and Griffith’s arguments. The first is John’s denunciation at 1 John 2:18-25 of the “antichrists” who “went out from us” (2:19). The use of the aorist for “went out”, ἐξῆλθαν, as Brown notes, “suggests a specific action”; although there may have been “constant leakage” from John’s community, this usage suggests a “major rift” bringing the secessionist group into existence.\footnote{Brown, Epistles of John, 338.}

But does the use of the perfect, “have gone out”, ἐξεληλύθασιν in 4:1d, “for many false prophets have gone out into the world”, contradict Brown’s analysis? Lieu argues that the use of the perfect here, while it “might refer to their departure”, probably emphasizes more “the evident fact of [the false
prophets’] presence”. Brown’s reply is convincing: despite the change of tense between 2:19 and 4:1d, John phrases the false prophets’ departure in this way “because he wishes to underline their choice of the world, theologically understood as the enemy of Christ”. The reference at 2:19 to those who “went out from us” more probably colours the whole denunciation of “antichrists” extending from 2:18 to 2:25, and the paraenesis on “testing the spirits” at 4:1-6.

Lieu’s explanation that the constant use of “us” in 2:19 signifies that the problem only occurred within John’s community, not with secessionists who had left it, does not take sufficient account of the aorist reference to those who “went out”, ἐξῆλθαν from “us”. This may suggest a definite past event – that is, an actual schism.

Perkins’ view, that John’s concern in 2:19, to assure his audience that those stigmatised were not really “from us” (2:19c), “shows that they have not established a completely independent sect”, is vulnerable to the same criticism. In 2:19, the aorist ἐξῆλθαν does not contraindicate, and indeed it suggests, real and present conflict with a group who had left the fellowship at the time John wrote, and threatened to attract further membership from it.

The second problem with Perkins, Lieu and Griffith’s views is that the “slogans” or “boasts” really do appear to be aimed at real people. The most obvious and natural interpretation of “whoever says/claims”, ὁ λέγων [ὁτί] at 2:4, 2:6 and 2:9, and “if anyone says”, ἐὰν τις εἴπῃ ὅτι at 4:20 is that John is here arming his audience against arguments from actual opponents, who might imminently present these claims to them. It presses rhetorical arguments too far to suggest that merely because the use of this kind of

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166 Lieu, 1, 2 and 3 John, 165.
167 Brown, Epistles of John, 490.
168 Lieu, 1, 2 & 3 John, 101.
169 Perkins, Johannine Epistles, 35.
language was undoubtedly common in Graeco-Roman rhetoric, no actual opponents need be presupposed. This argument is strengthened if the same author wrote 2 John, where in v.7 we read of “many deceivers” who “have gone out into the world, who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh”, and that “any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist [ἀντιχριστὸς]” – a direct echo of ἀντιχρίστου in 1 John 4:3. The issue of common authorship of 1, 2 and 3 John however is beyond the scope of this study.

As Brown says, there is parallelism in the use of “liars”, ψεύστης in relation to those portrayed in 4:20, “those who say ‘I love God’ and hate their brothers”: this constitutes an “adversary statement” similar to the same use of ψεύστης in 2:6 of “whoever says ‘I have come to know him’ but does not obey his commandments”, which suggests that John “is thinking of the secessionists and not simply enunciating a general maxim”.170

Perkins does not disagree that the views opposed by the author of 1 John and 2 John (and one might point here to 2 John 7) were developed from the Christology of John’s Gospel.171 But her proposal is that at 2:4 “I have known God” was not a slogan of the opponents but one “developed in the Johannine tradition”, based on John 14:7, where Jesus says to Thomas “if you had known me, you would have known my Father also”.172 She says that 4:20 is to be accounted for by simply saying that “the distinction between ‘saying that one loves God’ and actually loving fellow Christians is the Johannine formulation of the common paraenetic distinction between saying and actually doing (cf. 1 Jn 3:18)”.173 The objection to these arguments lies in the personal tone of the ὁ λέγων [ὁτί] designation at 2:4, repeated in 2:6 and 2:9, and the “if anyone says”, ἐάν τις εἴπῃ ὅτι formula at

170 Brown, Epistles of John, 533.
171 Perkins, Johannine Epistles, xiv.
172 Ibid, 23.
173 Ibid, 57.
4:20. Actual opponents, rather than theological possibilities, are a more compelling explanation of such rhetoric.

Lieu’s arguments are that in 2:4, 6 and 9 the “whoever says” or equivalent formula “remains a hypothetical or rhetorical possibility”, and that in 4:20-21 John is simply “proposing scenarios only to dismiss them as self-evidently flawed”, and “drawing [his readers] into a pattern of logical necessity”. As with Perkins’ arguments, these proposals take insufficient account of the ferocity and tone of personal address evident in the ὁ λέγων [ὅτι] statements at 2:4, 2:6 and 2:9, and “if anyone says”, ἐάν τις εἴπῃ δὴ formula at 4:20, particularly alongside the vehement ψεύστης in 2:6 and 4:20.

One must remember also the similar use of ψεύστης in 2:22a, “who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?”, where it is used, not merely in an ethical argument, but in a directly theological and indeed a Christological context. Again the existence of actual opponents threatening the author’s community and its stability, this time in its Christological beliefs, rather than hypothetical rhetorical possibilities, would seem the most natural inference to draw from such vehement, personalised language.

Griffith’s argument, that John’s use of rhetorical figures and techniques common in literary argument in the ancient world undercuts any inference that 1 John was written in the heat of conflict with secessionists still threatening his community, may be answered by Watson’s analysis, already noted, of 1 John’s rhetorical techniques, for example, amplification, including such figures as augmentation and comparison, as well as expolitio, regression, conduplicatio, distributio, synonymy and synonomy.

174 Lieu, 1, 2 and 3 John, 70.
175 Ibid, 197.
176 Ibid, 100.
177 Ibid, 102.
178 Ibid, 103-108.
epanaphora, along with other techniques. After this exhaustive examination, Watson argues that the “rhetorical situation” in 1 John is one where the “rheator” is “a member of the Johannine school”, prompted to write by “a schism within the Johannine community which has resulted in secessionists leaving the rheator’s audience to form their own community (2.18-19, 2 Jn 7)”, the schism being “rooted in different understandings of Christology and ethics within the Johannine tradition (3.23; cf. 2 Jn 9)”. Watson maintains that “the use of amplification indicates a careful working of the material and the need to be emphatic and clear in the face of the secessionist doctrine and practice to which his audience is subject”.

Contra Griffith, Watson sees no reason to infer from John’s use of rhetorical techniques of the time that he was not writing against present secessionist opponents threatening his community’s beliefs and ethical practice. This is sound. Why, one might ask, would John not have used emphatic rhetorical techniques from his time as the most potent weapon available to him, in order to confront present opponents in a live theological struggle?

For the above reasons, this study adopts as more likely correct the view adopted by Brown, Painter and others that the author’s rhetoric in 1 John is aimed at real opponents who had seceded from his community and threatened to take others with them, and that therefore the conflict reflected in it is present rather than past. John’s “love command” as the antidote to pressures from without is more remarkable, given that it arose in the heat of present conflict, than it would be if it were simply part of a rhetorical response to tendencies perhaps espoused by past opponents who had already suffered irrevocable defeat. It may be that a non-violent reading of 1 John is

181 Ibid, 110-111.
182 Ibid, 111-112.
184 Ibid, 118.
185 Ibid, 122-123.
186 For a good, brief summary of this view see Black, “The First, Second, and Third Letters of John, 372-374.
more, rather than less cogent if John’s response to present, fierce conflict
and rivalry consists only of simple injunctions to his remaining community
to hold to right belief and to love one another, in imitation of Jesus himself,
avoiding hatred as the begetter of violence.

The Literary Structure of 1 John

The literary structure of 1 John has long presented a problem. It has no
scheme of logical development of a single theme, but rather multiple themes
which collide, in the manner of a fugue, being brought into contrapuntal
relationship with one another. The writer “thinks around” a series of related
topics.187 The epistle lacks a connected plot – it is called a letter, after all,
although there is no salutation or subscription, nor the ending one would
expect of a letter.188 Yet it cannot be read out of the context of its time, and
it seems to have a concrete motive, stemming from a split in the community
in which it was written.189 Nevertheless, one also finds in 1 John the theme
of universal healing wrought by Jesus’ sending by God into the world,
despite the epistle’s concentration on the Johannine community.190 The
aphoristic character of the writer’s “meditations” may mean that any
endeavour to analyse the Epistle’s structure is “useless”.191

But what possible significance can the literary structure of 1 John have for
the application of a peace-oriented, non-violent hermeneutic to the epistle?
First John’s underlying themes of faith in Jesus’ coming in the flesh and
mutual love are deliberately yoked together by the author in the literary
structure of his letter, which primarily serves that connection. It therefore
becomes clear that the epistle teaches that an ethic of mutual love and

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188 Theo C Heckel, “Die Historisierung der Johanneischen Theologie im Ersten
Johannesbrief,” NTS 50.3 (2004): 425-443, 428; see also Black, “The First, Second and
Third Letters of John”, 370, and Judith M Lieu, “The Audience of the Johannine Epistles,”
in Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles (Atlanta: SBL
Press, 2014), 123-140, 130.
189 Ibid.
190 Hansjörg Schmid, Gegner im 1. Johannesbrief? (Stuttgart: Verlag W Kohlhammer,
2002), 262.
191 Painter, 1, 2 and 3 John, 116, following Brooke.
forbearance is compelled by faith in Jesus as truly incarnate in human flesh, because in his behaviour and teaching in his earthly life and death, he is the exemplar of this ethic.

Westcott too sees 1 John as in form a letter, but with no address or subscription and no evident destination, unlike say even James, Ephesians or Hebrews. It is however personal in tone, and it speaks “in teaching and in counsel with the directness of personal experience”.192

Law speaks of 1 John’s simplicity of syntactical structure, the absence of connecting particles and “the generally Hebraic style of composition”.193 But to him it lacks logical structure or ordered progression of thought. Its small number of themes, righteousness, love and belief, are introduced many times, and brought into every conceivable relationship.194 The key to its interpretation is that it uses “tests” to evaluate whether the reader is “begotten of God”.195 Law’s approach has proved influential in subsequent scholarship, even if it has not met with complete agreement.196

Brooke sets out Hort’s scheme, which to some extent follows Häring’s earlier one, which Brooke himself recommends.197 It is as follows:

1:1-4 Introduction
1:5-2:17 God and the true light; goodness, not indifference.
2:18-3:24 Sonship to God, and hence likeness to His Son, and abiding in him.

192 Westcott, Epistles of St John, xxix-xxx.
193 Law, Tests of Life, 2.
194 Ibid, 5.
195 Ibid, 6.
196 See for example Brown, The Epistles of John, 121-122; Painter, 1, 2 and 3 John, 118;
Rhea Jones, 1, 2, and 3 John, 3-4.
197 Brooke, Epistles of St John, xxxvii-xxxviii.
4:1-5:17 \hspace{1em} Faith resting on knowledge of the truth the mark of the divine Spirit, not indifference.

5:18-21 \hspace{1em} Conclusion. The Christian knowledge, the true and the false.

Schnackenburg sets out a similar structural outline, also reliant on Häring. Schnackenburg is sceptical of its value, noting the strong caesura at 3:24: to him, the warning by those who find only a loose articulation in the epistle, that such analyses are purely subjective, is well taken.\(^{198}\) Schnackenburg’s scheme is as follows:

Prologue: \hspace{1em} 1:1-4


2. Christological thesis: 2:18-27 – Faith in Jesus as the Christ serving as the basis for fellowship with God.


2. Christological thesis: 4:1-6 The Spirit proceeding from God confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

C. The two theses combined:

1. 4:7-21 – Love as the basis for faith.

2. 5:1-12 – Faith as the basis of love.

Conclusion: 5:13-21.

This scheme perhaps suggests more logical connections between themes than the epistle truly possesses, but it is useful. A possible criticism of it,  

\(^{198}\) Schnackenburg, *Johannine Epistles*, 12.
which Schnackenburg concedes, is that it ignores the strong caesura at 1 John 3:24.\textsuperscript{199}

That point too is well taken. After 3:24 there is an obvious change of subject at this point from “commandments”, ἐντολὰς in 3:24, to which the preceding discourse at 2:7-3:24 relates, from the first mention of ἀλλ’ ἐντολὴν παλαιὰν, “but an old commandment”, in 2:7, to πνεύματι, “spirits” at 4:1. The πνεύματι at 4:1 are not of course to be identified with the πνεύματος in 3:24: the former are human, or even diabolic, but the latter is divine. The contrast is deliberate.\textsuperscript{200}

Brown offers a simpler literary structure of 1 John as follows:\textsuperscript{201}

\begin{enumerate}
  \item The Prologue (1:1-4).
  \item Part One (1:5-3:10): The Gospel that God is light, and we must walk in the light as Jesus walked.
  \item Part Two (3:11-5:12): The Gospel that we must love one another as God has loved us in Jesus Christ.
  \item Conclusion (5:13-21): A statement of the author’s purpose.
\end{enumerate}

Brown defends this structure, which he says imitates that of John’s Gospel, by arguing that the bipartite division for which he argues is best placed at 1 John 3:10; he says this is because 3:11 opens the second section by a change

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{199} \textit{Ibid.} Culpepper’s scheme is similar to Schnackenburg’s, but it acknowledges the caesura at 3:24: Culpepper, \textit{The Gospel and Letters of John}, 254, 266. Coombes’ comment that determining structure is helpful in following the line of argument in the text of 1 John, and that the presence of subunits shows John’s grouping of ideas in small segments linking together to form a unit in which the ideas are developed repetitively, is cogent here: Malcolm Coombes, \textit{1 John: The Epistle as a Relecture of the Gospel of John} (Preston, Vic.: Mosaic Press, 2013), 47.
\item \textsuperscript{201} Brown, \textit{Epistles of John}, 124.
\end{itemize}
of subject, where “the Gospel which we have heard from the beginning” is defined as “we should love one another”, which means that although “the secessionists are never out of mind”, the “intensity of direct address to the author’s adherents becomes more pronounced”.

That may be so, but ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἠκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους “the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we must love one another”, at 3:11 surely refers directly back to 2:10, ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει, “whoever loves the brother lives in the light”. The thought is similar. On the other hand, Schnackenburg’s “strong caesura” at 3:24 introduces the new discussion at 4:1 onwards until 4:6, of πνεύματι who might lead the community astray into false Christology. Before then, the subject is obeying Jesus’ commandments; after 4:1, the subject is those πνεύματι who do (or do not) confess that Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα, “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” (4:2b). The change of subject from ethics, obedience to Jesus’ commandments, to Christology is obvious. Therefore the most obvious bipartite division in 1 John, if there is one, may occur after 3:24.

In 4:7 the ἀγάπη which ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν, “is from God”, is yoked indissolubly to the commandment ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, “let us love one another”, by the linking ὅτι, which is causal. That sets the tone for the whole discourse until 5:13 where the Epilogue begins. All the way through from 4:7 to 4:21, the single theme is that God has loved us by sending his Son, so we ought to love one another. Had not Jesus been the Christ, the true divine Son, the commandment to love one another would dissolve. In 5:1-5 we see the proof of loving τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ, “the children of God” (5:2a), that is, each other, as being loving God and obeying God’s ἐντολὰς (5:2b). Then in 5:6-12 the Spirit is μαρτυροῦν, “testifying” (5:6b) along with the water – Jesus’ baptism – and the blood – his death – to Jesus being

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202 Ibid, 127.
God’s Son.\footnote{So Painter, \textit{1, 2 and 3 John} 306.} And so (5:11) ἡ μαρτυρία is that God gave us eternal life, which is his Son.

Again, love of one another is yoked to God’s love of us and to obeying his commandments. This is a return to the theme announced at 4:7, that we must love each other, because love is from God. The whole section from 4:7 to 5:12 demonstrates this linkage. And it is dependent on 4:1-6, that we must believe only those spirits that confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, because only by confessing this does the reader apprehend the true reason for the command to love one another. Thus there is a strong argument that the true caesura in 1 John is not at 3:10, as Brown maintains, but at 3:24.

More satisfying is Painter’s literary structure for 1 John, largely following Häring’s of 1892 and also built on the later “tests” analysis of Law, Brooke and Schnackenburg.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, 117-118.} Painter’s scheme is as follows (simplified here for reasons of space):

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{I. Prologue} (1:1-5)
  \item \textit{II. First presentation of the two tests} (1:6-2:27)
    \begin{itemize}
      \item \textit{1. The ethical (love) test} (1:6-2:17)
      \item \textit{2. The Christological test} (2:18-27)
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textit{III. Second presentation of the two tests} (2:28-4:6)
  \item \textit{IV. Third Presentation of the two tests} (4:7-5:12)
  \item \textit{V. Conclusion} (5:13-21)
\end{itemize}

This analysis is more satisfying because, as Painter says, it emphasizes the controversial nature of 1 John, in that the “tests” were necessary because the
author believed that “counterfeit claims were abroad in the church”, and the
claims of the opponents had to be set out and tested, so the true could be
affirmed and the false rejected. While one can see that there is a strong
caesura at 1 John 3:24, the structure which the epistle more truly yields on
analysis is that of Häring as modified by Painter. It is one which presents
each of the “tests”, ethical and Christological, in turn, alternating between
the ethical and the Christological, until the Epilogue is reached, which is
more blessing and reassurance than a conclusion drawn from the preceding
argument. In that way the author shows that the “tests” are interlinked to
bring understanding that without right Christology, affirming that Jesus is
the true Son of God who truly came in the flesh, the love of God in sending
the Son cannot be rightly apprehended, and neither can the proper ground
for loving each other.

Smalley presents a bipartite outline of 1 John, as follows:

I. Preface (1:1-4) The Word of Life

II. Live in the light (1:5-2:29)

(a) God is light (1:5-7)
(b) First condition for living in the light: renounce sin (1:8-2:2)
(c) Second condition: be obedient (2:3-11)
(d) Third condition: reject worldliness (2:12-17)
(e) Fourth condition: keep the faith (2:18-29)

III. Live as children of God (3:1-5:13)

(a) God as Father (3:1-3)
(b) First condition for living as God’s children: renounce sin (3:4-9)
(c) Second condition: be obedient (3:10-24)
(d) Third condition: reject worldliness (4:1-6)
(e) Fourth condition: be loving (4:7-5:4)
(f) Fifth condition: keep the faith (5:5-13)

206 Ibid. 118.
IV. Conclusion (5:14-21) Christian confidence.

What will be immediately noticed in Smalley’s suggested structure is, firstly, that he places the division or caesura at 3:1, and secondly the resemblance between Smalley’s “conditions” and Law, Brooke, Schnackenburg and Painter’s “tests”. As to the placement of the caesura, this depends on where one sees the major change of subject occurring. The argument for finding it at 4:1 has already been presented, as has the reason why it may not matter. As to Smalley’s “conditions” and Painter’s “tests”, both terminologies emphasize John’s object, to uphold the author’s Christology and ethics against the “heretical” views of the opponents and demonstrate their falsity.

Thomas criticises Brown and Smalley’s suggested structures as “contrived” and “forced”, suggesting instead a concentric or chiastic structure. This proposal, while ingenious, suffers from the defect that in seeing 3:11-18 as the centre of the chiasm, it takes insufficient account of the caesura at either 3:10, 3:24 or 4:1, as set out above.

As indicated above, if 1 John’s underlying themes of faith in Jesus’ coming in the flesh and mutual love are deliberately yoked together by the author in the literary structure of his letter, which primarily serves that connection, it becomes clear that the epistle teaches that an ethic of mutual love and forbearance is compelled by faith in Jesus as truly incarnate in human form. Painter’s “tests” outline demonstrates precisely this connection. And it is a connection which, remarkably, is developed against a background of present conflict with opponents with false “slogans” contradicting any such connection, who aim at picking off stragglers from the remaining Johannine

207 Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, xxxiii-xxxiv.
210 Ibid, 372.
community. That the remedy to this situation in which 1 John was written is faith in Jesus as God’s true Son and mutual love, rather than hatred of the opponents, renders a peacemaking hermeneutic of 1 John more feasible than it would have been if hatred of the opponents themselves, rather than strong rhetorical denunciation of their doctrines, had been offered by the author as the solution to the conflict.

Reception of 1 John in the Early Church

There remains a scholarly division regarding the time by which the Johannine writings, and John’s Gospel in particular, were accepted by the Great Church\textsuperscript{211} as orthodox, and the extent to which they were used by dissident groups ultimately recognised as heterodox. Bauer is the modern progenitor of the view that a tendency towards caution when approaching the Gospel of John was continuous in ecclesiastical Rome, the centre of orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{212} Sanders thinks that John’s Gospel appeared to have been used first by the Gnostics.\textsuperscript{213}

Hill correctly observes that to speak of “orthodox Johannophobia”, as if the consensus were that what became orthodox Christianity was wary of the entire Johannine corpus, including 1 John, may put the matter too simply, because any such reservations about the orthodoxy of John’s Gospel may not have applied to 1 John.\textsuperscript{214} This would be unsurprising if the view adopted in this study is correct, namely that 1 John was written to correct both an over-high Christology, derived from pressing too far the Christological implications of John’s Gospel, and consequent ethical indifference in the secessionist group who had left the original Johannine

\textsuperscript{211} This convenient phrase, legion in scholarly writings since Bauer, is used here to denote the church circles or groups who embraced what later became orthodox teaching – no value judgment is implied.
\textsuperscript{212} Walter Bauer, \textit{Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity} (London: SCM Press, 1972), 208.
community. The controversy as to reception of John’s Gospel in the very early church is beyond our scope. But as will be demonstrated, use of 1 John, and recognition of it as authoritative teaching, appears very early, and indeed not long after its most likely time of writing, the last decade of the first century. The consequences of this for a non-violent interpretation of 1 John will be briefly examined later in this section.

For present purposes, a brief survey of scholarship on this question over the last 150 years or so will suffice. Westcott noted that 1 John was spoken of as an ἐπιστολή καθολική, “Catholic epistle”, from the close of the second century CE onwards, citing Clement of Alexandria and Origen.\textsuperscript{215} Law notes its quotation by these two Fathers, and by Cyprian, Tertullian and Irenaeus, and its earlier use, without citing it by attribution to John, in Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians (“Philippians”), which “contains an almost verbal reproduction of 1 John 4”.\textsuperscript{216}

Brooke offers use by “the Presbyter” and by Papias (as related by Eusebius) of the phrase ἡ ἀληθεία as evidence that 1 John was both known and valued during the first quarter of the second century.\textsuperscript{217} Schnackenburg too notes acknowledgment of 1 John by Origen and Eusebius, and its use by Tertullian, Cyprian and Clement of Alexandria, and its citation in the Muratorian Canon in the second half of the second century.\textsuperscript{218} Brown notes use by Ignatius of Antioch of Johannine ideas, maintaining that to Ignatius, the Matthean-Lucan infant Christology and the Johannine pre-existence Christology is sequential rather than contradictory.\textsuperscript{219} Brown argues that in the second century, Polycarp of Smyrna supplied “eloquent proof” as to the sympathies of church writers when choosing between the two communities that emerged from the schism of 1 John 2:19, noting, as Law does, the

\textsuperscript{215} Westcott, Epistles of St John, xxviii.
\textsuperscript{216} Law, Tests of Life, 39. So also Brooke, Johannine Epistles, liii; Brown, Epistles of John, 106 n.248.
\textsuperscript{217} Brooke, Johannine Epistles, liv.
\textsuperscript{218} Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 46-47.
\textsuperscript{219} Brown, Epistles of John, 112-113.
strong verbal resemblance to 1 John 4:2-3, without citation, of Polycarp’s *Philippians*.220

Painter also sees the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (which he dates at circa 110-115 CE) as alluding to 1 John 2:18 and 3:2.221 He too notes a number of passages in Polycarp’s *Philippians* (which he dates as not later than 140 CE), which he thinks are almost certainly dependent on 1 (and 2) John.222 Marshall refers to “citations” of 1 John by Polycarp in *Philippians*, and to “possible allusions” to it in Ignatius’ *Letter to the Ephesians*.223 Lieu sees the earliest citation of 1 and 2 John as being by Irenaeus, who attributes them to the Beloved Disciple and to John the son of Zebedee.224

Hartog offers a more detailed examination of Polycarp’s use of 1 (and 2) John, noting that in *Philippians* 7, Polycarp’s concern is with the “many” who do not confess, inter alia, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.225 The similarity here to 1 John 4:2 is obvious. Hartog also notes the close verbal parallels between *Philippians* 7.1 and 1 John 4:2b-3a.226 These are certainly present, as Hartog sets out.227 *Philippians* 7.1 uses the phrase Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθεῖσα ἀντιχριστὸς ἔστιν,228 and the almost identical statement in 1 John 4:3a is καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν· καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου. Further, as Hartog points out, in a “probable allusion”,229 the phrase ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου is found

\[\text{Ibid, 9, 113.}\]
\[\text{Ibid, 41.}\]
\[\text{Ibid, 41.}\]
\[\text{Ibid, 41.}\]
\[\text{Ibid, 41.}\]
\[\text{Apostolic Fathers, 288.}\]
\[\text{Hartog, “The Opponents of Polycarp, 379-380.}\]
\[\text{Ibid, 380.}\]
\[\text{Ibid, 380.}\]
in *Philippians* 7.1,\(^{230}\) and also in 1 John 3:8, although referring there to those who commit sin. These and other examples offered by Hartog suggest not merely verbal dependence of Polycarp on 1 John in *Philippians*, but also common opponents and tendencies being addressed by both authors.

Hill notes Irenaeus’ reference to his association with the aged Polycarp and Polycarp’s intercourse in turn with John and others who had “seen the Lord” (ἐξωρακότων, cf. 1 John 1:1-2) as evidence of his authority, as reported by Eusebius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.\(^{231}\) He notes that Irenaeus, as reported by Eusebius, refers to Polycarp receiving traditions from these persons, “the eyewitnesses of the word of life”, παρὰ τῶν αὐτοπτῶν τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ λόγου, a reference to 1 John 1:1, τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς.\(^{232}\) This suggests use of 1 John by Irenaeus to identify and combat similar tendencies to those against which 1 John was written.

Thus in very early times we have two examples of 1 John being utilised in polemic against heresy by prominent figures in what became the Great Church. We may deduce from this that certainly 1 John – whether or not there were early reservations about John’s Gospel – was seen early on as an ἐπιστολῇ καθόλικη in the Great Church. If 1 John’s commandment to its readership to love one another was an inevitable concomitant to right belief, and the Great Church accepted this teaching in very early times, then it was really accepting that the corrective to wrong belief is the teaching that Jesus came in the flesh, in love for humankind, and the concomitant notion, that this divine love itself commands mutual love and concern, rather than hatred and violent killing, as 1 John 3:11-17 teaches.

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\(^{231}\) *Apostolic Fathers*, 288.

\(^{232}\) Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 353. 

Conclusions

1 John might seem the very last NT text to which to apply a peacemaking or non-violent hermeneutic. It is undoubtedly the record of a bitter theological battle between John and those who have left his community, divided from it by irreconcilable differences, not only over ethics but relating also to the very nature of the Saviour himself, and of his mission on earth. Was he God’s true Son? Was he truly human no less than truly divine? What are the implications for ethics within the remaining Johannine community? How could it best protect itself against further incursions from the dissidents?

As we have seen, the feasibility of applying a non-violent or peacemaking hermeneutic to 1 John can only be determined after asking preliminary questions of and about the text. To whom and why was it written? What is its literary structure? When and how was it received in the early church? These suggest that such a hermeneutic may be applied to 1 John. Whether it can be is examined in the following chapters of this study.

There are strong indications that the slogans or “boasts” opposed in the ὁ λέγων and like formulae indicate still-raw conflict with theological opponents now departed from the Johannine community. They are “antichrists” and to be avoided, but hatred is condemned as being “like Cain” (3:12), leading to murder. Thus present conflict may present difficulty for any peacemaking hermeneutic of the epistle. But love, hatred’s opposite, is counselled within the community at every turn, rather than a lust for revenge against opponents, who might otherwise have been seen as deserters and traitors to the remaining Johannine community. How this may yet permit a peacemaking hermeneutic is examined in the forthcoming chapters.
Chapter 2 – ἱλασμός and its Cognates in the Septuagint, the Intertestamental Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls

Introduction

Peacemaking theology has made much of Jesus’ death as both an uncovering and an ending of the notion of sacrificial placation of an angry God, or as a demonstration of God’s love for humanity, as opposed to a propitiatory sacrifice to be appropriated by humankind to placate a wrathful God, to divert the divine anger that would otherwise fall upon them. ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2¹ and 4:10² is the battleground on which these competing ideas have been contested in the context of 1 John. The debate is not new. Rather than making a futile attempt to resolve it once and for all, the contribution this and the following chapter seek to make is to show whether or not 1 John, in its use of the word ἱλασμός and the ideas it represents, supports the conclusions for which some peacemaking theologians cite it.

This chapter first examines the seven uses of ἱλασμός in the LXX. It is beyond the scope of this study to analyse comprehensively the LXX uses of its cognates, ἱλάσκεσθαι or the more common intensive, ἐξιλάσκεσθαι, for they are numerous, although a few will receive some brief attention. It will then look at some uses of ἱλασμός in the intertestamental literature, which will necessarily be selective as the field is so vast. Then, in order further to illustrate the Jewish background against which 1 John was written, we shall briefly examine some presentations of Atonement ideas using the Hebrew word שבע, kippur (“atoned”), derived from the root שבע, kaphar (“cover”) in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Finally some conclusions will be drawn concerning the Jewish background which

¹ “And he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the whole world’s sins”.
² “Love is in this, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins”.
may underlie the use of Ἰλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. The next chapter will then deal with the two uses of Ἰλασμός in 1 John itself, making use of the conclusions reached in this chapter as to its Jewish background.

Ἰλασμός in the Septuagint

There are six occurrences of Ἰλασμός in the LXX which correspond to the Hebrew Bible, translated in modern English versions. There is another in 1 Chronicles 28:20 which, although in the LXX, does not appear in the Hebrew, nor in modern English translations. It must be dealt with here, as in LXX form it would probably have been available to the author of 1 John.

As we shall see, it is not the case that Ἰλασμός always, or even usually, conveys the idea of propitiation, although it often refers to sacrifice. The following analysis will show that as used in the LXX, Ἰλασμός translates a variety of Hebrew words, and the thought behind them varies widely. Unsurprisingly, Ἰλασμός has no fixed meaning in the LXX.

Any attempt to give Ἰλασμός a static or fixed meaning in the LXX is to fly in the face of James Barr’s cogent warning that while it is often essential to undertake comparative etymological study to unlock the meaning of Hebrew words (and, one might add, Greek words), etymology should not be used to impose a meaning on known usage of Hebrew terms. As Barr warns, etymological associations which appear to be theologically attractive cannot be allowed to assume command of the whole task of interpretation, without attending to the semantic context of the word in the passage under consideration.\(^3\) Words are used differently in regions and over time by different language users. The following analysis must take these facts into account.

account, and identify different shades of meaning when using the same word. This approach has proved fruitful in examining the differing meanings of ἴλασμός in the LXX. The uses of this term will be examined in the order of their appearance in the LXX.4

(i) Leviticus 25:9

The first LXX occurrence of ἴλασμος is in Leviticus 25:9b.5 This unit, Leviticus 25:8-55, concerns all of the ritual and social obligations upon Israelites, to the Lord and to each other, in a Jubilee year. The Hebrew for ἴλασμον in v.9b is נִכְפַּר in the plural.6 Despite the common rendering of “atonement” for the term, “purgation” may be a more appropriate translation in this verse. It better conveys the original sense of “cleanse” lying behind it. In the OT, נִכְפַּר can be used synonymously and in parallel with “wipe” or “remove” (e.g. Isaiah 27:9a, “by this will Jacob’s guilt be atoned for, נִכְפַּר, and this will be the first fruit of the removal, נִפְרָד of his sin”) and with “blot out” (e.g. Jeremiah 18:23b: “do not forgive, תְכֵפִי their crimes or blot out, תְַכִּפִי their sins”).7 Noting these parallels, “wiping” or “removal” is closer to the sense conveyed by the term נִכְפַּר in Leviticus 25:9b than

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4 While Do traces the work of Dodd and those who agree with him and those who differ from him as to the use of the ἴλασμον word group in the LXX (Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 192-200), his analysis of the occurrences of the word ἴλασμος itself in the LXX is brief and inconclusive (ibid, 205). As will be seen, the latter exercise has proved more fruitful in this study.
5 “On the day of purgation (ἵλασμον) you shall make a proclamation with a trumpet throughout all your land.”
6 The Hebrew OT text in this study is taken from The Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament (ed. John R Kohlenberger III; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), which uses the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, reproducing the Leningrad Codex B19A(L): Introduction, xvii.
7 Jacob Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1080. However, to the extent that Milgrom relies (partially) on Akkadian and other nearby Semitic languages’ use of cognates of kipper to mean “wipe” or “obliterate”, Feder cogently suggests that the variation in usages of Semitic cognates of kipper may be too wide to base a conclusion that this term always means “wipe” or “obliterate” in Hebrew: Yitzhaq Feder, “On Kupperu, Kipper and Etymological Sins that Cannot be Wiped Away,” VT 60 (2010): 535-545, 537-538.
“propitiate”, a translation which implies appeasement, or that “the principle of substitution is at work on the altar: animal life takes the place of human life”.  

Textually, Wevers argues against ἐξίλασμόν as the LXX original in 25:9b, shortened in later texts to ἱλασμόν, maintaining that ἱλασμόν is indeed original here. If ἱλασμόν is in the original, its meaning is far less specifically propitiatory than ἐξίλασμόν would carry. A mid position, which preserves both propitiation and cleansing as ideas expressed by ἱλασμόν is just as unsatisfactory, as the two notions are really contradictory: one implies cleansing by God after the required ritual, and the other implies propitiation offered to the deity.

Scholars differ over the many possible meanings of ἱλασμόν in the entire OT, however, and a full examination of this debate is outside the scope of this study. We shall examine its meaning only in those LXX examples where ἱλασμός and occasionally where its cognates are used to translate ἱλασμόν, in order to cast light on the use of ἱλασμός in its LXX context.

There is no doubt that elsewhere in Leviticus, and in Deuteronomy, in the rites of the scapegoat (Leviticus 16:10, 20-21) and the broken-necked heifer (Deuteronomy 21:1-9), the “kippur-carrier” (or bearer) is a ransom or substitute, onto which the impurities in the sanctuary are transferred. Thus it becomes lethal and must be driven out. But in the Masoretic Text in its final form these rites have a new purpose: the

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9 John William Wevers, Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 405.
expiation of the people’s sins.\textsuperscript{10} This is clear from the fact that the driving out of the goat, the “kippur-bearer”, although it bears the people’s culpability, does not in Leviticus 16:10 or 20:21 itself purify them from sin. That is the exclusive function of the purification of the sanctum by cleansing sacrifice.\textsuperscript{11} In Leviticus 16:10, the goat on which the lot fell “for Azazel” just refers to the goat which must be “sent away”. The Hebrew ל עֲזָאז ֵ֖ל in 16:10 means “as a goat of departure”, which refers to that which must be sent away alive into the wilderness to purify the people from sin. In the LXX, ל עֲזָאז ֵ֖ל is rendered by τὴν ἀποσπομπὴν, which carries the sense of carrying away evil. The Hebrew does not have that specific connotation. We shall come later to the same term in 1 Enoch, where it refers to a demon.

Equally, in Leviticus 4 different types of unintentional sin – by the priest, attributed to the people (4:3-12), by the whole congregation of Israel (4:13-21), by a ruler (4:22-26), or by one of the people (4:27-31) – are indentified, with differing sin offerings prescribed in each case. In each case, except the first, the priest makes atonement on behalf of others by cleansing the horns of the altar with the blood of a bull in the second case, and with that of a goat in the last two. In each case, that which is offered “as a sin offering”, לְחַטֵּ֣א (4:14), cleanses not the sinner but the holy place.\textsuperscript{12} This is shown by the fact that the noun used for “sin offering” here is formed from the Piel of the verb סָפַן, sin. In

\begin{enumerate}
  \item[12] Milgrom, \textit{Leviticus 1-16}, 255.
\end{enumerate}
Biblical Hebrew, the Piel stem may connote the undoing or elimination of the very act signified by the Qal stem of the same verb.¹³ Again, expiation, not propitiation, is the idea conveyed.

In its ritual usage the subject of קפער is usually the priest, and the object is something contaminated, but by way of contrast, outside its ritual usage the subject of קפער is usually God, and its direct object is sin: e.g. Isaiah 6:7b,¹⁴ 22:14b,¹⁵ Jeremiah 18:23b;¹⁶ Ezekiel 16:63;¹⁷ Psalms 66:5a,¹⁸ 78:38a,¹⁹ 79:9b.²⁰ But this is consistent with the ritual usage of this word group, because even there, ritual impurity is ultimately caused by sin, and it is God who grants purification on performance of the rite.²¹

It is common to assume that reference to blood from a sacrificed animal in OT purification rites implies substitutionary sacrifice, and that part of the meaning of קפער is to placate an angry God, or to pay a ransom.²² However Leviticus 16:18-19,²³ using in its LXX version a ἔλασμος derivative, demonstrates that expiation in the sense of cleansing is really the idea conveyed. Here again, significantly, we find קפער, “and

¹⁴ “Now that this [a burning coal] has touched your lips, your guilt has gone, and your sin is blotted out”.
¹⁵ “Surely this sin will not be forgiven for you until you die”.
¹⁶ “Do not forgive their iniquity, do not blot out their sin from your sight”.
¹⁷ “In order that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of our shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord”.
¹⁸ “You atoned for our transgressions with goodness”.
¹⁹ “Yet he, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them”.
²⁰ “And forgive our sins, for your name’s sake”.
²¹ Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 1083-1084.
²³ “Then he shall go to the altar before the Lord and make purgation on its [the assembly’s] behalf, and shall take some of the bull’s blood and that of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar. He shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times on it, and shall cleanse and hallow it from the uncleanness of Israel’s people”.

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he shall atone" (LXX ἐξιλάσασθαι) in v.18 used synonymously with ἐκάλεσσαί, “and he shall cleanse”, (LXX ἀκαθαρσιῶν) in v.19.

In these verses, expiation or forgiveness is not simply an effect of the priest’s actions. His actions are a prerequisite, as is contrition, but it is God that grants expiation or purification from sin.24 The priest is the subject of the action, the holy place is the direct object, but the people are the indirect object, for whose sin the rite is performed. This is clear from Leviticus 16:33, “he shall purify (יְכַפַּר) the sanctuary and the tent of meeting and the altar, and shall perform expiatory rites with respect to the sins of the people”.25

Notably, here an angry God is not the direct or indirect object of the verb יְכַפַּר. God grants the result, expiation or cleansing of sin, freely, after the action has been performed. The point of the action is that, as the Holiness Code in Leviticus 19 shows, holiness is maintained by obedience to the Commandments, so offerings must be presented to cleanse the holy place, defiled by human sin, i.e. disobedience of the Commandments.26 Divine forgiveness then follows. Rather than propitiation of divine anger, this process of divine forgiveness through cleansing sacrifice is what is connoted by ἀλασμός in Leviticus 25:9b. If propitiation of an angry God were the primary meaning intended here, one might expect God to be the direct, or at least the indirect, object of the action.27

27 It is acknowledged by Glenn N Davies and Michael R Stead in their magisterial article, “Atonement and Redemption,” in Christ Died for Our Sins: Essays on the Atonement (ed. Michael R Stead; Canberra: Barton Books, 2013), 35-58, 43-45 that the “semantic map” of Atonement in the Pentateuch is concerned with the forgiveness of sin, cleansing and removal of guilt, consecration and the averting of plague or wrath, rather than redemption, although the theme of the essay is the mixing of atonement and redemption metaphors elsewhere in the OT, a subject beyond the scope of this study.
(ii) Numbers 5:8

Numbers 5:8\textsuperscript{28} shows ‘λασμός being used in a somewhat different context. Numbers 5:5-8 contains legal instruction regarding the procedure to be followed when a man (or woman) wrongs another, and so (importantly) breaks faith with the Lord (5:6). In 5:8 we find τοῦ κριοῦ τοῦ ‘λασμοῦ used to render the Hebrew נְכֵפָרֵי, “the ram of the expiation rites”, a phrase which of course includes בַּכָּר, referring to the fact that the ram is to be offered in sacrifice by the wrongdoer to expiate their wrong.

This term נְכֵפָרֵי, “the ram of the expiation rites”, refers to the ritual referred to in Leviticus 5 as בַּכָּר, “guilt” (or reparation) offering: the procedure is set forth in Leviticus 7:1-10.\textsuperscript{29} In 5:8a, it is that where the injured person has no next of kin, that which is offered “as a guilt offering”, נְכֵפָרֵי, is made to the priest.\textsuperscript{30} But the actual “atoning process” is set out in Leviticus 6:1-7 in four steps: first, the wrongdoer must feel guilt (6:4); second, the wrong done must be confessed (6:7a); third, the principal sum representing the value of the wrong plus twenty percent interest must be paid to the injured party (6:5b); and fourth, a ram is presented to the Lord as reparation for sacrilege.\textsuperscript{31} Thus shalom is restored between perpetrator and victim.\textsuperscript{32}

What this demonstrates is that this process, including נְכֵפָרֵי, the ram offered in the guilt-offering to the Lord, has a relational function. Here we see the expiation process employed, not to placate an angry

\textsuperscript{28} “If the injured person has no next of kin to whom restitution can be made for the wrong, the restitution for wrong shall go to the Lord for the priest, as well as the ram of atonement (‘λασμοῦ ) with which atonement is made for the guilty man”.

\textsuperscript{29} Baruch A Levine, Numbers 1-20 (New York: Doubleday, 1993) 190.

\textsuperscript{30} Rashbam’s Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers (ed. & transl. Martin I Lockshin; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2001), 168.


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
God, but to reconcile humanity with God and with each other. It follows from the requirements of Leviticus 5:1-7 that a sinner cannot receive expiation of sin without repentance. The ram of atonement is the guilt offering required in Leviticus 5:25.

Returning to Numbers 5:5-10, it is notable that this unit repeats Leviticus 5:20-26. But unlike the latter passage, the former contains no explicit reference to a false oath to the deity (cf. Leviticus 5:22). This indicates that in Numbers 5:5-10 we see the transformation of the notion of a guilt (or reparation) offering, discussed above, from the sacral to the moral-legal sphere: the object of the obligation prompted by the incurring of guilt is transferred primarily from the deity to the injured person. The defrauding of a fellow is a sin against God.

The point in Numbers 5:8 is that the ram offered in the guilt-offering, is offered to cleanse the sin of the wrongdoer against both the deity and their neighbour. This offering expiates the wrong, so as to reconcile the wrongdoer with God and their neighbour. Thus the atonement process here, and thus as used in translation in the LXX in Numbers 5:8, while it certainly bears a sacrificial meaning, does not connote propitiation of divine anger, but rather expiation of sin by the deity, following performance of the cleansing ritual and repentance by the wrongdoer.

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33 Gane, Cult and Character, 202-203.
34 Philip J Budd, Numbers (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1984), 58.
37 With respect, Do’s view of Numbers 5:8 in the LXX, that as used there connotes “a means to placate the wrath of God or to propitiate God” (Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 205), misses the distinction between sacrificial cleansing and propitiation of divine wrath.
(iii) 1 Chronicles 28:20

First Chronicles 28:20c in the LXX, which does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, reads καὶ ἵδοὺ τὸ παράδειγμα τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ τοῦ οίκου αὐτοῦ, καὶ ζακχῳ αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὰ ύπερωά καὶ τὰς ἀποθήλας τὰς ἐσωτέρας, καὶ τὸν οίκον τοῦ ἱλασμοῦ, καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα οίκου Κυρίου. This follows 28:20a-b, which does appear in the Hebrew. First Chronicles 28:20 is part of David’s public speech in the assembly at Jerusalem, directed to his son Solomon, in which he lays out for him the plan of the Temple for the Ark of the Covenant (28:2). The Temple stands as the unifying point for all Israel. David’s plan for it also contains items only attributed elsewhere to the Tabernacle. Thus it reinforces the Temple’s role as the carrier and embodiment of Israel’s most sacred institutions. The point here is that it provides for Israel a place of God’s continued presence.

The phrase τὸν οίκον τοῦ ἱλασμοῦ in 1 Chronicles 28:20c, usually translated “the place of propitiation”, may also be translated “the house of the mercy seat”. The “mercy seat” or “atonement cover”, ἱλαστήριον, occurs at Exodus 25:17, part of the Lord’s instructions to Moses regarding the building of the Ark of the Covenant. The instruction here is to build a mercy seat of pure gold, flanked by cherubim (25:18), to be placed atop the Ark (25:21) containing “the Covenant which I shall give you”.

One may also translate ἱλαστήριον as “place of clearing (or cleansing)”, because each year at Yom Kippur it receives the sin offering whereby the people and the Tabernacle are “cleared”. Yahweh’s continued presence.  

38 “And look, the plan of the temple, indeed his house, and its treasury and the upper chambers, and the inner store rooms and the mercy seat, and the plan of the house of the Lord”.
40 Gary N Knoppers, 1 Chronicles 10-29 (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 941-942.
41 Edward Lewis Curtis and Albert Alonzo Madsen, The Book of Chronicles (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1910), 300.
presence is assured (Leviticus 16:14-15), as Yahweh’s spirit can only abide in a place of the utmost ritual cleanliness atop the ἱλαστήριον.

Thus the thought in 1 Chronicles 28:20c in the LXX may be seen to be in harmony with that in 28:20b, ὡκ ἄνησε σε, καὶ ὡ μὴ ἐγκαταλιπτῇ, “he [the Lord] will not forsake nor fail you”. Divine assurance lies at the heart of David’s promise to his son Solomon. The assurance that “he will not forsake nor fail you” is Deuteronomic: see Deuteronomy 4:31; 31:3; also Joshua 1:5. First Chronicles 28:20 contains another Deuteronomic formulae: “be strong and of good courage” (Deuteronomy 31:7, 23). All of these are concentrated in Deuteronomy 31:1-8, which also contains “God is with you”, also found in 1 Chronicles 28:20.

Beneath the ideas conveyed in 1 Chronicles 28:20c by the mercy seat, ἱλαστήριον lies the thought of God’s reassurance and constancy. The mercy seat is seen, not as connoting a place of propitiation of an angry deity, but as the symbol and embodiment of a merciful God who forgives sinners and is with them always. The point of David’s instructions to Solomon is that the Temple, especially the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies covering God’s Covenant with the people, stands as a symbol that God will be with them always.

(iv) Psalm 130:4

In the LXX Psalm 130(129):4, ἱλασμός appears in an entirely different conceptual context. It translates ἡμετέρα ἔλεος, literally “the forgiveness”,

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43 Ralph W Klein, 1 Chronicles (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 528.
45 A closer translation of 130(129):4 in the LXX is “for with you there is forgiveness (ἵλασμός), so your name may be revered” because of the appearance of ὄνοματός, “name”, of which there is no direct equivalent in the Hebrew, which simply reads יִהְיוּ, lit. “you are feared”: but see below.
rather than רָפָא. The ordinary meaning of the root רָפָא is “forgive”.

The Hebrew conception in Psalm 130:4 is of removal of sin from God’s sight by forgiveness, so promoting reverence for the deity by removal of human sins after penitence. Forgiveness is for God alone. Fear of God is thus not terror, but reverence for a deity who is all-powerful and compassionate.

Psalm 130 is a penitential Psalm, focussing not on retribution against Israel’s enemies but on the iniquities of Israel itself. Verse 4 stands out in its context because it marks a caesura which is also a turning point in the thought of the psalm. Verses 1-3 sound a note of almost-despairing supplication:

Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.
Lord, hear my voice;
Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.
If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

Then there is a change of mood, with the words of assurance: “But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared”. The new thought in v.4 is that the God from whom we are alienated is the God to whom we may appeal, as there is no other source of forgiveness.

'*λασμός* here therefore denotes something very different from ritual cleansing from sin by sacrifice. In Psalm 130:4, God is the *subject* of the action, humankind the *object*. Here, still more, forgiveness, *λασμός* is not something extracted from a wrathful God by propitiation, which is

46 Cf. Exodus 34:9, “This is a stiff-necked people: forgive (וְסָל חַתְּנָה, lit. “and you forgive”) our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance”; Leviticus 4:26, “and he shall be forgiven (וְנִסְל)".


51 The KJV wording of this famous and much-loved psalm cannot be bettered!

not in view at all. Rather, it is a free divine gift to the penitent wrongdoer.

The same root, נָפָל (in the form נָפָלָה “now you forgive”) appears in Psalm 25:11. Here the LXX (Psalm 24) renders it as ἰλάσις, ἰλασμός cognate. But in Psalm 65:3, in the phrase, נָפָלָה (lit. “you forgave [atoned for] them) appears, with the same idea, forgiveness, being conveyed. Here the LXX (Psalm 64) again renders it as ἰλάσις. This strongly suggests that the same idea as that underlying נָפָלָה in Psalm 25:11, forgiveness, rather than propitiation, is being conveyed by נָפָלָה in Psalm 65:3. Similarly, no propitiatory connotations underlie נָפָלָה, translated by ἰλασμός in Psalm 130(129):4.

(v) Ezekiel 44:27
In Ezekiel 44:27 in the LXX we find ἰλασμός used to mean “sin offering”. The LXX reads προσοσισουσιν ἰλασμόν. But there is no equivalent of ἰλασμόν in the Hebrew, which simply reads בְּרָכָה, literally “he must offer”, from the root בָּרָכָה, “offer”, “approach”, “bring near”. This word often refers to humankind’s approach to the presence of God: in Psalm 65:4a we find בְּרָכָה used in the sense of God bringing people into God’s presence.

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53 “Now you forgive my iniquity, O Lord, for it is great”.
54 “When works of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgave our transgressions”.
55 As Do correctly notes: Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 205.
56 “In that day when he shall go into the holy place, to the inner court, to minister in the holy place, he shall offer his sin offering (ἰλασμόν), says the Lord God” is a fair translation of the LXX.
57 “They are happy whom you choose (בְּרָכָה, lit. “and you bring near) to live in your courts”.
In Ezekiel 44:27, בְּדַרְתָּן is used in a sense analogous to the offering by the high priest after inadvertent sin, and by others after ceremonial uncleanness (Leviticus 4:3; 12:6-8; 14:12-19; 15:15; Numbers 6:11-14).⁵⁸ These instructions are intended to be equivalent to the Torah.⁵⁹ The context of Ezekiel 44:27 in this unit (44:15-31) is the guarding of boundaries in the Temple (44:15-27) and among the people by the levitical priests, the sons of Zadok (44:15).⁶⁰

Ezekiel 44:11 lays down a new law, that the levitical priest shall offer and slay these sacrifices presented by the people: beforehand they used to offer them themselves.⁶¹ But 44:25 prescribes that the levitical priests (44:15) generally may not defile themselves by contact with a corpse. However an exception is made for deceased parents, children, sons or unmarried daughters. The requirement for a priest to count seven days after he has become clean (44:26) increases the ritual demands on a priest who has become unclean, as compared to the instructions to a lay person in Numbers 6:11-14.⁶²

Traditionally these verses have been read as permitting a lay person to touch a corpse, perhaps a loved one, provided that a cleansing offering is afterwards performed.⁶³ However it is more likely that the lay regulation of Numbers 19:11-19 is indeed referred to, but with extra demands befitting the priestly status of the offeror, because he, a priest, has touched a relative’s corpse, as permitted by 44:26.⁶⁴ In part, the

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⁶¹ Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 481.
⁶⁴ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 264; *sed contra*, Rabbi Dr S Fisch, *Ezekiel* (London & Bournemouth: Socino Press, 1950), 308-309, reflecting the traditional rabbinical interpretation of Rashi and others, that 44:27 has no connection with 44:26, and relates to
association of this ritual by the priest with that imposed on lay people may be so that the priest may teach them the difference between the holy and the common.65

Either way, it is clear that Ezekiel 44:25-27 does not forbid a priest touching the corpse of a relative, as distinct from a non-family member. A priest who has touched such a corpse therefore does not sin by violating the law in 44:25: it falls within the permission contained in the exception for relatives. Rather, he becomes ritually unclean, and must count seven days after he becomes clean (44:26) and then make his offering in the inner court of the holy place (44:27) before resuming his duties.

The Hebrew contains no word that is the equivalent of ἱλασμός: what is offered does not propitiate the deity for human sin, but effects purification.66 The offering is made so that, in the eyes of God, the offeror is cleansed and fit to resume priestly duties. It may be that the offerings in Ezekiel 40-48 function to demonstrate the worshipper’s complete devotion to God, so that they can make atonement, that is, be cleansed from ceremonial defilement.67 But these offerings are not propitiations of a wrathful deity, by substitution of an animal victim for a human one.68

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65 Robert Jenson, Ezekiel (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 318.
68 With respect, Do’s view, that appeasing or placating divine wrath is connoted by ἱλασμός here, misses the significance of the absence of any ἱλασμός equivalent in the original Hebrew.
(vi) Daniel 9:9

In Daniel 9:9 we find ἰλασμός used in a non-sacrificial way, translating the Hebrew יִלְשָׁם וּלְעָפָר, “and the forgivenesses”, from בְּקַשׁ, “forgive”. Here 9:9a is prompted by 9:9b, “for we have rebelled against him”. God allows us to live, though we have rebelled.

The context in Daniel 9:4-19 is Daniel’s great prayer to the Lord, seeking to make atonement for his sins and those of Israel itself, and freedom in return. The reference in 9:2 to Jeremiah is to the prophecy in Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10 of seventy years of service by the Israelites to the King of Babylon, followed by return to Israel and punishment of Babylon. Daniel makes this prayer at a time when Darius, a Mede, has become king also of the Chaldeans (9:1). He, it might be anticipated, may be God’s instrument to right Israel’s wrong, in accordance with Jeremiah’s prophecy.

The theology of Daniel’s prayer seems strongly Deuteronomic: Israel is punished for its sin and appeals to God for mercy, which God will grant, although it must be said that the primary focus in Daniel’s visions is the sin of the Gentile king.

In Daniel 9:9, therefore, ἰλασμός as a translation of the Hebrew יִלְשָׁם וּלְעָפָר depicts God as merciful and forgiving. In no sense does God require propitiation or a turning away of divine anger otherwise falling on Israel. Daniel makes his prayer in light of prophecy promising

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69 “Compassion and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God, for we have rebelled against him.”
freedom after exile as punishment. The term of imprisonment has been served, and God has already promised release.

Daniel simply asks the Lord to keep a promise, while appropriately acknowledging his and Israel’s sin, and that it deserved the penalty of exile. In no sense does ἱλασμός here convey even a faint echo of propitiation. The idea is of a free gift by a forgiving God to a penitent people – after paying the penalty of exile.\(^{74}\)

(vii) Amos 8:14

In Amos 8:14\(^{75}\) in the LXX, ἱλασμός translates ἁπάτη, “by the guilt (or shame) of” Samaria: κατὰ τοῦ ἱλασμοῦ Σαμαρείας.\(^{76}\) The Hebrew comes from the root בְַּא, “guilt”. The idea here is false Gods: the two false deities mentioned here are, as is often the case, associated with places, Beersheba and Samaria, with both gods found together at Dan.\(^{77}\) In the case of Samaria, the reference may be to worship at the Samarian sanctuary in Bethel with its image of a calf.\(^{78}\) Hosea 8:6 speaks of “the calf of Samaria”, עָגוֹל שֶֽׁמֶרֶן, and the golden calf is called “your sin”, אֲתַכֶּם in Deuteronomy 9:21.\(^{79}\)

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\(^{74}\) Do correctly notes that ἱλασμός here connotes simply the forgiveness of sins committed against God: Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 205.

\(^{75}\) “Those who swear by the guilt of Samaria, and ‘by the life of your God’ from Dan, and ‘by the life of your pantheon’ to Beersheba, they shall fall and never rise again”: for this translation, closer to the Hebrew than most, see Francis L. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, Amos (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 826.

\(^{76}\) This apparently refers to the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians, related in 2 Kings 17:5-6: this ended the rule of King Hoshea of Samaria, who did evil in the sight of the Lord (17:1-2).

\(^{77}\) Ibid, 828.

\(^{78}\) Shalom M. Paul, Amos (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 270.

\(^{79}\) Ibid.
Amos 8:7 and 8:14 work to form a larger inclusion. The two participles, "those who trample" in 8:4 and "those who swear" in 8:14, match each other. The reference in 8:7 is to the evil actions portrayed in 8:4-6: trampling down the poor and bringing them to ruin, offering wheat for sale on the Sabbath, currency speculation, false weights and measures, buying the poor for silver and the needy for footwear, and selling grain refuse. This last may have been aimed at powerful corn merchants. This inclusion conveys the thought that the prerogative of the true God is to swear not to forget such deeds, not for those unfaithful to him to swear by false deities. The evil-doers (8:4-6), and the false-swearers (8:14), will never rise again.

In Amos 8:14, 'λασμός is often translated “propitiation”, but the context makes it clear that this is not the meaning conveyed. There is here introduced in the LXX an ironic reference to the (ineffective) “sin-offering”, 'λασμός of Samaria. But this idea is not present in the Hebrew, where the thought is simply “guilt”, מָעֵז. The whole unit, Amos 8, is a prediction of divine punishment for evil-doing of all kinds. The point in 8:14 is that divine punishment will inevitably fall on evil-doers. The thought is not propitiatory sacrifice, deflecting divine anger, but the inexorability of divine punishment for evil deeds.

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80 “The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: I will surely not forget their deeds”.
81 Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 829.
82 Ibid.
83 AG Auld, Amos (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 86.
84 Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 829.
86 With respect, Do’s view, that “λασμός here is ambiguous, and may connote either propitiation or forgiveness (Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 205) misses the negative view the LXX takes of the sacrifices of Samaria, apparently intended to placate divine anger, and that in the original Hebrew the idea is simply the guilt of Samaria.
Cognates of Ἰλασμός in the Septuagint

There is space here for only five representative examples. It is convenient to examine those offered by Law in the course of his analysis of the meaning of Ἰλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10: his work is early, but still germane.

Law notes that ῥηπτόν, “ransom” or “price of a life” and its derivatives, from the root ῥπότιν, “cover”, are translated by the LXX in Psalms 65:3, 78:38 and 79:9 as Ἰλασκεσθαι, but more frequently in the LXX by the intensive ἐξιλασκεσθαι, whereas Ἰλασμός is the regular translation of הַכַּלַּכַּפָּרִים, lit. “the atonements” (always used in the plural) in the LXX.87

Law’s examples of the use of Ἰλασμός-derived words in the LXX are worthy of examination, as they convey a variety of meanings, although they all translate ῥηπτόν phrases. His first is Exodus 32:30.88 Here the LXX uses ἐξιλασκωμαί for the Hebrew ἠκαπαν. Moses proposes to “make atonement” by intercession. Moses is the subject of the action, and the Lord the object. This follows the people’s faithless worship of the golden calf. But a plea for forgiveness (32:32) for profound violation of divine law,89 rather than propitiation of divine anger, is the sense conveyed.

Law’s second example is Ezekiel 16:63.90 Here in the is used for the Hebrew ὅροβα. Here the Lord is the subject, the actor LXX ἐξιλασκεσθαι in the act of atonement (or forgiveness), and sinful humanity its object. No sacrifice is in view. Divine wrath is not present. Rather, the Lord makes an

87 Law, Tests of Life, 160.
88 Ibid, 161 n.1: “You have committed a great sin. But I will now go up to the Lord. Possibly I can make atonement for your sin”. In each of Law’s examples, his LXX translation is used for convenience.
89 Brueggemann, Old Testament Theology, 59.
90 Law, The Tests of Life, 161 n.1: “In order that you may remember and be refuted, and never speak again because of your shame, when I forgive all you have done, says the Lord".
“everlasting covenant” (16:60) with the people, forgiving them for breaking a previous one (16:59). The idea conveyed by בְַּכַפְַר in the Hebrew is that the Lord will cover their sin.  

Law’s third example is Psalm 65:3.  

Here the LXX has the imperative ἰλάση for the Hebrew בְַכַפְַר. Here again the Lord is the actor, the subject of the act of atonement. The Lord is praised for forgiving the people when “deeds of evil” overcome them: this is the very reverse of divine wrath. Again the Hebrew בְַכַפְַר conveys the idea of covering sin.

Law’s fourth example is Leviticus 4:20.  

Here the LXX uses εἰγιλάσεται for the Hebrew בְַכַפְַר. Here the priest is the subject in the ritual act of sacrifice of a bull to the Lord, by whom the people will be forgiven, and the people themselves are the direct object, and the Lord the indirect object. Purification or expiation of the people’s sin is the idea conveyed.

Law’s fifth example, Leviticus 12:7, is similar. The LXX renders the Hebrew בְַכַפְַר by εἰγιλάσεται. Again the priest is the actor in a ritual sacrifice to the Lord, this time of a lamb, to cleanse a woman, who has recently given birth, of her flow of blood. Here the idea is very clearly cleansing or expiation, not propitiation for sin. The Lord is the indirect object of the action, and the woman the direct object.

91 Bowen, Ezekiel, 90.
92 Law, The Tests of Life, 161 n.1: “When deeds of evil overcome us, forgive us our sins”.
93 Briggs, Psalms, 81.
94 Law, Tests of Life, 161 n.2: “He shall do to the bull just what is done to the bull of sin offering: He shall do likewise with this. The priest shall make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven”.
95 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 245.
96 Levine, Leviticus, 23; Hartley, Leviticus, 62.
97 Law, Tests of Life, 161 n.3: “He shall offer it before the Lord, and make atonement for her: then she will be cleansed from her blood flow. This is the ritual for the one who bears a male or female child”.
98 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 760; Hartley, Leviticus, 169.
99 Levine, Leviticus, 74.
We have seen in these examples a wide variety of senses in which other ʼılašmuš cognates are used to translate the Hebrew ṣabbāb in the LXX, with God as the subject, as well as the object of the act of atonement. Such events are not portrayed in the LXX as acts of propitiation of God for human sin. They are pictured as acts of cleansing, or of divine generosity in which God forgives a people’s sin without any prior propitiation by them.

**Conclusions on Usage of ʼılašmuš and its Cognates in the LXX**

Three principal points emerge from our examination of the use of ʼılašmuš and its cognates in the LXX. First, where God is the object of the action depicted by the Hebrew ṣabbāb translated by ʼılašmuš, it is as an indirect object, not a direct one. Second, ʼılašmuš often connotes divine forgiveness, not sacrifice, and here God is the subject of the action. Sometimes when it is used in this sense, ʼılašmuš translates ṣabbāb, and sometimes it translates ʼezûb, “forgive”, a root without sacrificial associations. Third, where cognates of ʼılašmuš appear in the LXX, ideas other than sacrifice, such as intercession, are often translated by it: God is there the direct object of the action, which is however not sacrificial.

In summary, what we find in the varying uses of ʼılašmuš in the LXX is a variety of Hebrew roots translated, some sacrificial in meaning and others not so, such as forgiveness. God may be either the subject or the indirect object of the action, depending on what it is. None may be precisely identified as depicting divine propitiation. Where sacrifice is conveyed, cleansing rather than propitiation is the aim of the action or ritual depicted, because its direct object is a person or thing, rather than the deity. Where ʼılašmuš cognates appear in the LXX, in the examples we have noted ṣabbāb is translated, but again the sense in which the
Hebrew original is used may or may not be sacrificial. And God again may be the subject or the indirect object of the action.

If propitiation of divine wrath were the predominant sense in which Ἰλασμός is used in the LXX, one would expect the deity usually to be the direct, rather than the indirect object of the action – and certainly not the subject. The LXX is anything but a reliable indication that where in 1 John Ἰλασμός is used, it has a propitiatory connotation. If the LXX is indeed a reliable guide to the author’s use of Ἰλασμός in 1 John – a question for the next chapter – it rather suggests that expiation or cleansing from sin is the meaning carried by there.

**Atonement and Forgiveness in some Intertestamental Pseudepigrapha**

In this and the following section, the purpose is not to isolate and to analyse the use of Ἰλασμός in the texts examined, as in our study of this term in the LXX. The LXX was the translation of the Hebrew Bible available to Greek-speaking Jews in the first century CE. Its likely influence on the use and meaning of Greek LXX terms, such as Ἰλασμός, in the NT, including 1 John, has been well recognised and argued over, as we have seen. By contrast, the influence of the pseudepigrapha and the Qumran material on the NT, while again much discussed, is more problematical. In the absence of textual similarities, such as we find between 1 Enoch 1:9 and Jude 14-15,¹⁰⁰ and between 1 Enoch 9:1 and 1 Peter 1:11,¹⁰¹ proof positive that the author of 1 John had access to, and utilised, this material is impossible. All that can be done for present purposes is to note significant parallel attitudes to atonement and forgiveness between some pseudepigrapha and 1 John, and to postulate a possible connection.

For reasons of space, only units in the pseudepigraphic 1 Enoch, Jubilees and Testament of Abraham will be examined, as in the opinion of most scholars they are pre-Christian. English translations are used in the absence of a complete Greek or Hebrew original. However 4 Ezra, which might have yielded insights about the development of atonement ideas in first century Judaism, has not been studied here because it was most likely composed in the years following the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, and therefore may postdate 1 John, or may possibly be contemporaneous with it, although no direct influence from 4 Ezra on 1 John is likely.102

(i) 1 Enoch

Apart from Aramaic fragments and an incomplete Greek manuscript found at Qumran, 1 Enoch survives only in Ethiopic translation.103 Nickelsburg and Vanderkam’s opinion is that the original was probably written in Aramaic rather than Hebrew.104 However, caution may be required in drawing conclusions from the Ethiopic version of 1 Enoch as to the development of the Aramaic original, as the Ethiopic text may represent a considerable recasting of the Aramaic.105 It is a composite work, and the likely dates of composition of its parts vary widely. Overall, its sections demonstrate developing stages in the Enochic tradition, expressing a common world view that the present age is evil and unjust and in need of divine judgment and renewal.106 The authority of these sections rests on the claim that they transmit divine revelation given to the very early patriarch Enoch (Gen. 5:21-24).107

104 Ibid, 31-32.
106 George WE Nickelsburg and James C Vanderkam, 1 Enoch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 1.
107 Ibid.
As noted above, the idea of "אֲזָאזָל, "as a goat of departure" in Leviticus 16:10 is taken up in 1 Enoch where the notion is extended to refer to a demon. In 1 Enoch 10:4-6, in the Book of Watchers (1 Enoch 1-36), generally dated to circa 200 BCE or earlier,\(^{108}\) we find:

4 And again the Lord said to Raphael: "bind Azazel hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness; and make an opening in the desert, which is in Dudael, and cast him therein. 5 And place upon him rugged and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there forever, and cover his face that he might not see light. 6 And on the day of the great judgment he shall be cast into the fire.\(^{109}\)

Why does Azazel deserve this fate? Azazel is identified in 1 Enoch 8:1 as the one who “taught men to make swords of iron and weapons and shields and breastplates and every instrument of war”.\(^{110}\) In 1 Enoch 9:6 Azazel is the one who “taught all iniquity upon the earth, and has revealed the eternal mysteries which are in heaven, which the sons of men were striving to learn”.\(^{111}\)

It appears that in 1 Enoch 8, 9 and 10 the idea of "אֲזָאזָל, "as a goat of departure" from Leviticus 16:10 is taken up and made to stand for the one who introduced violence to the earth. Azazel's fate therefore may stand in 1 Enoch for the ultimate expulsion of violence from the earth. Seen through the eyes of 1 Enoch, the atonement ritual in Leviticus 16:10 represents, not propitiation of an angry deity, but the purging or cleansing of violence from the earth. Whether such Enochic notions influenced the author of 1 John in his use of ἰλασμός in 2:2 and 4:10 is of course entirely speculative.


\(^{109}\) The Book of Enoch (trans. RH Charles; London: SPCK, 1917), 37. A more modern translation of this section is Nickelsburg & Vanderkam, 1 Enoch 2, but it does not differ substantially from that of Charles in these verses.

\(^{110}\) Ibid, 25.

\(^{111}\) Ibid, 26.
In the section of the apocalyptic *Book of Parables* in 1 Enoch 37-41, attested only in Ethiopic translation,\(^{112}\) we find Enoch’s revelation of the coming of the “Chosen One”, and of “light” to the “righteous” and of the “dwelling place of the sinners”.\(^{113}\) First Enoch 40:6 refers to Michael the archangel, who “is merciful and long suffering”.\(^{114}\) This may allude to Exodus 34:6, where God is merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness.\(^{115}\)

In 1 Enoch 40:9 Raphael is the “healer”, in Aramaic from the Hebrew שפץ, “to heal”.\(^{116}\) This casts further light on the command to Raphael in 1 Enoch 10:4, which we have already noticed, to “bind Azezel hand and foot, and cast him into the desert”. As we have seen, this reflects and builds upon the ritual driving out of the scapegoat into the desert at *Yom Kippur* in Leviticus 16:10. Because in 1 Enoch 8:1, Azazel is the one who brought the means of war to humankind, the healing which Raphael is commanded to undertake may constitute the final removal of the means of violence from humankind by driving out Azazel.

In 1 Enoch 41:2 the dwelling place of the “sinners” is spoken of as the abode of those who “deny the name of the Lord”.\(^{117}\) Notably, here 1 Enoch’s theology does not define sinners by their evil deeds, but by their *allegiances*. This is consistent with the characteristics of Michael (40:6; see above), representing those of the deity, who is depicted as “merciful and long suffering”. Here final rebellion, not sin itself, causes banishment.

\(^{112}\) Nickelsberg & Vanderkam, *1 Enoch* 2, 4.
\(^{113}\) Nickelsberg & Vanderkam, *1 Enoch*, 50.
\(^{114}\) Nickelsburg & Vanderkam, *1 Enoch* 2, 134.
\(^{115}\) *Ibid.*
Because the *Book of Parables* may date from as late as the first century CE,\(^{118}\) although perhaps from nearer the turn of the Common Era,\(^{119}\) or even from about 40 BCE,\(^{120}\) its influence on 1 John is likewise somewhat problematical. It most likely was written before 1 John, so the most one can say is that its ideas concerning God’s forgiving nature *may* lie behind the use of ἰλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10.

In the *Second Parable* in 1 Enoch 46, we find in 46:2 the “angel of peace”, who predicts the “Son of Man”, who will “overturn the kings from their thrones” (46:5), and “turn aside” the “faces of the strong” (46:6).\(^{121}\) The reference is to Daniel 7:9: the phrase, the “ancient of days” is repeated in 1 Enoch 46:13.\(^{122}\) In 1 Enoch 45:6 the “chosen one” is spoken of as one who has “satisfied my righteous ones with peace”, “peace” being in Aramaic from the Hebrew שבטי, a key word denoting God’s eschatological gift of wholeness and wellbeing.\(^{123}\)

Here the theology of 1 Enoch depicts the “Son of Man” of Daniel 7:13 as one bringing primarily peace and reconciliation, rather than retribution by separation, a fate reserved for those who “deny the name of the Lord” (41:2). Certainly in 1 John there is no reference to Jesus as the “Son of Man”, a descriptor often applied by Jesus to himself in the synoptic Gospels, although it is used elsewhere in the Johannine literature, in the Fourth Gospel in 1:51, 3:13, 3:14, 6:27, 6:53, 6:62, 8:28, 12:23, 12:34 (twice) and 13:31, and in Revelation 1:13 and 14:14. Again, the most that can be said is that the idea of the deity as the bringer of peace in 1 Enoch *may* underlie, though negatively, the

\(^{118}\) Martin McNamara MSC, *Intertestamental Literature* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier Inc., 1983), 68.


\(^{120}\) JH Charlesworth, “Can we Determine the Composition Date of the Parables of Enoch?” in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man* (ed. Gabriele Boccaccini; Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: 2007), 450-468, 467.

\(^{121}\) *Ibid*, 153.


\(^{123}\) *Ibid*, 146, 151.
reference in 1 John 3:15 to those who hate a brother as “murderers” who “do not have eternal life abiding in them”.

Generally these ideas from 1 Enoch represent part of the intellectual background of first-century Judaism against which 1 John was written. Its author was probably Jewish, and may have been aware of these ideas in 1 Enoch, which was written in its entirety at different times, but on most estimates well before 1 John. The author’s horror of violence and murder, the polar opposite of love in 1 John 3:15, may possibly reflect adoption of some of the ideas in 1 Enoch which we have surveyed, but nobody can be sure.

(ii) Jubilees

The pseudepigraphic Jubilees also survives in full only in Ethiopic translation, although Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Syriac fragments have been found. It is a rewriting of the OT books of Genesis and Exodus, with many variations. It has been estimated as having been composed before 152 BCE. By his prologue and first chapter, the author introduces his narrative and places his story at Sinai in the events depicted in Exodus 24 when Moses climbs Mount Sinai the day after the revelation upon it (Exodus 24:4), claiming thereby that what he writes is a God-given revelation to Moses at Sinai. Its title

derives from its arrangement of its account in forty-nine periods, each forty-nine years long: it is a jubilee of jubilees.\(^{129}\) For reasons of space, we shall examine only two passages in Jubilees which relate to the theme of atonement or covering of sin, because these particularly highlight possible connections between the thought of Jubilees and that of 1 John.

In Jubilees 7:27-29, 30-33, Noah's injunctions to his sons (7:20), we find in v.28 the threat of destruction for those who shed human blood or eat the blood of any flesh. The allusion is to Genesis 9:4-6. But the earth is impure as a result of such bloodshed, which must be “covered” by the slaughter of beasts or cattle, as a “good work” (v.30). This notion of the impurity of the earth as a result of bloodshed is more clearly alluded to in Jubilees 21:19-20.\(^{130}\) The theology in these passages may be seen as congruent with that which we have seen in Leviticus 16:33, “he shall purify the sanctuary and the tent of meeting and the altar, and shall perform expiatory rites with blood with respect to the sins of the people”. It may be argued that Jubilees here endorses the notion that while sin normally entails death, it may be “covered” or expiated by rites of cleansing by blood, on the performance of which the deity grants deliverance from sin – always supposing appropriate penitence.

At Jubilees 34:12-19 we find the episode of the faked “death” of Joseph rewritten so as to associate it with the origin of the Day of Atonement, upon which (34:18) the children of Israel should “make atonement for themselves thereon with a young goat”.\(^{131}\) This is a significant reworking of Leviticus 16, where it is placed in the Mosaic legislation.\(^{132}\) The biblical subject of this rewriting is the sins of Jacob’s children and

\(^{129}\) McNamara, *Intertestamental Literature*, 118.


\(^{131}\) The Book of Jubilees or the Little Genesis (ed. RH Charles; London, SPCK, 1917), 171.

\(^{132}\) Vanderkam, “Biblical Interpretation in 1 Enoch and Jubilees”, 122.
their slaughter of a goat, dipping Joseph’s robe in its blood (Genesis 37:31-35), which leads Jubilees’ author to associate this event with the prescriptions for Yom Kippur in Leviticus 16, and to claim a patriarchal origin for them.\textsuperscript{133}

What is the importance of Jubilees’ rewriting of the origin of the Day of Atonement for our purposes? In Genesis 37:31-35, the intent of Joseph’s brothers in slaughtering a goat and dipping Joseph’s robe in it is to deceive their father Jacob/Israel into believing that Joseph had been taken by a wild beast, to conceal their abandonment of him in a pit (37:24) thus enabling his sale by Midianites to Ishmaelites (37:28). As a result of his sale, Reuben, one of the brothers, found Joseph missing when he returned to the pit (37:29), hence the brothers’ action in dipping Joseph’s robe in the slaughtered goat’s blood. In this deceit they were successful (Genesis 37:33). The purpose of their action in killing the goat was not therefore to atone for sin at all, but to conceal and thereby to reinforce it. Ironically, however, even if Reuben and the other brothers were half successful in their deceit, it delivered Joseph.\textsuperscript{134} From what? From the brothers’ jealousy and the danger to him from it. So in one sense, the slaughter of the goat effected deliverance, but not from sin. In another, it simply allowed the brothers to explain deceitfully to their father the loss of his son Joseph.

It may be argued that here the author of Jubilees intentionally turns the sordid story of the brothers’ deceit of their father in Genesis 37:31-35 on its head, by making the slaughter of the goat a prefiguring of the rite of the Day of Atonement. His purpose may have been to take the brothers’ deceit as emblematic of human sin, and to represent the slaughter of the goat, not merely as enabling the commission of sin, but as prefiguring deliverance by cleansing from it on the Day of

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{134} Derek Kidner, \textit{Genesis} (London: Tyndale Press, 1968) 182.
Atonement. If this proposal is correct, it does not involve propitiation of an angry deity. Rather, it prefigures performance of a rite of cleansing from sin, effected by the deity after the blood of the slaughtered goat is applied to the holy places, as in Leviticus 16.

Again it is impossible to say more than that since Jubilees predates 1 John and is part of the first-century Jewish intellectual background against which 1 John’s author wrote, the ideas we have isolated in Jubilees may have influenced his use of ‘λαομός’ on two occasions in 1 John. We have seen that atonement is central to Jubilees’ rewriting of the origin of the Day of Atonement, and may convey the idea of cleansing from human sin by the blood of the goat, rather than propitiation of a wrathful God. It is possible that this rewriting influenced 1 John’s author in his use of ‘λαομός’ in 2:2 and 4:10, but no one can be sure.

*Atonement and Forgiveness in the Dead Sea Scrolls*

Some significant uses of כובד which are not propitiatory in their meanings are found in the Qumran material in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In the Cave IV fragments related to the Rule of the Community (4Q255-264), in Fragment 2 we find, at line 8, כובד used in the statement לארשיים אהל כלשך י_rand, בְּבַשֵּׁט לְאִשָּׁתְךָ, "then he will be accepted by an agreeable atonement before God". This is the climax to a passage from lines 1 to 7 proclaiming that by God’s “Holy Spirit” the community aspirant is “cleansed from his iniquity”. Thus “by an upright and humble spirit his sin can be atoned”. And “it is by humbling himself to all God’s statutes

that his flesh can be cleansed by the sprinkling of any waters of purification” and “by sanctifying himself with the waters of purity”. Cleansing is achieved “by walking perfectly in all God’s way, as he commanded that he may not turn aside to the right or to the left and ... not transgress a single one of all his commands”.136 Then comes the reassurance quoted above, that “he will be accepted...” In no sense is atonement here connected with propitiation. Rather, it connotes forgiveness or reconciliation as the fruit of repentance for sin and righteous conduct thereafter, and associates water purification with atonement for sin.137

In the *Temple Scroll* we find a redaction of the goat sacrificial rite in Leviticus 16, wherein at 11QT 26:5-7 there is reference, combining Leviticus 16:9 and 16, to the requirement that the priest (replacing the Bible’s reference to Aaron himself) receive the blood of the goat in the golden basin in his hand, and do with it what he did with the blood of the bull, that is, make atonement with it on behalf of the people of the congregation.138 But what is interesting is that the remainder of the scroll passage adapts further Leviticus 16:15-16, but omits the Biblical instruction to sprinkle the blood on and before the ark cover. This, Schiffman convincingly posulates, is because “the author of our scroll views the meaning of the Hebrew root וְכַּפֵּר in ritual context as a technical term for the sprinkling of blood, in accord with usage later found in rabbinic literature”.139 To put it another way, the primary meaning of the Hebrew root here is *cleansing* or *covering* rather than propitiation.

Further, in the Manual of Discipline, deliverance from sin is described as cleansing: human purity is brought about by “atonement”, מ mük (1QS iii.4; xi.14). Nevertheless this is not by the flesh of offerings or animal sacrifices (1QS ix.4). Insofar as humans contribute to atonement, they do so by turning away from evil conduct (1QS ix.13), and by meekness and submission to divine command (1QS iii.7-8). Then cleansing follows from “sprinkling with the waters of purification” and by “sanctification with running water” (1QS iii.4, 9, 13). But finally it is God who reconciles or purifies (1QS xi.14). Here again, מ mük connotes, not propitiation but cleansing from sin – an idea we shall meet again in 1 John 1:7.

Also in the Manual of Discipline, while sacrifices are not rejected outright, fulfilment of the program of the Community atones for guilt and transgression “better than [or “without”] flesh of burnt offerings and fat of sacrifices”. Thus “offerings of the lips is accounted as a sweet fragrance of righteousness and blamelessness of conduct as an acceptable freewill offering” (1QS ix.4-5). This enumeration of the times of prayer speaks of an “offering of the lips” in a context where it clearly relates to praise and prayer (1QS ix.26-x.5). The term מ굳 is used to refer to the result of the Community’s activity: for example, the righteous life led within the Community is said to bring “atonement to the land” (1QS viii.6; ix.4).

140 Helmer Ringren, The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls (trans. Emilie T Sander; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 124 (the translator’s translation in this and following quotations from this work are used).
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
It is difficult to prove that the Qumran school influenced the author of 1 John. It is possible to say that the intellectual climate of first-century Judaism as practised at Qumran, insofar as it inherited and reworked the OT idea of atonement by taking from it the elements of human repentance and divine forgiveness, rather than propitiation, may underlie the thought in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 in the author's use of the term ἰλασμός. The most that can be said is that such a connection is possible.

**Summary of Conclusions**

We have seen that in the varying uses of ἰλασμός in the LXX a variety of Hebrew roots are translated, some sacrificial in meaning and others not so, such as forgiveness. God may be either the subject or the indirect object of the action, depending on what it is. None depicts divine propitiation. Where sacrifice is conveyed, cleansing rather than propitiation is the aim of the action or ritual depicted, because its direct object is a person or thing, rather than the deity. It is unlikely that ἰλασμός in the LXX ever means “propitiation”, for three reasons.

Firstly, if ἰλασμός were to be understood in the LXX as always, or predominantly, propitiatory in meaning, one would expect the deity to be solely or predominantly the direct or indirect object of the action. This is by no means always or even usually the case. A sense of forgiveness, without any implication of sacrifice, let alone propitiation, attends the use of ἰλασμός in Psalm 130:4 and Daniel 9:9, and God is the subject, not the object of the action. Secondly, in the other occurrences of ἰλασμός in the LXX, Leviticus 25:8, Numbers 5:8, 1 Chronicles 28:20c, Ezekiel 44:27 and Amos 8:14, a sense of “covering”, “cleansing” or “expiation” is more contextually apposite than “propitiation”. Thirdly, ἰλασμός in the LXX does not always translate ἐξιπιστία in relation to sin: cf. Psalm 130:4, Ezekiel 44:27 and Daniel 9:9.
This is not the case with the five examples of ἱλασμός cognates in the LXX which we have examined. All translate the Hebrew יָשַׁב. But in each case the more appropriate sense of this term in the context is “cover”, “cleanse” or “expiate” rather than “propitiate”. In no case is it used with the deity as the direct object.

The LXX was the version of the Hebrew Bible available to and used by Greek-speaking Jews in the first century CE. The author of 1 John was most likely such a person. It is likely in these circumstances that the uses of ἱλασμός and its cognates in the LXX were known to him. Whether they influenced him in his own twofold use of this term in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 must be examined in our next chapter.

In the examples of the definitely pre-Christian pseudepigrapha we have examined, firstly, in 1 Enoch, the atonement ritual in Leviticus 16:10 may represent, not propitiation of an angry deity, but the purging or cleansing of violence from the earth. Secondly, in 1 Enoch we find a reference to Michael, one of the archangels, who “is merciful and long suffering”. Thirdly, in 1 Enoch the dwelling place of the “sinners” is spoken of as the abode of those who “deny the name of the Lord”. Here 1 Enoch’s theology does not define sinners by their evil deeds, but by their allegiances: final rebellion, not sin itself, causes banishment. Fourthly, in 1 Enoch in the Second Parable, we find the “angel of peace”, who predicts the “Son of Man”, who will “overturn the kings from their thrones”, and “turn aside” the “faces of the strong”. The idea of the deity as the bringer of peace in 1 Enoch may underlie, though negatively, the reference in 1 John 3:15 to those who hate a brother as “murderers” who “do not have eternal life abiding in them”. Generally, these ideas from 1 Enoch represent part of the intellectual background of first-century Judaism against which 1 John was written. The most that can be
said is that they predate 1 John, and may possibly have influenced its composition.

In Jubilees, in Noah’s injunctions to his sons, we firstly find the threat of destruction for those who shed human blood or eat the blood of any flesh. Jubilees here appears to endorse the notion that while sin normally entails death, it may be “covered” or expiated by rites of cleansing by blood, on performance of which God grants deliverance from sin – presupposing appropriate penitence. Secondly, at Jubilees 34:12-19 we find the episode of the death of Joseph rewritten to associate it with the origin of the Day of Atonement, upon which the children of Israel should “make atonement for themselves thereon with a young goat”, a significant reworking of Leviticus 16, where it is placed in the Mosaic legislation. Here the author of Jubilees turns the story of the brothers’ deceit of their father in Genesis 37:31-35 on its head, by making the slaughter of the goat a prefiguring of the rite of the Day of Atonement. His purpose may have been to take the brothers’ deceit as emblematic of human sin, and as prefiguring deliverance by cleansing from it on the Day of Atonement. If so, this Jubilees rewriting does not involve propitiation of an angry deity. Rather, it prefigures performance of a rite of cleansing from sin, effected by the deity after the blood of the slaughtered goat is applied to the holy places, as in Leviticus 16.

Again, it is impossible to say more than that because Jubilees predates 1 John, as part of the first-century Jewish background against which 1 John’s author wrote, the ideas examined above in Jubilees may have influenced his use of ἴλασμος twice in 1 John.

In the Qumran material, firstly, in the Cave IV fragments related to the Rule of the Community, atonement is not connected with propitiation. It connotes forgiveness or reconciliation as the fruit of repentance for sin
and righteous conduct thereafter. Secondly, in the Temple Scroll we find a redaction of the goat sacrificial rite in Leviticus 16, combining Leviticus 16:9 and 16. The primary meaning of כְּפֶד here is *cleansing* rather than propitiation. Thirdly, in the Manual of Discipline, deliverance from sin is described as *cleansing*: humans’ purity is brought about by “atonement”, but not by the flesh of offerings or animal sacrifices. Insofar as humans contribute to atonement, they do so by turning away from evil conduct, and meekness and submission to divine command. Then cleansing follows from “sprinkling with the waters of purification” and by “sanctification with running water”. But finally it is God who reconciles or purifies. Here again כְּפֶד connotes, not propitiation but *cleansing* from sin. Fourthly, again in the Manual of Discipline, while sacrifices are not rejected outright, it is said that fulfilment of the program of the Community atones for guilt and transgression “better than [or “without”] flesh of burnt offerings and fat of sacrifices”. Here כְּפֶד is used in reference to the result of the Community’s activity: for example, the righteous life led within the Community is said to bring “atonement to the land”.

We cannot prove that the Qumran school influenced the author of 1 John. One can say that the intellectual climate of first-century Judaism, as it inherited and reworked the OT concept of atonement by taking from it the elements of human repentance and divine forgiveness, rather than propitiation, may underlie the thought in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 in the author’s use of the term ἱλασμός. While there is likely influence from the LXX uses of ἱλασμός on the author of 1 John in his two uses of it, any contribution to his thought from the intertestamental pseudepigrapha and the Qumran material is speculative, and a possibility at best. But insofar as the Qumran documents do not appear to use כְּפֶד in a sense that connotes propitiation of divine wrath, they do suggest that at least in that part of the thought-world of first-century
Judaism potentially available to the author of 1 John, the “covering” of sin was not thought to require a sacrifice to an angry deity.

Using our findings here in the next chapter, we shall attempt to resolve the meaning and function of ἴλοσμός as used in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, and then examine their implications for peacemaking theology.
Chapter 3 – ἁλασμός in 1 John

Introduction

What work does Jesus’ death do for us? What was the role of God the Father in it? Peacemaking theology must face these issues, for they are crucial to its picture of God. If God is a wrathful deity requiring punishment for sin, even if visited on God’s own Son by his vicarious death, that same deity requires infliction of violence on the Son, a repugnant idea in peacemaking, non-violent theology. In 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 the word ἁλασμός occurs, and many think its use provides clear and unequivocal answers to these questions. Others are not so sure. This chapter draws together and evaluates various exegeses of ἁλασμός in these two verses. Only representative contributors have been selected, otherwise the task would be never-ending.1

This is of course a well-ploughed field, as is that tilled in chapter 2. The contribution this chapter offers is to review and evaluate influential scholarly views, followed by a fresh exegesis of the occurrences of ἁλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 in their respective contexts, and finally some conclusions on Atonement models in peacemaking, non-violent theology.

Extending this selection to include earlier exegetes from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – but omitting, for reasons of space, still earlier writers such as Augustine, Anselm, Luther and Calvin – will produce a study that is genuinely diachronic, tracing views on ἁλασμός in 1 John over a longer period. After this survey of scholarship and the present writer’s

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1 See the remarks of Christopher Rowland and Jonathan Roberts, “Introduction,” JSNT 33.2 (2010): 131-136, 131, to a number of that journal devoted to Wirkungsgeschichte, reception history, regarding the “gargantuan volume of secondary literature” on NT interpretation of recent days; they there write that an ability to digest and discuss the secondary literature on the NT has become the basis of a scholarly contribution. This study seeks to avoid that pitfall by interacting directly with the original texts of both the OT and NT and other primary sources.
appraisal of it, an exegesis of John’s use of ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 in their respective literary contexts will follow, using the insights gained in this and the previous chapter.

The central Atonement debate over ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 is whether Jesus’ death is offered as propitiation to God by vicarious punishment for our sin, or whether God sends the Son to cleanse, expiate or expunge our sin, although some writers, in offering other views, have sought to avoid either camp, as we shall see. Broadly, peacemaking theology advocates an expiatory view, or assumes that it is the correct model.²

The following assurance appears in 1 John 2:1-2:

Τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ ἁμάρτητε. καὶ ἐάν τις ἁμάρτῃ, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον, καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου.

which may be translated:

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so you will not sin. But if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one; 2 and he is an atoning sacrifice for our sins, not for ours only but also for those of the whole world.

In 1 John 4:10 we read:

ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήκαμεν τὸν θεόν, ἀλλ' ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν.

which may be translated:

In this is love, not that we loved God, but he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

As Painter says, because in 1 John the work of the Son in a world where death reigns is to give life (2:2; 3:5; 4:9, 10, 14), this involves dealing with sin.³ How is this accomplished? Jesus as ἱλασμός, an “atonning sacrifice”,⁴ is

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² See Chapter 1.
³ Painter, 1, 2 and 3 John, 97.
presented as the solution at 2:2 and 4:10. We must now review how scholars have understood this term. They have been grouped according to three broad subdivisions, “expiation”, “propitiation” and “other views”.

Like all such simple categories, these are not watertight. The proper interpretation of ἁλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 is an old dispute. Positions have been taken, walls have been erected, and stalemate has for some time prevailed. A review of this scholarship, divided into those who support an expiatory, or alternatively a propitiatory translation of ἁλασμός, with some discussion of other less easily classified views, and some testing of these various views, is set out. There then follows an exegesis of 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 in their respective literary contexts.

Scholarship Review

(i) Expiation

Brooke Foss Westcott translates ἁλασμός as “propitiation” in 2:2, but he does not in fact adopt that view in preference to “expiation”, as we shall see. He notes that the present tense is used – Jesus is the ἁλασμός for our sins – so Jesus’ advocacy is “the act of a Saviour still living”. Jesus is the propitiation, not the propitiator. The propitiation is not simply a past event.

Westcott notes that in 1 John 1:7b, καὶ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας, the verb καθαρίζει denotes purification, and the idea is preparation for divine service and fellowship. To Jews, blood is spoken of directly in the OT as life itself, ᾽Οξεῖον – cf.

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4 So the NRSV. This neutral translation of ἁλασμός has been adopted at this early point, because to render it as either “propitiation” or “expiation” at this stage begs the very question this chapter asks.
5 Do’s recapitulation of these scholarly differences, with reference to the ἁλασμός word group in the LXX, while briefer, is similar to what follows: Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 192-200.
6 Westcott, The Epistles of St John, 43.
7 Ibid, 44-45.
8 Ibid, 22.
Genesis 9:4, “you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood”, and Deuteronomy 12:23, “only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the meat”.\(^9\) Also, מֵאֲדָם occurs in Leviticus 17:11-12, “for the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar”. Thus “its atoning value lies not in its material substance but in the life of which it is the vehicle”.\(^{10}\) So for Westcott, the sacrifice of a victim had double significance, the death of the victim and the liberation of “the principle of life” through the shedding of its blood. In OT sacrifices the killing of the animal was often the work of the offeror, but the sprinkling of its blood on the altar was the exclusive work of the priest. Jesus himself, however, by being offered and offering himself, fulfils both offices.\(^{11}\)

Westcott identifies that Jesus indeed fulfils both offices in 1 John 2:2. This is also the case in 1:7b, καὶ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Ιησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας, “the blood of Jesus the Son cleanses us from all sin”; cf. Hebrews 7:27, “unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer daily sacrifices, first for his own sin and then for the people’s: he did this once for all when he offered himself”.

To Westcott, propitiation is again intended in 1 John 4:10, but the idea is introduced here to prepare us for fellowship with God.\(^{12}\) thus the emphasis in 1 John’s use of ἱλασμός at 4:10 is on divine love, rather than blood sacrifice.

Westcott analyses the use of ἱλασμός and its cognates in the LXX. From a large number of LXX uses of ἱλασμός and words derived from it, Westcott shows that they bear such widely disparate meanings as “propitiation”,

\(^{9}\) Ibid, 34.  
\(^{10}\) Ibid.  
\(^{11}\) Ibid, 35.  
\(^{12}\) Ibid, 150.
“mercifulness”, “expiate”, “atone” and “cleanse”. He contrasts these variegated meanings with the classical and Hellenistic usage of ἱλασμός, in which the person propitiated normally takes the accusative case. If that were the sense in the LXX, he argues, God would be the direct object of the action. Crucially, Westcott concludes of the scriptural usages of ἱλασκέομαι, a cognate verb to ἱλασμός, that:

They show that the scriptural conception of ἱλασκέομαι is not that of appeasing one who is angry, with a personal feeling against the offender; but of altering the character of that which from without occasions a necessary alienation, and interposes an inevitable obstacle to fellowship. Such phrases as ‘propitiating God’ and God ‘being reconciled’ are foreign to the language of the NT.

From this passage it is clear that despite his use of “propitiation”, Westcott does not support any idea of placating divine wrath against humanity by Jesus’ substitutionary death.

Generally Westcott’s conclusions are supported by our survey of the many uses of ἱλασμός and some uses of its cognates, and of the variety of Hebrew words it translates in the LXX. In none of the uses examined does it mean “propitiation”, as opposed to “expiation” or “cleansing” or “forgiveness”. Of course that fact does not dictate its meaning in 1 John 2:2 or 4:10, but it certainly does not support a propitiatory meaning for ἱλασμός there.

Heinrich Holtzmann remarks of 1 John 2:2:

Now, beside the quality of being righteous, a second quality of Christ has to be mentioned, without which he cannot be the παράκλητος: he is the expiation [Versöhnung] … But that generally used expression [propitiation] is missing in 1 John. ἱλασμός is more to be understood as resulting in an actual taking away of sins, in so far as the once-shed blood of redemption (1:7-9) will continue its cleansing power until the aim is achieved…

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14 Ibid, 87.
15 HJ Holtzmann, Briefe und Offenbarung des Johannes (Freiburg IB und Leipzig: JCB Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1893), 243 (my translation).
Holtzmann here distinguishes the notions of propitiation and expiation, taking up the thought in 1 John 1:7-9 that Jesus’ blood has “cleansing power”. Of 1 John 4:10 he says:

This is the nature of love, not that we have loved God, but that he has loved us and has sent his Son as the expiation [Versöhnung] for our sins. Hence the death of the Son seems a free, unconditional sacrifice of love, given to a world which is estranged from God, whereas on the human side, we can only speak of giving back love in return.16

Here Holtzmann characterises God’s sending of the Son, not as an offering to be appropriated by humanity to placate God’s anger toward them, but rather as a loving, unconditional gift. This view is supported by our analysis of LXX use of ἴλασμός and some of its cognates, and of the Hebrew words it translates.

Robert Law views 1 John as containing a number of “tests” whereby believers may satisfy themselves of being “begotten of God” under three main headings: doing righteousness, loving one another, and “believing that Jesus is the Christ, come in the flesh to be the Saviour of the World”.17 In 1 John, “reference to the death of Calvary as a substitutionary ransom is excluded by the context, in which it is held up specifically as our pattern, binding on us the obligation to lay down our lives in like matter for the brethren”, referring to 1 John 3:16.18 We have seen in the previous chapter, from our own analysis of Law’s examples of ἴλασμός cognates in the LXX, that substitutionary propitiation is in each case not the meaning conveyed. Law so concludes in relation to 1 John 2:2 and 4:10:

Two great truths emerge. First, propitiation has its ultimate source in God. Paganism conceives of propitiation as a means of changing the disposition of the deity, of mollifying his displeasure and rendering him literally “propitious”. In the Old Testament the conception rises to a higher plane; the expiation of sin begins to supersede the idea of the appeasing sacrifice, and language is chosen as if to guard against the supposition that a feeling of personal irritation, pique, or resentment, such as mingles almost invariably with human wrath, mars the purity of the Divine indignation against sin. And this ascent from pagan anthropomorphism reaches the climax of all ethical religion in St John’s conception of the Divine atonement for

16 Ibid, 258 (my translation). Versöhnung, which can signify “propitiation” as well as “expiation”, is best given the latter translation in this context and in Holtzmann’s discussion of 2:2.


18 Ibid, 159.
human guilt: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins” (4:10).  

Therefore:

The action of which, in some sense, God himself is the object, has God himself as its origin. Propitiation is no device for inducing a reluctant deity to forgive; it is the way in which the Father in Heaven restores His sinning children to Himself.  

Granted, as seen in chapter 2, that the LXX uses ἱλασμός, among its varying meanings, in a sacrificial sense, but it does not use it to connote propitiation. It does not use this word to connote a sacrifice to an angry deity to deflect wrath from the offeror to the victim. On more than one occasion this word is used to signify the action of a loving Father in forgiving sinners, by an unasked and unmerited gift. Law’s conclusions are cogent.

Alan England Brooke also contends that in 1 John 2:2 Jesus in his death is both high priest, qualified to offer sacrifice, and is also the propitiation which he himself offers. ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 picks up the OT belief that sin must be “covered” to restore relations between God and humanity. It conveys the idea that now, after Jesus’ death, “the ceremonial has given way to the spiritual”. Thus through Jesus’ free and voluntary death, the removal of sin, which keeps humans from God, is made possible.  

As to 1 John 4:10, Brooke writes that “God could not give himself while men’s sins formed a barrier between them and Him”, and that “true love must sweep away the hindrances to the fulfilment of the law of its being”. Again, despite Brooke’s use of “propitiation”, his exegesis is closer to an expiatory sense of ἱλασμός. In this connection, Brooke notes that while the Vulgate has propitiatio, Augustine’s Tractates on the Epistles, using an Old Latin text not identical with the Vulgate, has litator. Another Old Latin text

19 Ibid, 162.  
20 Ibid.  
21 Brooke, Johannine Epistles, 28.  
22 Ibid, 28-29.  
23 Ibid, 119.
has *expiator* as a translation for the noun. Brooke favours this last sense as the proper translation of ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. This variation in Latin terms to translate ἱλασμός in 1 John is evidence suggesting that in early times there was in the Church a live debate about its meaning. Our analysis of LXX uses of ἱλασμός and its cognates in chapter 2 supports Brooke’s view.

*Charles Harold Dodd* contends that although 1 John 1:7, in its reference to the blood of Jesus, suggests animal sacrifices, the term ἱλασμός in 2:2 does not *itself* signify blood-sacrifice, and is wide enough to refer to the whole work of Jesus – his incarnation, his earthly ministry, his resurrection and ascension, and his death. This perspective is critical to the debate over the meaning of ἱλασμός in 1 John. Dodd’s statement here is cogent: our exegesis of ἱλασμός in 1 John 4:10 will show that the love enjoined to Christians should be in imitation of the love Jesus showed to others, not only in his self-sacrificial death but over his whole life.

Dodd recognises Jesus *himself* as the ἱλασμός in 2:2. He offers “expiation” as the proper translation, noting that in antiquity it was believed that performance of rituals was seen as a “powerful disinfectant”. He argues that this sense of ἱλασμός is what is meant in 2:2: “the entire work of Jesus is an act of expiation, and God is the author of it”.

Rather than referring generally to the “powerful disinfectant” effected by ritual in antiquity, more may be achieved by analysing the most obvious influence to hand for 1 John’s author, the LXX, in its use of ἱλασμός as examined in our last chapter, as Dodd indeed does. We have seen there in our analysis of the use of ἱλασμός and its cognates, particularly in

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24 Ibid.
26 Ibid, 27.
Leviticus, that this word very often conveys the idea of *cleansing* by the blood of sacrifice.

In an analysis of the cognates of ἵλασκεσθαι in the LXX in a much-discussed article, Dodd notes that the “stock rendering” in the LXX of ἔξυπνοι, usually “to atone”, “make atonement”, is ἵλασκεσθαι and its various derivatives. He notes that in classical and Koine Greek, these words regularly mean “placate” or “propitiate”, with a person as the object. 27 However he offers an example from Plato where ἐξιλασκεσθαι has the secondary meaning “expiate”, and therefore describes this ἵλασκεσθαι derivative as “ambiguous”. 28 If 1 John is influenced by pagan sacrificial views – which is contestable – it may argue against such views by presenting a model of atonement based on divine love, rejecting placation of a wrathful deity as a reason for Jesus’ willing death.

Dodd notes an example in the LXX where a ἔξυπνοι word is translated by words not derived from ἵλασκεσθαι (Daniel 9:24). He notes another where two kpr derivatives are respectively translated by an ἵλασκεσθαι derivative and by a word not so derived (Exodus 30:10). He notes two others where ἔξυπνοι words are not rendered by an ἵλασκεσθαι derivative (Exodus 39:33, 36). He notes another where a ἔξυπνοι word is again not rendered by an ἵλασκεσθαι derivative, but by ἀθωοῦν, which means to declare or pronounce ἀθως, free from guilt or sin. 29 Therefore, he says, where the LXX does not

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28 Dodd, “ἜΛΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, its Cognates, Derivatives and Synonyms, in the Septuagint”, 352.

29 *Ibid*, 352-353. Dodd refers to many variations in different texts of the LXX, but there is no space to discuss that subject here. It does not significantly affect the thrust of his argument.
render ἱλαρέων and its derivatives by ἱλασκεθαι related words, it uses words meaning “sanctify”, “purify”, “purge away” or “forgive” in relation to sin.  

This is cogent. Dodd shows that not only do ἱλασμός and its cognates not always translate ἱλαρέων words, but that ἱλαρέων words are not always translated by ἱλασμός and its cognates. It cuts away support for the proposition that ἱλασμός and its cognates usually carry a propitiatory meaning in the LXX. Our survey in chapter 2 indicates that they do not.

Dodd then examines Hebrew words other than ἱλαρέων which are rendered in the LXX by ἱλασκεθαι and its cognates. He notes that where this occurs, they render either words with a human subject, meaning “to cleanse from sin or defilement”, or “to expiate”, or with a divine subject, meaning “to be gracious”, “to have mercy” or “to forgive”.  

He contends that there was a development away from the use of ἱλασκεθαι and its derivatives in their usual pagan sense of “propitiate”. He argues that on many occasions in the LXX, though in no pagan writer, the words when used with a divine subject refer to an act of cancelling sin, an act of forgiveness, “an entirely new usage with no pagan parallels”. 

Dodd then examines the numerous examples where ἱλαρέων words are translated in the LXX by ἱλασκεθαι cognates.  

He argues that the general use of such cognates to translate ἱλαρέων related words in the LXX supports his conclusion, reached after examination of the use of ἱλασκεθαι derivatives to translate other Hebrew words, and of their synonyms to translate other Hebrew words. Dodd’s conclusion is that “the LXX translators did not see ἱλαρέων (when used as a religious term) as conveying

30 Ibid, 353.
31 Ibid, 353-356.
32 Ibid, 356.
the sense of propitiating the Deity, but of performing an act whereby guilt or defilement is removed". Our analysis in chapter 2 supports his opinion.

Dodd concedes that the Johannine Epistles are probably less influenced by the LXX than any other NT writing, and that this may itself support usage by the Johannine author of the “non-biblical, propitiatory” sense of ἱλασμός. Nevertheless, he says, we may see the use of an ἱλασκεθασά derivative in 2:2 as equivalent to the verb καθαρίζειν, “to cleanse” in 1:7, so that “Christ is a ‘sin-offering’, a divinely supplied means of cancelling guilt and purifying the sinner”.

In the end, Dodd picks up what he regards as the most common sense of ἱλασκεθασά derivatives where they are used in the LXX with a divine subject, and applies that as the most likely meaning of ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2, because it appears to accord with 1:7. Its many and varied meanings in the LXX negate the suggestion that its LXX background supports, much less compels, a propitiatory meaning in 1 John.

**Rudolf Schnackenburg** says ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 is either a “substitute of an abstract for a concrete” expression, or a “neologism for sin offering”, which “clearly betrays its Old Testament roots”, referring to ἱλασκομαί περί in the LXX. We have seen in chapter 2 that a wide variety of meanings is conveyed in the LXX by ἱλασμός and its cognates. Schnackenburg refers to two of the examples of LXX use of ἱλασμός noted above, Ezekiel 44:27 and Numbers 5:8. But he thinks the author of 1 John does not derive his ideas about sacrifice only from the OT itself, pointing to

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34 Ibid, 359.
36 Schnackenburg’s commentary was not translated into English before Raymond Brown’s magisterial work was published, but its German edition was published in 1975, and had considerable influence on the subsequent work of Brown, and that of Painter, which will be examined shortly.
37 Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 88.
38 Ibid, 88 n.77.
the theology of later Judaism relating to the blood of martyrs as *purification*,
most notably the apocryphal 4 Maccabees 6:28f.\(^{39}\)

Brief analysis of this last citation is required to evaluate Schnackenburg’s
view. In 4 Maccabees 6 we find the story of old Eleazar’s heroic martyrdom
by burning at the hands of the tyrant Antiochus, when he refused to obey the
tyrant’s command to eat defiling food. In 6:29 we read of Eleazar crying out
to the Lord, asking him to spare his people, καθάρσοιν αὐτῶν ποίησον τὸ
ἐμὸν αἷμα, καὶ ἀντίψυχον αὐτῶν λαβῇ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν, “may my blood be
made cleansing for them, and take my life instead of theirs”.\(^{40}\)

It is feasible that the author of 1 John had this verse in mind in 1:7b, καὶ τὸ
αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας, “the blood
of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin”, and by extension in 2:2. If so, this
supports the view that a model of atonement different from one of
propitiation is expressed in 1 John 2:2, i.e. *sacrificial cleansing*.

Schnackenburg writes that 4:10b “takes up the idea of sending”, pointing
out that Jesus was sent by the Father to atone for sin.\(^{41}\) So Jesus as ἰλασμός
is seen as loving gift. Here Dodd’s conception of the *whole* of Jesus’ life
and work as an expiation of human sin may profitably contribute.
Schnackenburg’s view is not inconsistent with it. Indeed in an excursus on
“Love as the Nature of God”, Schnackenburg writes that “only in the giving
of the Son as an atoning sacrifice for sin is the transcendent love of the
Father for the human race revealed” (1 John 4:10). He quotes Dodd: “God’s

\(^{39}\) *ibid.*

\(^{40}\) Talbert employs 4 Maccabees 6:29, among other citations, to suggest that ἰλασμός in 1
John 2:2 carries a primarily propitiatory meaning: Talbert, *Reading John*, 22. But the
analogy is strained: Eleazar is pleading with God for his people’s lives, knowing that his
own death is imminent, but he is a martyr-to-be, not, as Jesus is, one who has already
suffered earthly death, but who was with the Father from the beginning (1 John 1:1).

love is no longer parallel to his wrath or parallel to his righteousness … he is love”.  

*Raymond Brown*, in discussing ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2, notes that in the LXX version of Zechariah 7:2 and Malachi 1:9, ἵλασκεσθαι “is used with God as an object to express the pagan idea of placating God, an idea of which the author disapproves”. But he argues that the dominant uses of ἱλασμός related words in the LXX “normally do not have God as an object”.  

He suggests that in the LXX, ἵλασκεσθαι and ἐξιλάσκεσθαι related words also “normally do not have God as an object”. Rather, they either have God as the subject, so that the word means “forgiving”, or that there is a human subject, a priest, who “cleanses something from sin and impurity, thus making it pleasing to God”. This is in keeping with the findings in chapter 2 of this study.

Brown notes that most often in the LXX these words, ἵλασκεσθαι and ἐξιλάσκεσθαι, render a Hebrew word from the root רפַּק, one meaning of which is “cover over”. Therefore, on the strength of Hebrew background and LXX usage, there has been a “growing tendency” to translate ἱλασμός, ἵλασκεσθαι and ἴλαστήριον in the NT “in terms of ‘expiate, expiation’”, aimed at removing sin by Jesus’ cleansing action, and so reconciling humankind to God.

If, as Brown says, ἱλασμός and its derivatives in the LXX do not usually have God as the object – even if they do in the specific examples he gives, Zechariah 7:2 and Malachi 1:9 – then one might conclude that because sin is the object and God is the subject of the action in 1 John 2:2, ἱλασμός is better translated here as “expiation”, not “propitiation”. This is supported by

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44 Ibid.  
45 Ibid.  
46 Ibid.
1 John 1:7 and its use of the verb καθαρίζειν to characterise the role of Jesus’ blood in dealing with sin. Brown’s view gains support from our survey of ἅλασμός and its derivatives in the LXX in chapter 2. As we have seen, a wide variety of senses is comprehended by these words, depending on their context.

In Brown’s analysis of 1 John 2:2, he notes views in favour of either “expiation” or “propitiation” in this verse, but attempts a resolution by referring to the background of Hebrews 9-10 (10:19 in particular). He says “there is no doubt that the sacrifice of Christ on the once-for-all Christian day of atonement described in Hebrews is more an expiation than a propitiation”. He says the similarity in wording in 1 John 2:2 (and 1:7) provides “good reason to think that 1 John reflects this background”.

Brown also makes a comparison between 1 John 4:9-10 and the Abraham and Isaac story. He says it shows that the author is thinking of Jesus’ death, as well as the Incarnation, as in 1 John 3:16. Here we see a similar view to Dodd’s, that Jesus’ whole life and death are an expiation of sin. To Brown, this verse shows that the author is advancing Jesus as the saviour of a people, not just individuals. This fits with the idea conveyed by περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου in 1 John 2:2b, that God’s love is universal and not conditional on performance of an act of propitiatory sacrifice by the Son.

John Painter concludes, following Law, that John’s Gospel and Epistle were either written by the same author, or that the Epistle was written by an author steeped in the knowledge of the Gospel.

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48 Ibid, 221.
49 Brown, The Epistles of John, 551.
50 Ibid, 552.
51 Ibid, 553.
52 Painter, 1, 2 and 3 John, 3.
As to 1 John 2:2, Painter notes that there are only six occurrences of ἠλασμός in the LXX. He argues that its use, and that of related terms in the LXX, suggests that where used in relation to sin, its sense is expiation.\(^{53}\) In 1 John 2:2 it also carries the sense of “expiation”, and especially “where God himself is the agent of the action, as he is in 1 John 4:10”.\(^ {54}\) In Leviticus 25:9, Numbers 5:8, Psalm 130:4, Ezekiel 4:27, Daniel 9:9 and Amos 8:14 in the LXX, ἠλασμός is used in a variety of senses, some not sacrificial at all, and some connoting sacrifice but not necessarily propitiation. These LXX examples show the exact word we are considering in 1 John 2:2, ἠλασμός, used to translate a variety of Hebrew words which are not always derived from the Hebrew root רַעַפָ' , “cover”, רַעַשׁ in particular. They show that there is no precision in the LXX use of ἠλασμός, as one would expect when the Hebrew ideas it renders are disparate, and when this one Greek word may overlie several Hebrew words. In particular, ἠλασμός in the LXX has no necessary connection with propitiation of God for sin.

As with Law’s examples of ἠλασμός derivatives in the LXX, which do translate רַעַפָ' in the Hebrew, Painter’s examples offer more support to his view that ἠλασμός in the LXX conveys expiation, not propitiation, and that likewise in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, ἠλασμός should not be translated as “propitiation”, but rather “expiation”.

\(^{53}\) Ibid, 147-147.

Georg Strecker sees 1 John 2:2 as not only an “explication” of 2:1b, but as giving a reason for the statements in 2:1. The author uses “primitive Christian concepts” here, and ἱλασμός can be translated either as “expiation” or “propitiatory sacrifice”, noting also its use at 4:10. To Strecker the idea of the ἱλαστήριον in Romans 3:25 is related, as is the ἱλάσκεσθαι of the “faithful high priest” who “atones” for the sins of the people in Hebrews 2:17.

For Strecker, 1 John 2:2 employs the idea of atonement, introduced by 1:7, which refers to αἷμα Ἰησοῦ, in that:

The advocacy that the exalted Christ exercises for the community before the Father is based on the atonement for sins accomplished by Jesus Christ’s redeeming sacrifice. Christ’s standing before God as δικαίος and acting as advocate for the community is founded upon his atoning death. Because he, who is sinless, has made atonement on the cross, he can stand before God’s throne in the present as the trustworthy Paraclete and perform effective intercession for those who are his own.

So, as to how Jesus is ἱλασμός in 2:2, Strecker notes Henri Clavier’s opinion that these words describe the event of reconciliation, identified with the Son. For Strecker, based on LXX examples in Ezekiel 44:27 and Numbers 5:8, the idea of Jesus’ propitiatory sacrifice “ought not be excluded”. By so saying, however, it is clear from Strecker’s exegesis of 1 John 2:2 in light of 1:7 that he does not necessarily put forward positively any explicit notion of the Father being placated or appeased by Jesus’ death.

Evaluating this view, as we saw in the preceding chapter, Ezekiel 44:27 and Numbers 5:8 do indeed convey the idea of sacrifice for the primary purpose of cleansing, but not necessarily propitiation. And in Psalm 130:4 and Daniel 9:9, ἱλασμός does not convey the idea of sacrifice at all, but rather

55 Strecker, Johannine Letters, 39.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
60 Strecker, Johannine Letters, 39 n.17.
divine forgiveness and reconciliation. Strecker’s is a careful view, but in the
LXX, ἱλασμός does not primarily convey the idea of propitiation. As to its
use in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, its context might indicate whether ἱλασμός there
means “propitiation” or “expiation”. Where 1 John 1:7 refers to αἷμα Ἰησοῦ,
it is not necessarily introducing the idea of propitiation, but is depicting
Jesus’ suffering and death as a cleansing, suggested by καθαρίζει. Similarly Jesus’ standing as a παρακλητός with the Father in 1 John 2:1 is
a means of reconciliation, not because he is the propitiation for human sin,
but rather because he is the one who removes or cleanses it – the very idea
introduced at 1:7.

In his analysis of 1 John 4:10, Strecker approaches this view. He describes
ἱλασμός as “a synonym for the soteriological action of Jesus Christ”, and,
while noting that its meaning can frequently “approach” atoning sacrifice
(as we have seen from some of our examples of its use in the LXX), he says:

In general, it refers to God’s act of forgiving. Accordingly, Jesus Christ is
represented here not as a means or result of the divine forgiveness of sins. Instead,
the sending of the Son, an action proceeding from the Father, is the act which
creates reconciliation between God and humanity.61

In Psalm 130:4 and Daniel 9:9, ἱλασμός is used in the LXX to refer to
divine forgiveness or reconciliation, rather than sacrifice. These same ideas
may be conveyed in 1 John 4:10.

Marianne Meye Thompson suggests that the context of the author’s use of
ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 suggests that “expiation” rather than “propitiation” is
the preferable translation. She does so on the basis that in 4:10 God’s action
is directed “toward our sins and toward us”. Thus one should read 2:2 as
also taking sin as its object, so that cleansing or removal of sin by God is the
sense conveyed.62 She writes of 4:10 that “God not only gives us the

61 Ibid, 153 (emphasis added).
62 Marianne Meye Thompson, 1-3 John (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press,
1992), 50, Note on 2:2.
command to love but modelled for us what true love is”.63 That idea will be taken up later.

(ii) Propitiation

Roger Nicole sounds a significant counter-blast to Dodd’s views. In an article influential among later writers unconvinced by Dodd’s “expiation” view of ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, he argues five main points. First, he notes the unpopularity of the idea of propitiation with those who, he says, uphold what he terms a “purely subjective” notion of the atonement, noting that Dodd argues for “expiation” as the proper translation of ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10.64 To Nicole, the typical attack on “propitiation” presents it in the crudest pagan terms, and attacks it as being unsupported in Scripture.65 For Nicole, the biblical concept of propitiation is on “a far higher plane” than the pagan one, and “the giver of the propitiatory gift is God himself in his gracious mercy”.66

Next, Nicole argues that Dodd’s examples provide incomplete evidence, or evidence incompletely used.67 Correctly, he notes that Dodd incompletely lists words of the ἐξοθήματος group translated in the LXX by words other than the ἐλασκάσωθαι class.68 But this does not prove the converse, that words of the ἐλασκάσωθαι class necessarily connote propitiation where they translate words in the ἐξοθήματος group in the LXX. Nicole pays too little attention to the distinction between uses of words of the ἐλασκάσωθαι class in the LXX where God is the object, direct or indirect, of the action, and those where God is the subject of the action.

63 Ibid, 123.
65 Ibid, 122.
66 Ibid, 150.
68 Ibid, 127.
Nicole also correctly observes that Dodd’s omission of any reference to the books of the Maccabees is serious.\textsuperscript{69} Then he gives examples of conclusions by Dodd which, he says, go beyond the evidence adduced.\textsuperscript{70} This criticism also has some weight, as does his reference to questionable assumptions by Dodd.\textsuperscript{71} Then he refers to what he says is lack of caution by Dodd in dealing with debatable issues.\textsuperscript{72} Certainly Dodd displays a certain dogmatism in referring to some other scholars on occasions as “wrong”, without sufficient argument.

But to Nicole, one must refute all Dodd’s findings, because they are independent of each other. He argues that if the LXX and NT writers shared Dodd’s distaste for propitiation, they would not have used the word ‘\(\lambda\alpha\sigma\kappa\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\)’ to mean “forgive” or “expiate” when “the usual connotation of this word was overwhelmingly ‘propitiation’”.\textsuperscript{73} For Nicole, Dodd must “explain away” all propitiatory uses of this word to connote the wrath of God. Dodd’s “expiatory” interpretation begs the question of who it is that requires expiation, and why.\textsuperscript{74}

No-one would now contend that Dodd provides a complete solution to this debate, however influential his views have been. But Nicole is incorrect to describe the ideas conveyed by the ‘\(\lambda\alpha\sigma\kappa\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\)’ group as “overwhelmingly” propitiatory. Many are not, as we have seen. As but one example, which we have noticed in reviewing Law’s work, in Ezekiel 16:63 in the LXX, ‘\(\varepsilon\xi\lambda\alpha\sigma\kappa\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\)’ is used for \(\tau\rho\epsilon\bar{v}\tau\beta\bar{o}\), “when I make atonement”, a \(\tau\rho\bar{v}\bar{n}\beta\) phrase. Here the Lord is the subject, the actor in the act of atonement, and sinful humanity is its object – no sacrifice is in view. Divine wrath is not present. Rather, the Lord here makes an “everlasting covenant” (16:60) with the people, forgiving them for breaking a previous one (16:59).

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid, 131-132.  
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid, 135-146.  
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, 146-147.  
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, 147-149.  
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, 140.  
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, 149-150.
Leon Morris also strongly criticises Dodd’s view that the ἰλάσκομαι word group has a non-propitiatory secondary meaning of “expiate” in pagan usage, arguing that in Dodd’s Plato example, the context is the need to pay for injury, carrying the idea of soothing anger. As to its use in the LXX, Morris agrees with Dodd’s conclusion that it does not convey the idea of a capricious deity who must be bribed into a good mood by his worshippers. He argues that the wrath of God is ever-present in the OT. Morris is critical of Dodd’s conclusion that the LXX translators did not see ἵππος as conveying the idea of propitiation of the Deity, but rather of an act removing guilt or defilement.

Morris acknowledges that Dodd is correct to say that the ἰλάσκομαι word group is used in the LXX in a wide variety of senses, many not conveying the idea of propitiation. He suggests the categories may be even wider than Dodd perceives. But he argues that as the senses in which the LXX uses the ἰλάσκομαι word group are so wide, it is “meaningless” to conclude that it “generally” conveys, not propitiation of the Deity, but rather an act removing guilt or defilement. He considers that it is incorrect to say, as Dodd does, that because the ἰλάσκομαι word group translates one Hebrew word or idea and on occasions another, the two Hebrew words or ideas must necessarily be similar. For Morris, the important thing is not to look at the Hebrew word the LXX translates, but the general idea it seeks to render.

One can see why Morris argues this way from his examples of use of the ἰλάσκομαι word group in the LXX, namely Exodus 32:14, Lamentations 3:42, Daniel 9:19, 2 Kings 24:3f., Psalm 77(78):38, Psalm 78(79):9, Psalm

76 Ibid, 148.
78 Ibid, 155.
79 Ibid, 155-156.
80 Ibid, 156.
24(25):11, Psalm 64(65):4, Esther 13:17 and 2 Kings 5:18. He concedes that that in each case forgiveness is conveyed, but asserts that it carries the idea of turning away divine wrath, so that a propitiatory meaning is justified.\textsuperscript{81}

The defect in this argument is that each of these usages conveys the idea of the Lord freely turning away his wrath, without any propitiation offered by a sinful people. Far from supporting a propitiatory meaning for the ἵλασκομαι word group where used, Morris’ examples in fact support Dodd. They depict the LXX conveying by this word group the idea of a God who is both wrathful and merciful, and who may be petitioned to turn away wrath freely, without blood sacrifice being offered.

Morris argues also from the many cultic LXX usages of ἴλαστήριον for “place of atonement” or “means of atonement” that its association with propitiation is clear.\textsuperscript{82} This is contestable. We have seen in chapter 2 in our discussion of the expression τὸν ὅικον τοῦ ἴλασμοῦ in 1 Chronicles 28:20c in the LXX, which does not appear in the Hebrew, and which can be translated “the place of propitiation”, can also be translated “the house of the mercy seat”.\textsuperscript{83} As but one example, as noted in chapter 2, ἴλαστήριον occurs in Exodus 25:17, where the Lord’s instructions concerning the building of the Ark of the Covenant include a mercy seat, ἱεράμαντα of gold to be placed atop the Ark (25:21): οἱράματα may also be translated “place of clearing (or cleansing)’, because yearly at Yom Kippur it receives the sin offering by which the people and the Tabernacle are “cleared”. Thus Yahweh’s continued presence is assured (Leviticus 16:14-15), as Yahweh’s spirit can only abide in a place of utmost cleanliness atop the οἱράματα.\textsuperscript{84} The idea conveyed by the use of ἴλαστήριον in Exodus 25:17 (and in the use of τὸν ὅικον τοῦ ἴλασμοῦ in 1 Chronicles 28:20c in the LXX) is not

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, 157-158.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid, 159.
\textsuperscript{83} Curtis and Madsen, The Book of Chronicles, 300.
\textsuperscript{84} Propp, Exodus 19-40, 385-386; similarly Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, 332, Durham, Exodus, 359-360.
propitiation of divine wrath, but cleansing of a holy place by ritual sin offering, to ensure Yahweh’s continued presence.

Morris contends that ἐξιλάσκομαι, while not used in the NT, should be considered in that context because of its close association with ἱλασμός. He argues that it is the usual expression for “make atonement”, in association with the sacrificial system. He asserts that the fact that ἐξιλάσκομαι renders Ἰλασμός 83 times and another Hebrew root only 11 times shows that in the LXX ἐξιλάσκομαι and Ἰλασμός are “nearly synonymous”.85

There are two objections to this argument. Firstly, since ἱλασμός and its derivatives are on a number of occasions used to translate Hebrew words other than Ἰλασμός, this might indicate that the two word groups are not “nearly synonymous”. It might show simply that they are used on many, but by no means all occasions to translate a particular Hebrew word group. To assert a stronger association runs into the same pitfall as Dodd’s argument that because different Hebrew word groups are translated by ἱλασμός related words, the Hebrew word groups must be closely related, if not identical in meaning.

Secondly, precisely because ἐξιλάσκομαι is not used in the NT, its LXX use is anything but a sure guide to the use of words such as Ἰλασμός in the NT (used only in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10) where reference to a sacrificial or propitiatory idea is not otherwise clear in the context. Put another way, ἐξιλάσκομαι and ἱλασμός and its derivatives may be grammatically related, but to assert, without further argument, that the two word groups are “closely associated” falls into the same error as Morris stigmatizes in Dodd’s analysis, of assuming a similarity in meaning without examining the context in which these two words occur.

Morris gives examples of the non-cultic use of רעפִּי in the LXX, namely Exodus 30:12-16, Numbers 31:50, Genesis 32:20, Isaiah 47:11, Exodus 32:30, 2 Samuel 21:1-14, Numbers 35:33, Deuteronomy 32:41-43, Deuteronomy 21:1-9, Proverbs 16:6 Isaiah 27:9, Ezekiel 16:63, Psalms 78:38, Daniel 9:24, Jeremiah 18:23, Numbers 25:3-9, 11-13, 2 Chronicles 30:18 and Isaiah 6:7. He argues that in each case רעפִּי is used in close association with רעפּ, “ransom”, which has clear sacrificial associations, and that רעפִּי may be more original than רעפּ and that the latter may be a denominative from the former. 86

But there is no mention of divine wrath being turned away by sacrifice in most of these examples. To suggest that because רעפִּי may be a denominative from רעפּ, the meaning of the latter may control the meaning of the former, is a weak reed on which to found the notion that in all of these examples, propitiation of wrath is the idea conveyed. Granted that in Morris’ first example, Exodus 30:12-16, this may be so. But in Numbers 31:50 what is spoken of is a gift, not a sacrifice. In Genesis 32:20 there is simply appeasement of human anger. Isaiah 47:11 speaks of punishment for sin, not propitiation. In Exodus 32:30 Moses entreats the Lord to forgive the people’s sin. In 2 Samuel 21:1-14 David recompenses the Gibeonites for Saul’s vengeance upon them. In Numbers 35:33 pollution of the land by the blood of the victim requires the death of the murderer, which is not so much propitiatory as a form of primitive justice. In Deuteronomy 32:41-43 the Lord vindicates his servants over their adversaries. In Deuteronomy 21:1-9, land where a corpse is found is cleansed by the sacrifice of a broken-necked heifer. In Isaiah 27:9 the guilt of Jacob is expiated and his sin is removed by the Lord, who crushes sacrificial altars. In Daniel 9:24, of which Morris admits “its precise meaning is not easy to determine”, 87 the idea is repentance for iniquity, rather than propitiation for it. Only in Numbers 25:3-9 and 11-13 is there unequivocal reference to divine wrath being

86 Ibid, 161-166.
87 Ibid, 165.
turned away, by impaling the chiefs of the people and the two Midianite men to avert plague, resulting in the Lord’s revelation to Moses of a new covenant.

However in Proverbs 16:6 we find simply a reference to iniquity being “atoned for” by “loyalty and fidelity”. There is no hint of sacrificial propitiation. Likewise in Ezekiel 16:63 the Lord commands his people never to open their mouths because of their shame, when he forgives them all they had done. Free forgiveness, not sacrificial propitiation is the idea conveyed. In Psalm 78:38, God “the compassionate, forgave their iniquity and did not annihilate them”. Again, loving forgiveness, without any act of propitiation is conveyed. In Jeremiah 18:23 we find a prayer by the prophet that the Lord will not forgive the iniquity of those who plot to kill him. Divine wrath is invoked, but there is no sense of denial of a propitiatory offering by the plotters. In 2 Chronicles 30:18 there occurs a prayer by Hezekiah for a number of the people who ate the Passover despite not being ritually cleansed, proclaiming (30:18-19) that “the good Lord pardons all who set their hearts to see God”. The prayer is granted (30:20). The idea here is of free forgiveness, despite lawlessness. In Isaiah 6:7 the seraph in Isaiah’s vision touches his mouth with a live coal (6:6), saying “your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out”. Far from sacrifice or propitiation, the idea here is that divine wrath is freely turned aside by divine action through the seraph, an agent of God. Thus in a significant number of Morris’ examples of non-cultic use of רְפֻּקָּא, there is no hint of propitiation or even sacrifice, although this last element is present in a number of cases.

Morris’ examples of the purely cultic use of רְפֻּקָּא words may demonstrate a sacrificial usage, as one might expect: the OT cultus was partly based on sacrifice, but ritual cleansing rather than propitiation was its primary purpose. This does not prove Morris’ point, because almost ex hypothesi, cultic examples are likely to demonstrate a sacrificial, but not necessarily a propitiatory usage.
Morris says Westcott and Dodd “go too far” in their affirmation that when the LXX translators used “propitiation”, they did not mean “propitiation”.88 This is not what they said. Their thesis is that when we find ἱλασμός words translated by the ἵλασκομαι word group in the LXX, the idea of propitiation is not necessarily conveyed. As we have seen from Morris’ examples of non-cultic use of ἱλασμός words, he himself arguably goes too far in suggesting that they always, or even usually, convey ideas of propitiation of divine anger.

Morris concludes that in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, ἱλασμός is to be read with a propitiatory meaning, if his analysis of this word-group in the LXX is sound.89 With due respect, it is not. As we have seen from his examples, ἱλασμός words translated by the ἵλασκομαι word group in the LXX mostly do not carry a propitiatory meaning, or even one of sacrifice.

Morris contends that the reference in 1 John 2:1 to our need for an advocate with God means that “we are in no good case”, and that “our misdeeds prevail against us, we are about to feel the hostility of God to all that is sinful”. Thus “under these circumstances we may well speak of Christ turning away the wrath of God”.90 That is all inferred by Morris from 2:1.

What 1 John 2:1 says is that if we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, in 2:2 is to be read as “propitiation”. This translation, on Morris’ argument, depends on the soundness of his analysis of the ideas conveyed by the word

88 Ibid, 173.
89 Ibid, 206.
group containing ἴλασμός in the LXX. As we have seen, this analysis has considerable defects arising from the text of the LXX.

Furthermore, there is no reference in the text of 1 John itself, in the verses surrounding 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, or for that matter in the whole letter, to John’s readers facing divine wrath, ὀργή.91 Nor do the verses surrounding 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 refer to the necessity for the reader to appropriate Jesus’ sacrificial death to propitiate the Father for their sin, before Jesus’ ἴλασμός is available to them. No-one should seek to “write out” of the NT the theme of divine wrath, often prominent in it; the point here is that this idea should not dominate the meaning of ἴλασμός in 1 John when it is nowhere mentioned in the epistle. The defect in Morris’ argument is that it is crucially dependent on the propitiatory interpretation of the LXX references to the ἴλασμός word group which he marshals, which cannot be sustained.

David Hill is another formidable exponent of the “propitiatory” view of ἴλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. As with Morris’ objections to Dodd’s work, his argument is careful and detailed. Hill’s central criticism of Dodd’s work is that Dodd “limited his discussion of ἴλασκεσθαι and related words in the LXX to matters of grammar and translation equivalence”, which Hill thinks “partly explains its inadequacy”.92 This criticism has some merit, but it does not necessarily entail the consequence that Dodd’s views on the use of ἴλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 are misconceived and wrong.

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91 As Do correctly notes: Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 238. It must be conceded, however, that ὀργή occurs elsewhere in the Johannine corpus, in John 3:36, and of course in Revelation 6:16, 6:17, 11:18, 14:10, 16:19 and 19:15; even there it is used in somewhat different contexts, involving punishment simpliciter rather than propitiation. The other koine Greek word for “wrath”, θυμός, with a sense closer to “fury”, is only used in Revelation: see 12:12, 14:8, 10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:19; 18:3, 19:15. The idea conveyed is not always divine wrath: Revelation 12:12 refers to the Devil’s wrath, and 14:8 and 18:3 speak of the wrath of Babylon’s fornication, and where the concept conveyed is divine wrath (see 14:10 and 19, 15:1 and 7, 16:19 and 19:15) again the idea is divinely-imposed punishment, not propitiation in order to avoid it.

Hill’s view, contra Dodd, is that the terms “propitiation” and “expiation” are so closely related that they are often seen as interchangeable, in part because there is no difference between the actions taken to bring either result. That opinion is contestable, at least in relation to the use of ἡλασμός and its derivatives in the LXX, because they do not always, or even usually, refer to propitiatory sacrifice for sin. As we have seen, there is no precision in the use of these words in the LXX, in either meaning or context.

Hill rightly observes that notions of divine wrath are anything but absent in the LXX. But as we have seen from Law’s examples, the undoubted fact that divine wrath is present in the LXX does not necessarily prove that in LXX occurrences of ἱλάσκεσθαι and its cognates, the context clearly refers to the anger of God. Hill indeed concedes that the meanings of Greek words other than ἱλάσκομαι which translate ἱλασμός words vary greatly, from “sanctify” to “cancel”, so they cannot give a precise indication of the meaning of the ἱλάσκομαι group.

Hill’s contention is that in almost all cases where ἱλάσκομαι and related words do not render ἱλασμός and its derivatives, they render words which either have a human subject, and refer to cleansing from defilement or expiation of sin, or have a divine subject and refer to grace, mercy or forgiveness. Hill is forced to resort to the argument that the meaning of the Hebrew term translated is a less reliable guide to the LXX word used than its context, and therefore the idea sought to be conveyed by the LXX translators. One would have thought that both etymology and context are equally important here. Be that as it may, Hill gives many examples where he maintains that in context, words other than ἱλασμός could easily have been rendered otherwise than by ἱλασμός derivatives.

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93 Ibid, 23.
94 Ibid, 25.
95 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid, 26-27.
The difficulty for this argument is that the LXX translators do in fact use ἱλασμός derivatives to translate disparate Hebrew words not in the group and not conveying the idea of sacrifice. This suggests, contra Hill and supporting Dodd, that ἱλασμός and its derivatives as used in the LXX have no necessary frame of reference to propitiatory sacrifice.

Hill deploys his findings concerning the LXX use of ἱλασμός and its derivatives to show that in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, because in the LXX the word-group refers, not to “expiation” but “atonement”, “forgiveness” or “propitiation”, only the first and third of these meanings is correct in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. The first objection to this argument is that as we saw at the outset, Hill maintains that the terms “propitiation” and “expiation” are so closely related that they are often seen as interchangeable. This is in part because there is no difference between the actions taken to bring either result. For reasons already given, this is not so.

The second, more potent objection to Hill’s view here is that as we have seen when analysing Law’s examples, ἱλασμός derivatives are in fact often used in the LXX to translate words with the Lord as the subject, as well as the object of acts of atonement. These examples show that such acts are not universally portrayed in the LXX as acts of propitiation of the Lord for human sin, and are often pictured as acts of divine generosity, in which the Lord forgives humans’ sin without any prior act of propitiation by them.

Following Morris, Hill is forced to maintain a “paradox”, that if acceptance of the personal breach with God created by sin requires a propitiatory interpretation of 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, then the means of turning

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99 Ibid, 37.
100 Ibid, 23.
101 Morris, Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, 178-179.
aside the consequences of sin comes from God’s love. To this the retort is that if the idea of expiation rather than propitiation is conveyed by ἡλασμός in 2:2 and 4:10, there is no paradox. If that be so, then God has not propitiated God’s own wrath by sending the Son. Instead, God sent the Son to act as the expiator of sin, to cleanse us (1:7) from the sin we inevitably commit, despite our self-deceptions (1:8). On this view, Jesus does not propitiate the Father, but acts in loving concert with the Father in delivering us from sin.

As we have noted, there is no reference in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, or for that matter in the whole letter, to John’s readers facing divine wrath, or of the necessity for them to appropriate Jesus’ sacrificial death to propitiate the Father for their sin, before Jesus’ ἡλασμός is available to them. Hill’s thesis, like that of Morris, is crucially dependent on a propitiatory interpretation of the LXX references to the ἡλασμός word group which he marshals, which is unsustainable.

*Howard Marshall* writes of 1 John 2:2 that ἡλασμός in extra-biblical Greek writing refers to an offering made by a person to placate the anger of a deity, whereas Westcott and Dodd argue that in the OT the object of the action is the sin itself, so that in the Bible the term refers to “expiation”, a means of cancelling sin. Marshall’s answer to this is that of Morris and Hill. It is that in the OT, the idea of placating God or some other injured person is often present when the ἡλασμός word group is used. Therefore in the NT, and in particular 1 John 2:2, there is “no real doubt” that the meaning of ἡλασμός is “propitiation”, so that “Jesus propitiates God with respect to our sins”.

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This is a very frank presentation of the propitiatory view of atonement in 2:2. It has the difficulty, firstly, that use of ἱλασμός and its cognates in the LXX is anything but uniform in its portrayal of the idea of sacrifice, which itself is not necessarily propitiatory. Sometimes this idea is present; sometimes it is not. Indeed Marshall, ever the careful and fair scholar, concedes as much. He gives many examples, and notes that “the fact would seem to be that the word group can have different nuances in different contexts”.\(^\text{105}\) It follows that usage in the LXX of ἱλασμός is not an entirely authoritative guide to its meaning in 1 John 2:2.

Secondly, Marshall’s argument presents an unwarranted separation between the mind and action of the Father and that of the Son. This is a view rightly castigated early on by Charles Gore as having the consequence that “contrary to all the teachings of the New Testament, the mind of Christ has been distinguished from the mind of the Father as mercy from justice”.\(^\text{106}\)

The same difficulties attend Marshall’s view of 1 John 4:10. He rightly says of humanity that here God “pardons their sins against himself at his own cost”. But he goes on to quote James Denney: “so far from finding any kind of contrast between love and propitiation, the apostle can convey no idea of love except by pointing to the propitiation”.\(^\text{107}\) This view does not engage with the difficulty that the LXX’s use of ἱλασμός and its cognates is anything but consistent in its presentation of the idea of propitiation, as compared with others, such as forgiveness and reconciliation, without any prior propitiation.

**Stephen Smalley’s** view of ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 is not dissimilar from that of Morris, Hill, Marshall, and Bruce, though with some variations, as we shall see. He provides a full and fair summary of the scholarly debate

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centring on a comparison of the use of the word in 2:2 and in the LXX. He maintains that the opinions that ἱλασμός in 1 John means either that God is the subject or alternatively the object of the action, and therefore that either expiation or propitiation of sin is the idea conveyed, ought not be regarded as mutually exclusive.\(^\text{108}\)

Smalley’s argument here rests first on the contributions of Dodd and those who follow him, arguing that ῥπακφ in the OT has the root meaning of “cover”. He notes that they argue that this idea, referring to sin, is best translated by “expiation” rather than “propitiation”, and that one may find LXX examples of this where ῥπακφ words are translated by ἱλασμός and its cognates to convey the idea of “expiation” of sin; cf. Psalm 130:4, Daniel 9:9.\(^\text{109}\) Smalley then notes the work of Hill and those who follow him (Marshall, for example) who posit that ἱλασμός and its cognates in the LXX are often seen more “objectively”, depicting God as the recipient of propitiatory sacrifice for sin; cf. Ezekiel 44:27, 2 Maccabees 3:33.\(^\text{110}\)

Smalley suggests that because ἱλασμός and its cognates may carry either an expiatory or propitiatory meaning in the LXX, then possibly in 1 John 2:2 both senses may be conveyed. This is because even in the OT, God is both the initiator (by the law’s prescriptions) and the recipient of sin offerings, and the same pattern may exist in 1 John 2:2.\(^\text{111}\) To Smalley, in 2:1 Jesus is the heavenly intercessor (παράκλητος), and can do so because he (σωτός) is righteous (δίκαιον) – he is the offering, and God is the object, but God is also the subject of the action, as the ultimate source of forgiveness and purification of the sinner (4:9).\(^\text{112}\)

\(^{108}\) Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 39.

\(^{109}\) Ibid.

\(^{110}\) Ibid.


\(^{112}\) Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 40.
To Smalley’s argument that by God’s prescriptions in the Jewish law, God is the subject, the provider of propitiatory sacrifice, one may retort that in the OT the point of blood sacrifice is that humankind offers to God what would otherwise be to its benefit – otherwise how is it a “sacrifice” at all? In 1 John 2:2, God indeed is the provider of the sacrifice – as we learn in 4:9 where we read that τὸν ζῷον αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενὴ ἄντέκταλκεν ὁ θεὸς. In no sense does humanity itself provide the sacrifice of God’s own Son. To penal substitutionists, one may reply that even in the OT, as we have seen from our survey of ἱλασμός and its cognates in the LXX, particularly Leviticus, blood sacrifice does not necessarily connote propitiation of the deity, but rather a cleansing of sin by the blood of a victim.

As to ἱλασμός in 1 John 4:10, Smalley argues similarly that there Jesus is not the sacrifice for our sin, to the exclusion of all other sacrifices, but “generically a sacrifice for all sin”. He compares this verse to Romans 8:32, which he says refers to Genesis 22:1-14, relating Abraham’s intended sacrifice of his only son. The defect in this argument is that it is clear that in the OT, sacrifices for sin are different in kind from that depicted in 1 John 4:10. As we have just seen, in no sense in 2:2 or 4:10 does humanity itself provide the sacrifice of God’s own Son – God alone does so. It is quite otherwise with Abraham. Although God does indeed provide a ram as an alternative sacrifice (Genesis 22:13), the central point of the OT story is Abraham’s faith (cf. Romans 4:3), in being prepared to offer the supreme sacrifice of his own son when tested by God. God’s action in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 is quite different. Granted, God in supreme love for humankind (4:9) sends the Son as ἱλασμός for our sin, but in no sense does God sacrifice the Son to someone else, as Abraham was prepared to do.

(iii) Other Views

Judith Lieu brings a different perspective to the debate over ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. As to 2:2, she sees represented in 2:1 the tradition of a

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113 Ibid, 244.
παράκλητος, a just one, persecuted even unto death. She offers the example of Wisdom 2:18, where the fate of the just one whose opponents think they can act with impunity is described: “if the just one is a son of God, he will help him and rescue him from the hands of his opponents”.  

Lieu argues that “against this background”, 1 John suggests that Jesus’ being able to intercede with the Father springs not from his divine status as God’s own Son, but from his being the one who remained faithful to God, even unto death. She appeals here to contemporary Jewish sources ascribing an intercessory role to those who die for their faith. She cites 2 Maccabees 7:37-38 where the seven die for God’s law in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, praying that God might be merciful to a suffering land, and 4 Maccabees 17:21-22 where because of the martyrs “the homeland is purified, for they became, as it were, a ransom (antipsychon) for the sin of the nation, and through the blood of these devout ones and through the atoning sacrifice (hilastērion) of their death, the divine Providence saved the oppressed nation”.  

In such references to the undeserved death of God’s faithful ones, according to Lieu, “the traditional language of sacrifice was being recast without any detailed reflection on why and how their deaths might be efficacious”. So in 1 John 2:2, the word ἴλασμος, used only once again in the NT in 4:10, in “its form as a noun emphasizes action rather than agent or means”, so that “he is forgiveness” is the sense conveyed. She notes that in the LXX a cultic sense is not necessarily conveyed by the term. She acknowledges that in Leviticus 25:9 it refers to the Day of Atonement, but points out that in Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 130:4 and Daniel 9:9 it refers simply to divine Providence saved the oppressed nation”.  

114 Lieu, I, II and III John, 63. The theology in 1 John 2:1, where it speaks of Jesus Christ di/kaion may have resonances with James 5:6, where the accusation is made that James’ addressees had murdered τὸν δίκαιον, i.e. Jesus Christ, οὐκ ἀντιτάσσεται ὑμῖν. The idea in both verses is that Jesus was faithful, di/kaioj even unto death. I am indebted for this fruitful suggestion to discussion with Professor John Painter.  
115 Ibid.  
116 Ibid.  
117 Ibid, 64.  
118 Ibid.
forgiveness.\textsuperscript{119} Therefore, “the context here in 1 John supports a neutral translation rather than a cultic one; there is no reference here to Jesus’ blood or death and no hint of a sacrificial framework”\textsuperscript{120}

This viewpoint on ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 really places Lieu closer to the “expiation” rather than the “propitiation” camp. Granted that there is no precise indication in the LXX to support an accurate description by way of either “expiation” or “propitiation” of the action portrayed in 2:2, expiation is preferable, because it connotes cleansing of sin. First John 1:7 has already spoken of cleansing of sin by the blood of Jesus, God’s Son. There is no hint there either of cultic sacrifice, except for the bare mention of Jesus’ blood. This might more properly be read simply as a reference to his blood itself, rather than the precise mechanism by which it effects an ἱλασμός for human sin. Might ἱλασμός in 2:2 itself be a reference simply to the fact of divine forgiveness wrought through Jesus’ blood, rather than to its precise mechanism, which we cannot know?

Similarly, as to ἱλασμός in 1 John 4:10, Lieu argues that “no specific understanding of how sins are forgiven is implied”.\textsuperscript{121} She suggests that in 2:2 the emphasis is on the present, on how God deals with sin now, whereas in 4:10 it is on what God in Christ did in the past.\textsuperscript{122} To Lieu, the formula in 4:10 provides, not precise detail of how God’s love benefits believers, but rather the reason why that love is the foundation of our response.\textsuperscript{123}

The context in 1 John 4:10 indeed suggests that John is speaking primarily of what God’s love effects, so that our response (4:11) ought to be that we love one another. In 4:10 we do not find a precise theology of how atonement occurs, but rather rejoicing in God’s love for us in sending the

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid. See also Lieu, \textit{Theology of the Johannine Epistles}, 63-64.  
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, 183.  
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid, 183-184.  
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid, 183-184.
Son as a means of forgiveness of human sin, so in light of such a costly action, God’s people should reflect that supreme love in their own community.

Pheme Perkins deals with ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 somewhat differently, but still in basic accord with Lieu’s approach. She steers clear of the propitiation/expiation debate, and says that 2:1-2 is anti-gnostic polemic: it affirms that rather than victory over sin being won by the individual spirit, it is attained by Jesus’ prayers, in that “his intercession and atoning death make forgiveness a permanent reality within the community”.124 Of 1 John 4:10 she says that “1 Jn thus expresses a fundamental insight of the covenant theology of the Old Testament as it has been handed on in Christianity: that God takes the initiative in reconciling a sinful humanity to himself”.125 Perkins’ view is helpful. Rather than defining the precise mechanism of atonement, the point of 1 John 2:2 (and 4:10) is that in love, the Father sent the Son to reconcile us to God by cleansing us from sin, through the death of the Son. This too really places Perkins closer to the expiation point of view.

Urban von Wahlde argues concerning ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 that the “more satisfying background” to its use is that of the rite of the Day of Atonement, referred to in Leviticus 25:9, which Leviticus 16 says was performed by a high priest sacrificing a bull and a goat. In Leviticus 16:16 in the LXX, using an ἱλασμός derivative, the Holy Place is cleansed by the outpouring of blood. Therefore, reading 1 John 1:7 with 2:2, both ἱλασμός and “blood” are associated with the Day of Atonement, so that a cleansing of the sin of the whole world (2:2) which still exists (1:8) by the blood of Jesus (1:7) is what the author portrays.126

124 Perkins, Johannine Epistles, 22.
125 Ibid, 55.
This view, far from “explaining away” the apparently propitiatory sense in which ἱλασμός and its derivatives are used in the LXX, harnesses one of these apparently propitiatory uses, and demonstrates that it may still bear a non-propitiatory, “cleansing” sense in 1 John. But did not the Johannine author also intend in 1:7 and 2:2 to draw in the sacrifice of a bull and a goat in Leviticus 16 as depicting the meaning of Jesus’ sacrifice? Not so: the author’s use of ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 refers more obviously to the actual cleansing by blood (cf. 1 John 1:7) in Leviticus 16:16, not the precise mechanism whereby it was accomplished.

A cautionary note must however be sounded here. If an analysis of past use of language proceeds as if such examination can by itself prove meaning in another context – and it is by no means clear that Von Wahlde falls into this trap – it is in error. At most, the past range of meanings can be shown by such analysis. New meanings do emerge in current use of language. Past usage however may reveal clues which may be helpful about the ways in which contextual elements reveal shades of meaning. In the end, analysis of past use can only show possibilities: the meaning of ἱλασμός in 1 John depends on its own particular context.

**Conclusions from Scholarship Review**

After a fairly extensive, but necessarily selective overview of scholarship on the use of ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, and of the way in which scholars have appealed to LXX use of the term and its cognates, it can be seen that much the same evidence has been interpreted in different ways. Some maintain that it supports a propitiatory interpretation for this term. Others opt for an expiatory one. Still others suggest that this evidence is so varied that no definite conclusion can be drawn. In the preceding chapter we examined LXX uses of ἱλασμός and reached the conclusion that no pattern of predominant, or even frequent propitiatory usage of this term can be discerned, nor can such a use of ἱλασμός cognates be found. The LXX usage of ἱλασμός and its cognates is varied, showing God as
both the subject and the indirect object of the action. Non-sacrificial meanings such as forgiveness appear as often as notions of sacrifice. Even then, cleansing or expiation of sin by God, after humankind has taken the appropriate actions, rather than propitiation, is the dominant idea.

True it is that 1 John is remarkable among NT texts for its relative lack of allusion to the OT. First John 3:12, with its reference to Cain, is the only one. And yet, a number of its key theological motifs are inexplicable, as we have seen, without reference to OT theological and ethical principles. Cain and Abel imagery affects more than this one verse.\textsuperscript{127} It is apparent beneath 3:15, in the clause “he who hates a brother is a murderer”, and indeed beneath the whole section from 3:11 to 3:17. Moreover, the author had available to him the LXX and the interpretative tradition built upon it in Second Temple Judaism, as demonstrated in the intertestamental pseudepigrapha and the Qumran writings traced in the preceding chapter. It is inappropriate to read 1 John in a vacuum, apart from, and without reference to, that background.

More guidance can be derived from the immediate literary contexts in which ἱλασμός occurs in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 than from the LXX evidence. Context always influences the meaning of a word, and words require context so their precise meaning can be determined. This does not mean that the LXX evidence affords no help. It provides the biblical background, of which the author was undoubtedly aware, against which the term ἱλασμός is used in 1 John. But the LXX background of usage of ἱλασμός does not by itself dictate its literal meaning, still less the theology it expresses in 1 John. To unlock this, we must embark on our own exegesis of 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 in their respective literary contexts.

\textsuperscript{127} Brown, Epistles of John, 442.
**Exegesis of 1 John 2:2 and 4:10**

(i) 1 John 2:2

This verse must be examined as part of a larger unit. Most scholars see 1 John 1:5-2:2 as a unit in itself, or part of a larger one. Brown, Marshall and Lieu consider that the section, 1:5-2:2 constitutes a unit by itself. This is convincing. These verses are united by the three secessionist boasts (or claims) concerning sin, “if we say”, ἐὰν εἴπωμεν, in 1:6, 1:8 and 1:10. Each is followed symmetrically by a condemnatory statement in the same verse, 1:6, 1:8 and 1:10, and in the next verse, 1:7, 1:9 and 2:1, by a corrective statement of a positive consequence for us if we do not say what is stigmatised, but rather the reverse.

The introduction to the unit is in 1:5. The preliminary statement that ἡ ἀγγελία, “the message” which “we” have heard from Jesus himself, that God is light and that in God there is no darkness, is introduced as a prelude to a discourse on sin in 1:6-2:1. Symmetrically, its conclusion is in 2:2, where the discourse on sin at 1:6-2:1 is climaxed by the crowning statement that Jesus himself, from whom ἡ ἀγγελία, “the message” has come, is the ἰλασμός for our sins. So 1:5-2:2 form a single,

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129 Brown, *Epistles of St John*, 128; Marshall, *Epistles of John*, 26; Lieu, *I, II and III John*, 48. Matthew Jensen argues that 1 John 1:5 forms a conclusion to 1:1-4, contending that the theme of sin that so dominates 1:6-2:1 is absent from 1:1-5, and the first ἐὰν εἴπωμεν statement of 1:6-7 requires both premises of 1:1-5, fellowship with God, and God as light without darkness: Matthew Jensen, “The Structure and Argument of 1 John,” *JSNT* 35.1 (2012): 54-73, 63. The problem with this proposal is that in 1:6, κοινωνίαν ἐχομεν μετ’ αὐτοῦ is a clear reference back to ὁ θεὸς in 1:5. Jensen concedes this, but if ὁ θεὸς in 1:5 is referred to as being the one in whom there is no σκοτία, “darkness”, surely that affirmation is to be contrasted with 1:6, in which human “walking in darkness” is identified with sin.

130 So Brown, *Epistles of St John*, 128. Do’s contrary proposal, that the scholarly view that 1 John 2:1-2 has continuity with 1:8-10 needs re-evaluation because of Greek textual breaks at 1:10 and 2:1, (Do, *Re-thinking the Death of Jesus*, 33-34) affords insufficient weight to the thematic continuity demonstrable from 1:5 to 2:2, with the latter providing a climax, as will shortly be demonstrated.

131 Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 142.

symmetrical unit. The concluding statement that Jesus is the ἱλασμός for our sins is thus intimately connected to, and is the remedy for, the preceding secessionist “boasts”. This statement is especially connected, as we shall see, to that in 1:7, that the blood of Jesus, God’s son, cleanses us from all sin. It is by examining the context in 1 John 1:5-2:2 that we shall uncover what Jesus being ἱλασμός for our sins in 2:2 truly signifies.

In 1 John 1:5, ἀκηκόαμεν, “we have heard”, echoes the same word in 1:1, and ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, “from him” refers back to τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “with his Son Jesus Christ” in 1:3. Both emphasize the direct, dominical source of ἡ ἁγγελία, “the message” in 1:5. The statement that ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστιν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία,"God is light and there is no darkness in him at all" in 1:5 might seem tautologous. But σκοτία stands as a prelude to the statement in 1:6, where the word is repeated.

In 1:6 we find the first boast or claim of the secessionists, ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ’ αὐτοῦ, “if we say we have fellowship with him”, followed by the first rejoinder, ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατῶμεν, ψευδόμεθα καὶ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν, “we walk in darkness, we tell lies and do not do what is true”. The term “fellowship”, κοινωνία harks back to the “little prologue” in 1:3 where it refers to ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ”. This contrasts the false claim to fellowship by the secessionists with the true fellowship with the Father and with one another. Walking in darkness, ἐν τῷ σκότει in 1:6 is associated with lying and failure to do what is true, literally "the truth", τὴν ἀλήθειαν, which is to be attained by adherence to ἡ ἁγγελία (1:5). Later John explains that to walk in darkness is to be like Cain, and to walk in the light is to love one’s brother (1 John 2:9:10), and that the God who is light is revealed by the God who is love (1 John 1:5, 4:7-12, and 4:8). Darkness is associated with hatred, and light with love.
First John 1:6 sets up the contrasting, corrective statement in 1:7a, that if we walk “in the light”, ἐν τῷ φωτὶ, we will have κοινωνία with each other. This is immediately followed by the consequential statement in 1:7b which is the hinge of the whole unit, τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας, “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin”. As Rhea Jones remarks, “while blood [in 1:7] conjures up the language of sacrifice, it functions here primarily in a human direction of removing guilt”.133 And as Brown notes, the Jewish outlook on cleansing from sin is well summarised in the words of Leviticus 17:11, where blood is given to the people “so you may make atonement with it upon the altar for your souls”: Brown considers that John had in mind in 1:7 a particular OT sacrifice, that on the Day of Atonement, when he described the shedding of Jesus’ blood.134 This is convincing, because 1:7 states a remedy for human sin by bloodshedding, which is the precise point of the Day of Atonement sacrifice referred to in Leviticus 25:9, analysed in our examination of the use of ἱλασμός in the LXX. If, as argued above, ἱλασμός is better translated in Leviticus 25:9 (LXX) as “purgation”, then the author of 1 John conveys in his use of καθαρίζειν in 1 John 1:7, not the idea of propitiation, but of expiation or removal of sin. This bears on the author’s use of ἱλασμός in 2:2.

In 1:8 the second negative statement occurs: first the boast or claim, ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν, then the rejoinder, ἑαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν. The word ἀλήθεια recalls the first rejoinder in 1:6, and ultimately ἡ ἀγγελία, the “message” in 1:5, introduced by the “little prologue”, 1:1-4. Denial of sin in oneself contradicts ἡ ἀγγελία, and ultimately Ὄ ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς in 1:1.

133 Rhea Jones, 1, 2 and 3 John, 40. This is the first of several metaphors used in 1 John to describe what has been done to sin, followed by forgiveness (1:9; 2:12), expiation (2:2; 4:10) and “taken away” (3:5): Black, “The First, Second, and Third Letters of John,” 386.
134 Brown, The Epistles of John, 203.
In 1:9a comes the corrective, ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πιστός ἐστιν καὶ δίκαιος ἤν ἁρπῇ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας, “if we confess our sins, the faithful and just one will forgive us our sins”. The thought here is similar to the rejoinder in 1:7: if we confess our sins, we recognise the truth of the message, ἡ ἀγγελία about ourselves. If that were all, the action would be purely between the Father and sinful humanity.

However the next statement in 1:9b, καὶ καθαρίσῃ ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας, “and cleanses us from all our unrighteousness” repeats the thought in 1:7 of purgation or expiation by cleansing from unrighteousness, which is a state or quality of sinfulness, not a particular evil deed. This harks back again to the idea in Leviticus 25:9 in the LXX of ἱλασμός for sin by cleansing sacrifice. First John 1:9b depicts what may be described theologically as an action by the Father and the Son in concert, earlier depicted in 1:7. In 1:9b, the Son’s blood cleanses us from unrighteousness, καθαρίσῃ ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας. Therefore it is the Father who gives the Son, whose blood cleanses us from all sin in 1:7.

In 1 John 1:10 we find the third boast or claim of the secessionists, ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν, “if we say that we have not sinned”, followed by the first rejoinder, ψεύστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτόν, “we make him into a liar”. Here ψεύστην echoes ψευδόμεθα in 1:6, and ποιοῦμεν harks back to the same word in 1:6. In 1:6 it is we who lie. In 1:10 it is really our lie, by denying sin, that portrays the divine ἀγγελία in 1:5 as false; the use of the perfect, ἡμαρτήκαμεν, indicates a past action with continuing results.135 The consequence is in the second pejorative statement in 1:10, ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἐστιν ἐν ἡμῖν, “his word is not in us”. “His word”, ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ again refers to the divine ἀγγελία in 1:5: the idea is that we have not understood the divine message.

135 Rhea Jones, 1, 2, and 3 John, 42.
One corrective appears in 2:1a, Τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ ἁμάρτητε, “my little ones, I write these things to you, so you may not sin” (cf. 1:7, 1:9). However the writer does not expect that his words will be a “cure-all” for sinful humanity. He qualifies his optimism by a second corrective statement in 2:1b of the remedy for sin: καὶ ἐάν τις ἁμάρτῃ, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον, “but if anyone sins, we have an intercessor with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one”. The aorist ἁμάρτῃ in 2:1, in contrast to the present form of the verb in 1:8 and the perfect in 1:10, suggests that individual acts in the definite past, rather than a process, are referred to in 2:1.136 The theology is that even though we have sinned, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα. As Vouga says, the action of the παράκλητος in 2:1 is to effect a godly reversal (Entsündigung) of the effects of human sin.137 The preposition πρὸς in 2:1 need not imply that God is the recipient of Jesus’ advocacy by his propitiatory death: it can be translated “with”, in the sense of “in company with” the Father.138 The statement in 2:1 that Jesus Christ, God’s Son is παράκλητος for us refers back to the κοινωνία we have with God and with God’s Son, Jesus Christ in 1:3. First John’s use of “paraclete”, παράκλητος in 1 John 2:1 is linked to its use in John 14:16 to show that as Jesus has lived among us as a manifestation of divine love, so, as Burridge says, ἄλλον παράκλητον, “another advocate” (John 14:16) will continue to offer that love.139 The discourse in 1 John 1:5-2:2 focusses on sin and its remedy, and 2:1, as the climax of the unit approaches, links the remedy for sin, Jesus’ intercession for us, with our communion with the Father and the Son. But this advocacy does not avail us, and we do not receive God’s cleansing, unless we confess our sin (1:9). Similarly, the phrase Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον takes us back to

137 Vouga, Die Johannesbriefe, 32.
139 Burridge, Imitating Jesus, 301-302.
1:9b. The thought is that Jesus, God’s anointed, the righteous one pleads for us with the Father, and expiates our unrighteousness.

In symmetry with the introduction to the passage in 1:5, the climax to it, how sin is dealt with, is stated in 2:2a: καὶ ἀυτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστίν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, “and he is the expiation of our sins”. Here ἱλασμός provides a climax to, and a summary of the theology of the whole passage – especially the hinge in 1:7b, τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας. It is God’s action, not ours, that provides τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. God is the subject, not the object of the action. God has by the gift of the Son expiated our sins – Jesus has not propitiated the Father. Expiation “is not a human maneuver that changes God from furious to loving: expiation is an expression of God’s love, that removes sin from the sinner”.140

To return to Leviticus 25:9b, we have seen in chapter 2 that “wipe” or “remove” is a more convincing translation there of ἱλασμός, ἱλασμός in the LXX, than “propitiation”.141 The idea in Leviticus 25:9b is divine cleansing, removal or expiation of sin after the appropriate cultic sacrifice is performed. As we have seen, expiation or forgiveness is not there seen as a physical effect of the priest’s actions: they are a prerequisite, as is contrition, and it is God that grants the resulting expiation or purification from sin.142 Certainly the priest is the subject of the action, but the person or object being cleansed is the direct object, and God the indirect.

141 So indeed Brown, Epistles of John, 220. The usual translation, “atonement”, is in reality neutral.
First John 1:7 introduces the same idea by its use of the verbal form καθαρίζει. Similarly in 2:2 God removes or expiates sin after the appropriate action, confession of sin (1:9) is performed. And God’s forgiveness of sin is through God’s gift of the cleansing blood of the Son (1:7). This is not analogous to Genesis 22:13 where a ram is provided by God as a sacrifice in place of Abraham’s son Isaac. In 2:2a ἱλασμός does capture the idea of sacrifice on the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 25:9, as indicated by the use of περὶ. Indeed in 2:2a ἱλασμός does connote sacrifice for sin, but one must not think of it in the usual way, the giving of “life for life”. It is not God’s gift of the Son so we can appropriate his gift of the Son, whose cleansing blood provides forgiveness or expiation, ἱλασμός of sin, as in Psalm 130:4. The divine disposition implied here is merciful love of humanity, not divine displeasure requiring placation.

In 2:2b-c the corrective statement in 2:2a is extended to “the world”: οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου. Jesus Christ is ἱλασμός – not offered as ἱλασμός, and is thereby the expiation, not only for “our” sins, i.e. those of John’s believing community, but for those of the whole world. This is a “theological claim, not in keeping with limited atonement”. There are many negative statements about ὁ κόσμος, “the world” in 1 John (e.g. 2:15-17, 3:1, 4:1, 4:4-5 – but cf. 4:9, 4:14). One might say that the author recognises the world’s corruption, but also affirms God’s love for the whole world and God’s willingness to offer the Son as its means of cleansing. The thought in 2:2b-c is that the members of John’s community do not themselves hold the key to expiation of sin – only God does, and then only after confession and

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144 Ernst Gaugler, Die Johannesbriefe (Zürich: Evz-Verlag, 1964), 66.
146 Rightly, Do notes that the triple use of περὶ in 2:2 is followed by no less than three genitives, τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, τῶν ἡμετέρων and ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, intensifying the meaning of ἱλασμός in the sense of removing sins: Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 191-192.
147 Rhea Jones, 1, 2 and 3 John, 45.
repentance. It is a strong corrective to the exclusivism of the secessionists.

Summarising 1:5-2:2, there is a stepped build-up, beginning with the opening assertion that God is light (1:5), through the secessionists’ boasts or claims and their negative consequences (1:6, 8, 10) and the rejoinders to them (1:7, 9 and 2:1), to the final theological affirmation in 2:2a that Jesus Christ is ἱλασμός, the expiation, for our sins, and indeed for those of the whole world (2:2b). As Culpepper says, “the three statements regarding the consequences of denying the reality of sin can serve as an outline for this section, with verse 5 standing as an introduction and 2:1-2 functioning as a conclusion”. The triumphant claim in 2:2a is inextricably linked to 1:7-9, where the blood of Jesus is the cleansing agent for our sin. Not only is the idea of cleansing of sin by blood in 1:7 picked up in 2:2a: so also is the idea of divine forgiveness and cleansing in 1:9. Viewed that way, ἱλασμός in 2:2a is used in the same way, to connote cleansing or covering of sin, as we find in many of its occurrences in the LXX where it translates ἄφες words. Viewed against the background of first-century Jewish thought, available to the author of 1 John, there is a strong likelihood that ἱλασμός in 2:2a conveys, not the idea of propitiation of divine wrath, but of covering or cleansing of sin in the LXX sense we have traced.

As we have seen, the idea often conveyed by ἱλασμός in the LXX is cleansing, often by cultic sacrifice involving bloodshedding, but on occasion by forgiveness as a divine act, unprompted by any human rite (cf. Psalm 130:4, Daniel 9:9). Those who would make the leap from this idea of cleansing or covering of sin to a substitution of Jesus as propitiatory victim to slake God’s anger for the animals sacrificed in the

OT do not satisfactorily explain why ἁλασμός is frequently used in the LXX to connote divine forgiveness.

The true meaning of 1 John 2:1-2a is that the Father freely gives the Son in love. This is an idea which becomes much clearer in 4:10 where ἁλασμός again appears. Thus by the Son’s gift of his life he becomes an advocate, a παράκλητος with the Father, for sinful humanity – not to assuage divine anger, which propitiation implies, but to extend forgiveness by his own bloodshedding. To postulate that the Father’s anger is propitiated by the Son’s death not only ignores the absence of any reference to divine wrath at 2:1-2a (and for that matter in the whole unit, 1:5-2:2) but also breaks apart the loving co-operation between the Father and the Son which is implicit in 2:1-2a. We shall come shortly to the profound implications of these conclusions for a peacemaking, non-violent hermeneutic of 1 John.

(ii) 1 John 4:10

Most scholars see 1 John 4:10 as part of a unit devoted to God’s character as love, although they vary as to its boundaries. Westcott and Painter see it as running from 4:7 to the end of the chapter, 4:21. With deference to many who see this unit as extending from 4:7 to 5:4, Painter’s argument, that a new section may be recognised at 5:1 because the focus shifts more directly to Christology, is convincing. From 4:7 to 4:21, apart from 4:15, we do not find any explicit reference to Jesus’ true nature, as opposed to God’s gift of the Son in love (4:9-10).

149 Parsenios, First, Second, and Third John, 66.
150 Law, Tests of Life, 16 (4:7-5:3a); Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 206 (4:10-5:4), Brown, Epistles of John, 513 (4:7-5:4a); Strecker, Johannine Epistles, 142 (4:7-5:4a); Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 232 (4:7-5:4); Lieu, I, II & III John, 175 (4:7-5:4).
151 Westcott, Epistles of St John, xlvi; Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 265.
152 Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 265-272.
But at 5:1 a new note – apart from a side reference in 4:15 – is struck: the necessity of belief in Jesus as the Christ, ὁ Χριστός, God’s anointed one. This is followed by an extended statement in 5:2-5 of the connection between Christological belief and love of one another, shown by love of God and obedience to God’s commandments, and victory over the world through Christological faith. It is appropriate then to see 4:10 as part of an extended discussion of the relationship between human and divine love in 4:7-21. Within that unit, 4:7-12 stands as a sub-unit proclaiming that God’s love is the fons et origo, the source and origin of love for one another. This can be seen from the change of subject at 4:13, to the assurance that we know that we abide in God and God in us because of the gift of the Spirit, whereas 4:12 speaks of God’s love perfected in us by love of one another. It is appropriate therefore to see where 4:10 sits in the context of this sub-unit, 4:7-12.

The sub-unit begins with 4:7a, where we are commanded: Ἀγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν, “beloved ones, let us love one another, because love is from God”. The point of mutual love is that we share with each other the love God has for us. This is confirmed in 4:7b, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ γινώσκει τὸν θεόν, “everyone who loves is born of God and knows God”.153 This completes the triangular relationship: God loves us, and in loving one another, we are children of God and we know who God truly is.154

Next in 4:8 we find the converse, negative statement, ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἐγνώκει τὸν θεόν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν, “the one who does not love does not know God, because God is love”. There can be no knowledge of God

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153 Do perceptively notes that the use of the present tense in the phrase γινώσκει τὸν θεόν in 4:7 indicates that the revelation of knowing God is realised now in our loving one another: Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 163.
154 Similarly Lieu, I, II, & III John, 179.
without love of one’s fellow, because God’s own nature is loving.\textsuperscript{155} The yoking together of γεγέννηται and γινώσκει in 4:7b with ἐγνώ in 4:8 forms a linkage between the ideas of birth and knowledge: new birth in God brings knowledge of God as love and love for one another.

At 4:9 we read ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι’ αὐτοῦ: “in this manner the love of God was shown among us, that God sent his Son into the world so we may live through him”. The linkage between 4:8 and 4:9 is that in 4:8 we read that God is love, and in 4:9 that God showed forth his love in sending the Son as a gift of life. The aorist passive ἐφανερώθη in 4:9a indicates that here we are dealing with a past event, the Incarnation, the earthly life of Jesus in its totality.\textsuperscript{156} So God’s present, enduring love for us was shown by the past life and death of the Son ἐν ἡμῖν, among us. This grammatical inference is supported by the statement in 4:9b: there the Son is sent into the world, rather than sent simply to die, even though that is a dimension of being in the world.

Again ἵλασμός marks a climax, this time in 4:10b. But first in 4:10a we read, ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήκαμεν τὸν θεόν, ἀλλ’ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, “in this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us”. It is striking that the perfect tense, ἠγαπήκαμεν is used to convey the past continuous, that we “were loving” God, which implies an incomplete action, whereas the aorist ἠγάπησεν portrays God’s action as a single, decisive past event, of which we as mere humans are

\textsuperscript{155} As Do rightly notes, ὁ θεὸς ἠγάπη ἐστίν is the “main statement of the entire passage”, and “here one does not detect God’s wrath being averted or the propitiation being accomplished”, and “the words ἰδίως and ὡς are absent”: Do, Re-Thinking the Death of Jesus, 271. Do cogently proposes that ἵλασμός in 1 John 4:10 is to be interpreted as connoting expiation of sin in light of the use of ἠγάπη in this verse: ibid, 272-274.
\textsuperscript{156} Culy, I, II, III John: A Handbook on the Greek Text, 107; Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, 38; Klauck, Der Erste Johannesbrief, 251; Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 171.
incapable. The idea is that God loved us once and for all, in a single saving act.\footnote{Do’s analysis of these differing tenses in 4:10 is similar to that adopted in this study: “though the two actions are in the past and completed, one differs from the other with respect to duration and simple act”, so that “ηγαπηκαμεν refers to a ‘durative’ action of human love toward God”, whereas “ηγαπησεν ... makes clear that God’s love for human beings is historical”: Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 181-182.}

What that act was is revealed in 4:10b, καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, “and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins”. The use of περὶ here rather than ὑπὲρ is significant. The word ὑπὲρ appears twice in 3:16, which affirms that Jesus gave up his life ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, “for us”, so that we ought to give up our lives ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν, “for the [our] brother”. This suggests that the idea in 4:10b is different from, though similar to, that in 3:16. In 4:10b the thought is that Jesus as ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν is an agent who has an effect on something. This is consistent with the author’s use of ἱλασμὸς in 2:2a. The idea is of Jesus cleansing us from sin. First John 4:10b makes explicit what is implicit in 2:1-2: that God in loving co-operation gives the Son, God’s “one and only”,\footnote{Black, “The First, Second and Third Letters of John”, 430.} as ἱλασμὸς for our sins. Significantly, in 1 John (and John’s Gospel) the title “son” is reserved for Jesus.\footnote{Rhea Jones, 1, 2 and 3 John, 182.} First John 4:10 is also in a sense epexegetical: that is, it elaborates upon and clarifies 4:9. The “sent” statements in 4:9, 10 and 14 make divine love and life the context for interpreting ἱλασμὸς in 4:10b. Indeed the ἱλασμὸς statement in 4:10b, καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, appears to be in synchrony with the wording of the soteriological statement in 4:9b, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεός εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι’ αὐτοῦ.\footnote{Morgen, Les épîtres de Jean, 169.} One must not, however, miss the dimension in 4:10b of the “scandal of the cross”: the misunderstanding of liberal theology has often been to
under-emphasize God’s own sacrifice in the sending of the Son, and to see it only as the proclamation of God’s love.161

In fact 1 John 4:10b is somewhat reminiscent of “you atoned for our iniquities”, τὸς ἀσέβειας ἡμῶν σὺ Ἰλασθη in Psalm 64(65):3 in the LXX, noted in the preceding chapter. In both clauses God is the subject, not the object of the action, and in both, ἱλασμὸς or a cognate refers to a divine gift to effect forgiveness of sin. In both clauses God provides atonement for sin – not humankind.

In 4:11 we find ἀγαπητοί, εἰ ὦτως ὁ θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἣμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν, “because God loved us so much, we too ought to love one another”. The aorist ἠγάπησεν here again implies a once and for all, finished act of love by God. This echoes the aorist ἀπέστειλεν in 4:10b. The following clause, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν, returns us to the present. The explicit nominative subject pronoun ἡμεῖς highlights the necessary connection between God’s actions and those of the letter’s audience.162 The idea is that God’s expiation of sin by sending the Son is the founding act of love, which binds us in turn to love one another. This is connected with the theme of life through God’s sending the Son into the world in 4:9.

In 4:12a we find θεὸν οὐδεὶς πώποτε τεθέαται, “no-one has ever seen God”. The point here is that we have not known the Father first-hand: our means of knowledge of God the Father is through the Son. The perfect τεθέαται suggests that no-one has ever seen God so far, conveying the meaning that at this time our only knowledge of God comes through the Son. Realised eschatology is the theme, but this does not exclude direct knowledge of God at some future time. Use of the

161 Gaugler, Die Johannesbriefe, 228.
verb θεάωμαι here, rather than the simpler ὁράω (cf. 1:1; 1:2, 1:3), suggests, not simple observation but seeing with insight. The idea is that no-one has ever understood God by direct experience.

So in 4:12b we read ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ὡλλήλους, ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν τετελειωμένη ἐστιν, “if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is made perfect in us”. This recalls the idea in 4:7b, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ γινώσκει τὸν θεὸν, “whoever loves is born from God and knows God”. The additional idea in 4:12b is that ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν τετελειωμένη ἐστιν. This implies that it is possible for God’s love to be perfectly reflected in our love for one another. Here the passive (or middle) participle τετελειωμένη implies an external actor, other than ourselves – none other than God. So the additional idea here is that God has enabled God’s love to be made perfect in us by our mutual love. How? By God’s own final act of love, spoken of in 4:10b, ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, “he sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins”. Thus the idea of expiation of sin through the gift of the Son is inextricably linked with the obligation of mutual love. This is the moral outworking of the divine gift of the Son to give life through him (4:9).

The context in which ἱλασμός is used in this sub-unit therefore suggests strongly that the idea is not propitiation of divine wrath – which is nowhere mentioned – but a cleansing of sin by a loving deity through the sending of the Son, including the self-giving, self-sacrificial death of the Son, releasing humanity to love one another and allow God to make his love perfect in us.

164 The masculine pronouns are used here only for textual accuracy.
Conclusions

After a reasonably extensive, but necessarily selective overview of scholarship on ἱλασμὸς in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, we have seen that much the same evidence has been interpreted in different ways, as is so often the case. Our own investigation of the use of ἱλασμὸς and some of its cognates in the LXX in chapter 2 does not yield a predominantly propitiatory meaning for this term. Its predominant use in the LXX is to connote cleansing, or expiation of sin, by God, not by humanity.

More help comes from the immediate literary context in which ἱλασμὸς occurs in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 than from the LXX evidence, and we have dealt with that in our exegesis. Context always influences the meaning of a word, and words always have context, from which their precise meaning may often be determined. However this does not mean that the LXX evidence provides no guidance. Rather, it provides the Jewish LXX background, of which the author must undoubtedly have been aware, against which the term ἱλασμὸς is used in 1 John. Although this LXX background does not by itself determine the literal meaning of ἱλασμὸς, and still less the theology it expresses, it provides some potent clues as to the author’s possible intentions in his use of this word.

We have seen how Judith Lieu argues that where 1 John refers to the undeserved death of God’s faithful ones [in the LXX], “the traditional language of sacrifice was being recast without any detailed reflection on why and how their deaths might be efficacious”.165 As noted, this view is persuasive because, as with Perkins and Edwards, Lieu holds that the debate over whether ἱλασμὸς in 1 John 2:2 or 4:10 refers to propitiation or expiation is less important than recognition of the Father’s love in sending the Son to be the means of our reconciliation with God by dealing with our sin (4:10).

165 Lieu, I, II, and III John, 64.
This leads to the argument espoused by Marianne Meye Thompson that 1 John 2:2 is to be read in light of 4:10. Many interpreters have tended to read 4:10 through a propitiatory grid, having arrived at this by noting the use of ἱλασμὸς in 2:2, concluding then that its use there is propitiatory after uncovering what they say are LXX examples of such use. Morris and Hill are prime representatives of this viewpoint. However our reading of 2:2 in light of 1:7 and 1:9, as explained above, undoes this reading of ἱλασμὸς in 2:2 and 4:10.

Furthermore, the use of ἱλασμὸς in 4:10 sheds light on its use in 2:2. In opening with the statement ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, is not John affirming in 4:10 that God’s sending the Son as ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν is the ultimate act of costly, self-denying love? No wrathful Father is in view in 4:10 – so why should this idea be read into 2:2, when again the idea of reassuring love is introduced by 2:1? Jesus is portrayed in 2:1 as a παράκλητον ... πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, followed by the reassurance in 2:2a that καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. This affirms that the loving bond between us and the Father is not broken by sin, because we have a παράκλητος, a “friend at court” (2:1b) in Jesus, God’s Son, who cleanses us from all sin (1:7b, 9). The idea of the gift of the Son in 2:1-2 is further expanded and explained by 4:10. There it is explicit that God’s gift of Jesus as ἱλασμὸν...περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν is an act of divine love. First John 4:10b also makes explicit another thought that is implicit in 2:1-2: that God in loving co-operation gives the Son as ἱλασμὸς for our sins.

We may surely maintain a degree of “reverent agnosticism” as to precisely how in 2:2a Jesus is the ἱλασμὸν...περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, while emphasizing God’s costly love in sending the Son to cleanse God’s undeserving people of their sin.

What is notable from the literary context in which ἱλασμὸς is used in 1 John 2:2 (and 4:10) is that nowhere in the surrounding verses is there any
reference to divine wrath – still less the need to propitiate it: what is portrayed is the action of a loving God, taking the initiative in sending the Son. To summarise the foregoing exegesis of 1 John 1:5-10, the author is primarily dealing with human waywardness and recalcitrant sin. There is characteristic Johannine dualism in several opposing statements. God is light and in God there is no darkness (1:5). We lie if we claim fellowship with God, yet walk in darkness (1:6). If we walk in the light, we have fellowship, and Jesus’ blood cleanses us from sin (1:7). If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1:8). If we confess our sin, he (God) who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from unrighteousness (1:9). If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and God’s word is not in us (1:10).

What is the antidote? In 2:1-2 the author provides it:

I am writing these things so you may not sin, but if any one [of you] does, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the expiation to deal with our sin. And not for ours only, but for those of the whole world.

The antidote is provided, not by propitiation of divine wrath provoked by human sin, but because God, who the author later explains is love, anticipates our sinning and provides the Son as an atoning sacrifice to cleanse us from sin, as 1:7 and 9 foreshadow. God is the actor at all points, and not the object of a propitiatory sacrifice to turn aside divine wrath. The object is not God, but rather human sin itself. And this gift is available not only for the author’s community, his immediate addressees, but for the whole world.

In 1 John 4:7-10, we see similar ideas building on one another. The author urges mutual love in his community, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of, and thereby knows God (4:7). And then comes the contrary statement: whoever does not love does not know God,

166 Rhea Jones, 1, 2, and 3 John, 44. Do, in a valuable excursus on the biblical concept of divine wrath, referring to the “overreach” of some scholarship on this subject (Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 217-241), which is unfortunately outside the scope of this study, draws out a cogent distinction between wrath as a divine action, and the attribute of love, which is constitutive of the divine nature.
who is love (4:8). How was God’s love revealed? In this way: God sent God’s only Son into the world that we may live through him (4:9). Love does not consist in our love for God, but in God’s love for us, in that God sent God’s only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins (4:10). Since God loved us so much, we should love one another (4:11). Again, there is no mention of divine wrath over sin in these verses. Rather, God’s love in giving the Son as the atoning sacrifice for sin is made the mainspring of the commandment that we should love one another, as God has loved us. We must act as God did. Again, God is the actor, the subject of the action at all points, and the object is human sin. The prime emphasis here is not on divine anger, but on Jesus’ role in covering or removing sin.

Do’s proposal, that the uses of the ἰλασμός cognates, ἱλέως in Matthew 16:22 and Hebrews 8:12, ἱλασθέντι in Luke 18:13, ἱλαστήριον in Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5, and ἱλασκοσθαί in Hebrews 2:17, are not propitiatory, but rather connote petitioning for, or granting of, mercy, and are congruent with an expiatory, rather than a propitiatory understanding of ἰλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, is cogent, but outside the scope of this study. It reflects the view that in an exegetical study of a Johannine text, NT citations ought be confined to comparisons with other Johannine texts, John’s Gospel in particular.

We have seen that Girard writes that “there is nothing in the Gospels to suggest that the death of Jesus is a sacrifice, whatever definition (expiation, substitution, etc.) we may give for that sacrifice”. Certainly a propitiatory sacrifice whereby Jesus offers himself to the Father as the price of sin, which would otherwise be paid by sinful humanity, should not be read into 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, as many have done. But in the sense that the Father gave the Son, who “for our sake...was crucified” as the Nicene Creed says,

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168 Do, *Re-thinking the Death of Jesus*, 200-206: the summary of Do’s views here is brief, and may do some violence to the detail of his proposal.
Jesus’ death is a *sacrificial* one, wrought by both the Father and the Son in love, for the cleansing of sin, as seen in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10.

As noted earlier, Aulen is a proponent of a non-violent *Christus Victor* model of the Atonement. This view is in part consistent with 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, in that the Father emerges, not as an angry, punitive Godhead who requires the death of the Son to pay the price of human sin, but as the giver of the Son. The Son cleanses human sin by his saving life and death. This death is self-sacrificial, and the Son does not resist it. Yet it cleanses us of sin. Jesus is the “lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”: John 1:29. He is the “lamb” of Revelation 5:9 who was “slaughtered” and who “ransomed for God” many from every tribe and language and nation. So he is the *victor* over sin. And he enables us also to triumph over the world by faith in him (cf. 1 John 5:4). But some peacemaking theologians give insufficient emphasis to Jesus’ cleansing of sin by his blood (cf. 1 John 1:7) as the ἴλασμός for it, preferring to stress his non-resistance to his fate. The *Christus Victor* model of the Atonement fits 1 John 5:1-5, in that conquest of ὁ κόσμος, “the world”, here symbolising human sin, occurs through our obedience to God’s commandments, our being born of God and our faith, in that our faith is in Jesus as ἴλασμός for our sin. But a *sacrificial* model, as distinct from a penal substitutionary one, best fits Jesus’ role as ἴλασμός for sin through his cleansing of our sins by his blood (1 John 1:7, 9; 2:2), having been sent by the Father as ἴλασμός for our sins, in love for us (4:10).

Peacemaking theology on occasions misses the depth of Jesus’ role as expiation of sin by his sacrificial, cleansing death in 1 John, but the picture of God it presents, as loving reconciler of humanity to God’s own self, is nevertheless broadly consistent and reconcilable with that in 1 John in the passages we have examined.
Chapter 4 - Σφαζω and ἀνθρωποκτόνος in 1 John

Introduction

In 1 John 3:11 the author’s audience is enjoined to love one another, and in the very next verse they are told not to be like Cain, who murdered his brother. Cain is the very antithesis of love, and murder is the antithesis of love for the writer of 1 John. The verb σφαζω, although it is usually translated here simply as kill, is used also in 3:15. It carries the sense of violent death or slaughter, and is used elsewhere in the NT only in Revelation, where it occurs eight times. It is very significant that of all the evil acts that the author could have depicted as the antithesis of love, the ultimate act of interpersonal violence, murder, is the one chosen.

This linkage has been of great interest for peacemaking theology. As but one example, as we have seen, Girard offers 1 John as a “genuine epistemology of love”, citing 1 John 2:10-11. He writes that the love of which John speaks here “reveals the victimage processes that underlie the meanings of culture”, which is “no purely ‘intellectual’ process”, because “the very detachment of the person who contemplates the warring brothers is an illusion”. He says “love is the only true revelatory power because it escapes from, and strictly limits, the spirit of revenge and recrimination”. To Girard, 1 John 3:14-15, “all who hate a brother or sister are murderers”, shows that “every negation of the other leads... towards expulsion and murder”. Thus he argues that Cain, mentioned in 1 John just before this citation, says in effect that “now I have killed my brother, everyone can kill me”. Put another way, my act of ultimate violence on my brother unleashes the possibility of the same act by another on me.

1 Brown, Epistles of John, 441.
2 Girard, Things Hidden, 277.
3 Ibid.
The word ἀνθρωποκτόνος, "murderer" is also used in 3:15, and its being yoked together with σφαξω in 3:12, intensifying its meaning, makes it clear that in the author’s eyes, Cain’s act is not simply an impulse killing, which might be regarded as manslaughter, but rather a gross violation of all that Abel had the right to expect from his brother – in particular, love. Clearly, then, a study of these two words in their context in 1 John 3 will do much to illuminate the author’s thought on the whole subject of brotherly love.

The author depicts Cain as one whose deeds were πονηρός, evil (3:12b), and provides this as the reason for Cain’s act in murdering his brother. The author’s proposition is not that Cain killed his brother, so his acts were evil, but rather vice versa. That linkage, as we shall see, is not present in Genesis 4:4-9, where Cain was angry that the Lord had regard for Abel’s offering but not his own, and his face fell, so the Lord warned Cain that sin was lurking at the door, desiring him, but that he must master it, but Cain instead killed his brother in the field. Despite the Lord’s curse on Cain (4:10-11) there is no indication of any prior disposition in Cain to evil acts, nor any direct association between Cain and Satan, or the forces of evil generally.

Why then does 1 John 3:12b affirm that Cain’s acts were evil as the source of his action in killing his brother? As we shall see, there is a considerable thought-shift between the Cain and Abel story in the Torah and its being taken up in 1 John, marked by the development of the idea of Cain’s failure to master sin, which lurks at the door (Genesis 4:7b), to a point where Cain is himself representative of the Evil One and a prototype of all that is evil in humanity. This, as we shall see, is to be seen particularly in the writings of Philo of Alexandria and Josephus in the intertestamental period, and in intertestamental pseudepigraphical writing itself. Although there is no proof

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that the author of 1 John read these works, they reflect the Jewish tradition standing behind 1 John.

To demonstrate this thought-shift, and to assess its influence on the reworking of the Cain and Abel story by the author of 1 John, it is necessary first to look at the meaning of the story in its original Hebrew OT setting and in the LXX. Then we shall examine how it is taken up in a representative sample of pseudepigraphical writing in the intertestamental period, including 1 Enoch, Jubilees and the Testament of Abraham, and still later by Philo and Josephus. Then and only then may we attempt an exegesis of the use of σφαίρως and ἀνθρωποκτόνος in 1 John. In so doing we must look at 1 John’s appropriation of some words and ideas from the LXX in Genesis 4:1-16, from 1 Enoch, Jubilees and the Testament of Abraham, and from Philo and Josephus.

This tracing of thought-shifts in the Cain and Abel story from the Hebrew OT through the LXX, 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and the Testament of Abraham and the accounts by Philo and Josephus to 1 John 3 has been done many times. The contribution this chapter seeks to make is to assess whether 1 John’s reworking of the Cain and Abel story has been validly appropriated in recent peacemaking theology. To do so it is necessary to trace the Jewish tradition lying behind the one specific OT reference in 1 John to the Cain and Abel story, and thus to lay bare why it is so necessary to the author’s argument to make a direct linkage between hatred and violence, murder of the brother.

**Cain and Abel in the Hebrew Bible**

Significantly, in Genesis 4:1-16 the story of Cain and Abel is placed straight

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6 A full survey is impossible here for reasons of space.

7 See for example Brown, *Epistles of John*, 442-443; similarly Painter, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 233; Grayston, *Johannine Epistles*, 110; Rhea Jones, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 137; and most recently and comprehensively in John Byron, *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition: Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the First Sibling Rivalry* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011). This chapter is much indebted to Byron’s work.
after the account in Genesis 3 of Adam and Eve’s primal act of disobedience by eating of the fruit of the tree in the garden, leading to their expulsion from the Garden. Once again a human, Cain, is presented by the Lord with a choice, to master sin, which is “lurking at the door” (Genesis 4:7), and chooses wrongly. It is seen by many as an expanded genealogy of Adam.\(^8\) Therefore in the past the Cain and Abel story has been seen as purely collective or aetiological, relating figuratively the estrangement of Cain’s descendants, living on inferior land compared to those of Seth. Gunkel saw Cain as “the progenitor of a people”, arguing that the statement that Cain’s murder will be avenged sevenfold only makes sense if seen as a “poetic statement that every son of Cain will be avenged”: it is part of a legend which “understands peoples as individual persons”.\(^9\) More commentators follow Westermann in seeing this story as the account of two prototypical individuals, Cain and Abel; Westermann quotes with approval Cassuto’s interpretation of the story, that “Cain, who killed his brother, is the prototype of the murderer”, and that “all human beings are brothers and whoever sheds human blood sheds the blood of his brother”.\(^10\)

Genesis 4:4-5 in the Hebrew provides no reason for the Lord’s preference for Abel’s offering over Cain’s. Although many have speculated that this divine preference was because Abel’s sacrifice was of firstlings, first-born animals, whereas Cain’s was of the fruit of the ground (4:3),\(^11\) the stronger opinion is that the Lord’s choice of Abel’s offering over Cain’s is but a manifestation of divine favour towards Abel rather than Cain.\(^12\) Any different interpretation relies on implication from the text of something that is not there: a reason, satisfying the modern mind’s expectation of a just and


rational God, why such a deity might favour one brother than the other. In Genesis 4:4, the priestly Pentateuchal source has in general nothing to say about why God “takes knowledge” of sacrifices; God simply “has regard” for them – as Genesis 4:4 puts it, “and he had favour” (יִּשְׁתַּע, lit. “and he looked upon”) for them.  

Perhaps the most that can be said here is that “acceptance and non-acceptance is directed at both givers and gifts”.

A history of interpretation of Genesis 4:4 may be traced, which notes that the Hebrew of 4:4, in describing Abel’s sacrifice, uses two words not used to describe Cain’s offering, מִבְּכָרָה, “firstlings” (lit. “from the first born of”) and וּמִנְחָת, “fat portions” (lit. “from fat of them”), but that מִנְחָת, “his offering” in 4:4 occurs again for the gifts Jacob offered Esau (Genesis 32:14, 19, 21-22; 33:10) and for those which Jacob’s sons took to Egypt (Genesis 43:11, 15, 25-26). This term does not occur again in a worship setting, suggesting that it may simply mean “tribute” (cf. 1 Kings 4:21; 10:25). This is to be contrasted with the LXX, in which the ritual fault with Cain’s offering is stated, suggesting that Cain’s and Abel’s offerings were specifically cultic actions. We shall return to this later.

A narrative approach may be used to posit connections between Genesis 2-3 and 4:1-14, seeing resemblances between Genesis 4:7b and 3:16b, and 4:11a and 3:17b. In both stories the relationship between humans and the earth is important, and words in the opening verses of 4:1-16 such as דָּבָר, “work, serve”, אָדָם, “man” and אָדָמה, “woman” refer back to 2-3.

Verbal and narrative connections between Genesis 2-3 and 4:1-16 may likewise be found, suggesting that the verbs דָּבָר and אָדָם in various

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forms, as used in Genesis 4 in association with each other, hark back to the use of these same terms in Genesis 2-3; as they occur together in the Garden of Eden story: they describe the purpose of human life, and the reappearance of יָדַע in 4:9, “am I my brother’s keeper” suggests a triangular relationship between human beings, the earth and God. In the Garden story in 2:5, “there was no-one to work the ground”. Because יָדַע may also mean “serve”, this suggests a human obligation not to do anything that is not beneficial to the land. In 2:15 God told the יָדַע, “man” to יָדַע, “work” and יָדַע, “keep” the land, suggesting that the human obligation here is to work and guard the Garden reverently.

In 3:23 the Lord God sends the man forth from the Garden to יָדַע, “work” the ground, suggesting that as the man is no longer in paradise, his obligation is to work in service of the land, a more mundane obligation than that which he had in the Garden. Significantly, in 4:2 Cain יָדַע, “works” the soil, but Abel’s occupation, outside of Eden, is not to יָדַע, “keep” sheep, but to יָדַע, “shepherd” them, and therefore Cain’s question whether he must יָדַע, “keep” his brother may be genuine, in that he must already יָדַע, “work” or “serve” the land. But there are three clues in Genesis 4:2-3 that Cain’s obligation is to care for his brother, and that this is associated with his obligation to work, or serve the land: first, Cain’s identification as a “man”; second, Eve’s bearing of “his brother, Abel”, noting that Abel’s name, יָסֵר, which may also mean “mist” or “vapour” or “something transient” (cf. Ecclesiastes 1:2), hints at Cain’s responsibility for his (younger) brother; and third, that Cain must care for the soil. Care for one’s brother is a concept we shall meet later in 1 John.

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18 Ibid, 375.
19 Ibid, 376.
21 Ibid, 377-378.
22 Ibid, 378.
But the association of לֶבֶן as Abel’s name with its very different use in Ecclesiastes 1:2 may be tenuous: Abel is more likely לֶבַע, “insubstantial” because he is murdered. Overall, the Cain and Abel story is a useful model of human obligation as a combination of respect for the land given by God and refraining from harm to one’s brother or sister. This finds an echo in 1 John 3:12.

It has been proposed by Reis that in Genesis 4:8 Cain’s words, “let us go out to the field” connote Cain speaking against his brother, in symmetry with 4:9, “Cain rose up against his brother”, on the ground that לְמַע is to be translated as “spoke”, not “said”, with the result that Cain’s motivation travels inevitably from hatred to murder. Jacobson goes so far as to posit that לְמַע here may have an extended use so as to mean “plot”, suggesting that this is a permissible extension of the meaning “propose” or “purpose” or “plan” for this word. This would have the result that Cain planned Abel’s murder beforehand. Both interpretations are tenuous on exegetical grounds, however, and may press the meaning of לְמַע beyond acceptable limits. As Craig observes, the problem in Genesis 4:8 indeed turns on לְמַע, “said” or “spoke” and his solution is that לְמַע does not have an object: Cain simply “spoke” to Abel, and what he said or intended is not conveyed (as opposed to the LXX version). If so, the Hebrew text is not to be seen as casting Cain as evil before his murder of Abel: the act is what is evil.

In Genesis 4:9 Cain’s answer to the Lord’s question, כָּאֶרֶץ לִבֶּן אָבִיו, “where is your brother Abel?”, is a lie: לָא יָדֵע, “I do not know”. Some have seen Genesis 4:9-16 as a judicial process, ending in Cain being cursed by God and accepting his punishment, the process beginning at 4:9 where Cain is

23 Ibid, 292.
26 Craig, “Questions Outside Eden”, 119.
tried and invited to give his version, which is false.\textsuperscript{27} Or Cain’s reply may be seen as a repudiation of the OT obligations on a man’s brother to be the first to help him in time of trouble (Leviticus 25:48), and to avenge his blood when he is murdered (Numbers 36:12-28).\textsuperscript{28} One way or the other, in the Torah, Cain is simply a foolish man trying to evade responsibility for his evil act by trying to lie his way out of trouble.

The Lord’s curse on Cain (Genesis 4:10-11), whose brother’s blood is “crying out to me from the ground” (4:10) is the real climax of the story.\textsuperscript{29} There are “verbal echoes” here of God’s cursing of the ground upon which Adam stood (Genesis 3:17).\textsuperscript{30} So Cain, having polluted the ground by bloodshedding, is driven from it (4:14).\textsuperscript{31} As Westermann argues, in 4:10 “the most important word in the sentence is *תָּנָא, ‘to me’*,\textsuperscript{32} because there is no such thing as the perfect murder – God will always know of it, so God protects us from complete elimination. God intervenes without a mediator when the blood of the murdered one cries from the ground, and “confronts the doer”.\textsuperscript{33}

Generally the Torah, as we have seen, does not concentrate on Cain’s nature in explaining his murder of his brother. Instead, God’s favour for Abel’s sacrifice sets up a murderous triad, in which Cain, despairing of God’s favour, enviously murders the brother who stands in the way of his attaining it. Having done this, instead of achieving God’s favour, Cain is cursed by God and expelled from his home to the land of Nod. This is a relatively simple tale which makes no attempt to cast Cain as a representative of cosmic evil, in opposition to God himself, a portrait which emerges in later accounts of the story.

\textsuperscript{27} The scholars of this view are summarised in Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 303-304.
\textsuperscript{28} Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 107.
\textsuperscript{30} Alter, *Genesis*, 18.
\textsuperscript{31} Kessler and Deurloo, *Genesis*, 64.
\textsuperscript{32} Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 305.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
Cain and Abel in the Septuagint

The LXX does not use the more intensive σφαίξω, used in 1 John 3:12, to represent Cain’s killing of Abel at 4:8.\(^\text{34}\) Genesis 4:8 in the LXX uses the word ὑπέκτεινεν, which simply means “kill”, to translate the Hebrew וַיִּשְׂאֹב, “and he killed him”, which has the same meaning. In the LXX, σφαίξω occurs only a few times to translate cognates of the Hebrew root יָהַב, and where it does (Zechariah 11:4, 5, 7; Jeremiah 12:3; 15:3; 19:6), heavy violence (and in Isaiah 22:13 in the LXX, sacrificial slaughter) is the concept conveyed.\(^\text{35}\) As we shall see, the words πνημός (and in one case σφαίξω) occur in later writers’ accounts of the incident, and represent a thought-shift as to who Cain was and why he did what he did.

However, the LXX does use different words for the Hebrew ἔντειο, “gift”, “offering”, used in both Genesis 4:4 and 4:5 for both Cain’s and Abel’s offerings: Cain’s offerings are a θυσία, “sacrifice”, but Abel’s are δώρος, “gifts”.\(^\text{36}\) But it is safer to regard this LXX usage as simply further differentiating Abel’s offering from Cain’s.\(^\text{37}\) Perhaps this difference in the LXX enhances Abel’s status as an unambiguous giver compared to the ungenerous Cain.

Also, in the Hebrew text of Genesis 4:4-5 God is said to gaze or not to gaze, נַצְרַף on Cain and Abel and their gifts, but the LXX in 4:4 says God “looked upon”, εἶπεν, Abel and his gifts, and in 4:5 that God “did not pay attention to”, οὐ προσέσχεν, Cain and his sacrifice.\(^\text{38}\) As נַצְרַף is not translated elsewhere in the LXX as προσέσχε, possibly the translators wished to mark a divine rejection of Cain himself.\(^\text{39}\) This LXX usage suggests that

\(^{34}\) Noted in Grayston, *The Johannine Epistles*, 110.


\(^{37}\) Byron, *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition*, 41-42.

\(^{38}\) Lohr, “Righteous Abel, Wicked Cain”, 487.

\(^{39}\) *Ibid*, 488.
eπείδεν conveys the idea of God’s providence and care, so that in some sense God appeared to Abel but not to Cain. This may indicate that by implication – though not specifically, as we have seen – the LXX portrays Cain himself as evil in God’s eyes – not just his act.

Further, the LXX does not translate the difficult Hebrew of Genesis 4:7a, “if you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is you, but you must master it”. Instead, in the LXX text in 4:7a the Lord asks Cain οὐκ ἔαν ὁρθῶς προσευγκησ, ὁρθῶς δὲ μὴ δίέλης ἡμαρτε, “have you not sinned if you have brought it properly, but have not properly cut it up?” This question is not present in the Hebrew text, and it appears to represent an attempt by the LXX translators to rationalize the Lord’s preference for Abel’s sacrifice over Cain’s, in terms of an error in ritual sacrifice. This addition in the LXX text, as compared to the original Hebrew, does not clear up why Cain did not “divide” his offering properly: it is more likely an attempt to explain God’s preference for Abel’s offering, rather than a scribal error. This LXX alteration portrays Cain as an impious person, if not a downright evil man.

Also, in 4:7b in the LXX the Lord addresses Cain, ἴσων πρὸς σὲ ἡ ἀποστροφὴ αὐτοῦ, καὶ αὐ ἀρξής αὐτοῦ, “be still, and his obeissance will be to you, and you will rule over him”. Therefore, the suggestion in the Hebrew Bible that Cain will rule over sin if he “does well”, is replaced by one that Abel will then submit to him, and he will then rule over Abel. But does this leave the text ambiguous? Is Cain told that sin will haunt him until he conquers it, or is Cain promised supremacy over his younger brother if he conquers sin? The preferable conclusion is that this difference seeks to clear up the ambiguity in the Hebrew Bible, in that Cain’s birthright can only be secured if he “does well”, but instead, being evil, he forswears it by murdering Abel.

40 Byron, Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition, 51.
41 Lohr, “Righteous Abel, Wicked Cain”, 489.
42 Ibid.
43 Byron, Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition, 49.
44 Lohr, “Righteous Abel, Wicked Cain”, 489-490.
45 Byron, Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition, 54-55.
The LXX version of the Cain and Abel story tends to support Westermann’s conjecture that God’s address to Cain in Genesis 4:6-7 in the Hebrew Bible is an addition, to ascribe full responsibility to Cain for what he did, by not heeding the Lord’s warning, a question outside the scope of this study. But the LXX version of 4:7 may also represent a thought-shift from the Hebrew, in that Cain’s act is portrayed, not just as a deliberate decision on his part to sin, but as an act predicated by his failure to offer to the Lord an appropriate sacrifice, and to “be still”, i.e. stay his hand, and let the Lord place him over Abel by divine providence. So Cain is perhaps to be seen in the LXX as an archetypal opponent of divine will, which intensifies the evil nature of his action, as compared to the original Hebrew version of Genesis 4:7.

What is notable is that even in the LXX, Genesis 4 does not represent Cain as ὁ πονηρός, “evil”, as 1 John 3:12 does. However, in the Greek of Wisdom 10:3 in the OT Apocrypha we find another intensification of Cain’s evil, where it said that an unrighteous man (Cain) committed the grievous crime of fratricide: he slaughtered, ἀδελφόκτόνος, his brother in a fit of anger. We meet this term again in the writings of Philo and Josephus.

Generally in the LXX Cain is portrayed in somewhat more negative terms than in the Hebrew Bible. By implication, though not explicitly, he is painted as evil by nature. This represents a thought-shift from the Hebrew Bible, where it is Cain’s murderous act that is evil, and attracts God’s curse, not Cain himself. In the LXX this thought-shift is incomplete, as we have seen: Cain is not frankly portrayed as evil by nature, although much of the wording in the story points that way.

Cain and Abel in Some Intertestamental Literature

(i) 1 Enoch

As noted in chapter 2, the Jewish apocalyptic traditions collected in the

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46 Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 299-300.
Book of Enoch, or 1 Enoch, were largely composed in Aramaic; it was probably written in Palestine, between the fourth century BCE and the turn of the Common Era, but the collection as a whole survives only in a sixth century CE Ethiopic (Ge’ez) text, itself translated from an intermediate Greek translation, although Aramaic fragments exist. The oldest portion, chapters 12-36, from which we shall examine chapter 22, is probably pre-Maccabean in origin, and the Dream Visions in chapters 83-90, from which we shall examine chapter 85, were probably written during Judas Maccabeus’ war in 165-161 BCE. As we shall see, Hellenistic influences are often apparent. Unsurprisingly, doubts have been expressed about the reliability of the Ethiopic version as an entirely faithful representation of the content of the original Aramaic text. This matters, for if the author of 1 John had access to 1 Enoch, it would very likely have been to the Greek text. Any conclusions about the influence of 1 Enoch on 1 John must be qualified by this caveat.

At 1 Enoch 22:7, in answer to the writer, the Angel Raphael “answered me, saying, ‘this is the spirit which has left Abel, whom Cain, his brother, had killed; it (continues to) pursue him until all of (Cain’s) seed is exterminated from the face of the earth, and his seed has disintegrated from among the seed of the people’’’. In this exegetical elaboration of Genesis 4:10, Abel’s blood, inanimate but personified in Genesis, is the seat of ⱣⱤ, “life” or “soul” (Genesis 9:4), which the author identifies as Ɑⱨ, “spirit”, which was an active being, familiar in the Hellenistic world-view: here the narrative of Genesis is interpolated with the motif of the dead pleading for vengeance.

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48 George WE Nickelsburg, A Commentary on the Book of Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 1; see also The Book of Enoch, trans. RH Charles, ix-x.
50 See for example Knibb, “Interpreting the Book of Enoch”, 440-441.
52 Nickelsburg, Enoch, 22.
Here “eschatology has been built into the universe; rewards and punishments are already in place”.\textsuperscript{53} This kind of thinking is not to be found in Genesis 4, either in the Hebrew text or in the LXX.

Further, in 1 Enoch 85:4, we have the visionary symbolism of a black bull, its colour symbolizing murder or sin and representing Cain, goring a red one, its colour symbolic of its blood and representing Abel, and pursuing it over the earth.\textsuperscript{54} Omitted from 1 Enoch is any account of the Fall, and in its place we find this episode as the first account of human sin, thus portraying Cain as the first perpetrator of violence.\textsuperscript{55} In this “animal Apocalypse”, the omission of the Fall shows that thinkers in the Enoch tradition placed little emphasis on Genesis 3 as explaining the origin of sin: in 1 Enoch the first sin is Cain’s murder of Abel.\textsuperscript{56}

Thus in 1 Enoch the OT picture of Cain in Genesis 4 as an envious killer of his brother intersects with the Hellenistic notion of Abel’s immortal spirit or soul pursuing Cain, the original evil-doer, over the earth. Again we see a thought-shift, in which Cain in 1 Enoch is not simply an envious murderer of his own brother, as in Genesis 4, but the original evil-doer who will never be free from his brother’s spirit, crying for vengeance. Similarly in 1 John 3:12 Cain is the archetypal murderer of his brother, who is “from the evil one”.

(ii) Jubilees

The intertestamental, pseudepigraphic Book of Jubilees, which, as noted in chapter 2, was probably written in the second century BCE, is sometimes called the “little Genesis”.\textsuperscript{57} It reflects an expectation of speedy inauguration of the messianic age, but is not a typical apocalypse. It is largely narrative,

\textsuperscript{55} Nickelsburg, \textit{Enoch}, 371.
\textsuperscript{56} VanderKam, \textit{Enoch}, 74.
based on historical narratives in Genesis and Exodus.\textsuperscript{58} It was probably composed in Hebrew, known under various titles in Greek, and like 1 Enoch survives only in an Ethiopic text.\textsuperscript{59}

Jubilees’ most prominent characteristics are the chronological frame within which most events in the patriarchal period are dated, and legal passages added to the rewritten narratives in the book.\textsuperscript{60} The scholarly consensus has been that it is a unified work by a single author,\textsuperscript{61} though this has been questioned.\textsuperscript{62}

The author of Jubilees, like those responsible for the Book of Enoch, is concerned to identify the origin of evil, and thus to set out activities and ideas that depart from this order.\textsuperscript{63} Jubilees does not pretend to be an entirely new revelation: it has been rightly said that compositions such as Jubilees and the Temple Scroll “seek to provide the interpretative context within which scriptural traditions already acknowledged as authoritative can be properly understood”, and that their interpretations “acquire authority through their intermingling with the well-known words of traditions whose authority is already acknowledged”.\textsuperscript{64} Put another way, Jubilees is “a midrashic insertion of haggadic traditions into the biblical narrative in order to anticipate questions, and to solve problems in advance”.\textsuperscript{65} We shall shortly see some examples of this phenomenon.

Initially in Jubilees 4:2-5 Cain and Abel are introduced conventionally, in parallel with the account in Genesis 4, except that it is the angels who do not

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, vii-viii.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid, 22.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid, 25-29.
\textsuperscript{65} JTAGM van Ruiten, Primaeval History Interpreted: The Rewriting of Genesis I-II in the Book of Jubilees (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2000), 3 (following Vermes).
accept Cain’s offering. But in 4:5 we find a citation of Deuteronomy 27:24, “and therefore it is written on the heavenly tablets, ‘cursed is the one who strikes his fellow with malice. And all who have seen and heard shall say, “so be it”; and the man who saw it and did not report (it) shall be cursed like him’.” The bare account of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 is thus taken further in Jubilees 4:5, so that Cain’s sin is made to stand for a supreme act of sin, which is so heinous that whoever witnesses it but does not disclose it is as guilty as the perpetrator himself. This is an addition to Deuteronomy 27:24: the additional point made in Jubilees is that not only is the offender cursed but also the witness who does not disclose the offence. This addition may have been derived from Leviticus 5:1.

Indeed, the doctrine of retributive justice, the _jus talionis_, has been identified in Jubilees: it has been inferred from Jubilees 4:31 that this principle itself springs from the punishment of Cain and is “inscribed on the heavenly tablets”. This is cogent: in Jubilees 4:31 we find Cain killed by the stones of his house, which fell on him, because he killed Abel with a stone, and he therefore was killed “in righteous judgment”. This suggests the _jus talionis_, even if it is not executed by Abel himself. Here in Jubilees 4:5-6 the author constructs a _halakha_ on the _jus talionis_ to explain, as Genesis does not, how Cain was killed, in retribution for the way in which he murdered Abel.

In Jubilees 4:7, we find “and for this reason we announce when we have come before the Lord our God all the sin which is committed in heaven and upon earth, and in light and in darkness, and everywhere”. The association

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66 VanderKam, _The Book of Jubilees_, 32.
68 Van Ruiten, _Primaeval History Interpreted_, 148.
71 Van Ruiten, _Primaeval History Interpreted_, 172.
of sin committed “on earth” with “darkness” here, along with the injunction to “announce”, i.e. acknowledge, sin before God, find an echo, not necessarily intended of course, in 1 John 1:5-7 with its dualism of light and darkness alongside sin and confession.

Significantly, in 4:15, a fragment of Jubilees which survives in Greek, Cain is described as an ἀδελφοκτόνος, the very description we find later in Philo and Josephus.\(^{(72)}\) This makes it clear that in the author’s eyes, the treacherous attack on the neighbour is even graver because the neighbour is the murderer’s brother.

In a Greek fragment, Jubilees preserves the LXX distinction already noted between Cain’s and Abel’s gifts, describing Cain’s as θυσία, “sacrifices”, but Abel’s as δώροι, “gifts”.\(^{(73)}\) This suggests that some of the fault is in the giver, not just the gift: again it is Cain’s character that is implicitly condemned, not just his offering.

Thus the Cain and Abel story in Jubilees, while mainly following Genesis 4, is presented with some additional elements conveying the ideas of the supreme sin of fratricide, so grave that it must be disclosed by anyone who witnesses it – lest they be equally guilty of it. It presents the elements of light and darkness, in dualistic association with sin and repentance, confession before God. It may have been read and drawn on by the author of 1 John. It is another example of a thought-shift between Genesis 4, in which Cain is presented simply as a cursed sinner who is exiled for murdering his brother, and later literature where there is greater emphasis on the uniquely grave nature of Cain’s sin, which springs from rebellion against God and which is committed in a state of darkness, or separation from God. These ideas we find in full flower in 1 John.

\(^{(72)}\) Byron, “Slaughter, Fratricide and Sacrilege”, 528.
\(^{(73)}\) Byron, \textit{Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition}, 43.
(iii) The Testament of Abraham

The Testament of Abraham is dated by Allison as likely composed somewhere near the turn of the Common Era, based on Jewish books adopted by Christians no later than the second century CE, with “a strong syntactical and lexical resemblance to the language of the Septuagint and the New Testament”. 74 He considers it most likely to be a Jewish work rather than a later Christian composition. 75 Sanders, on the other hand, noting scholarly disagreement even over whether the original text is in Hebrew or Greek, 76 favours a date of c. 100 CE, plus or minus twenty years, on the basis that “it is doubtful if Egyptian, especially Alexandrian Judaism was sufficiently intact after AD 117 to allow the production of such literature, especially a work like the Testament of Abraham, which does not distinguish Jew from Gentile in the judgment”. 77 It is at least doubtful whether it was available to, and potentially read by the author of 1 John. At best, it is evidence of some ideas within first century Judaism which may have influenced him.

In the Testament of Abraham in its Long Recension in Greek (thought by Allison to be prior to its shorter Recension, also in Greek 78) at 13.1, Abraham asks the “Commander-in-Chief”, a descriptor of God, the identity of a “most marvelous judge”, and in 13.2-3 the answer is “the son of the first-formed, the one called Abel, whom the most evil and fratricidal Cain killed”, who “sits here to judge all the creation”. 79 As we shall see, “the most

75 Ibid, 28-31. Bauckham notes that a large range of works, including the Testament of Abraham, whose dates and provenance are still doubtful, have in the last few decades been treated by many as of non-Christian, Jewish authorship and sufficiently early to be of relevance to NT research: Richard Bauckham, “The Continuing Quest for the Provenance of Old Testament Pseudepigraphy,” in The Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins (ed. Gerbern S Oegema and James H Charlesworth; New York/London: T&T Clark, 2008), 9-29, 9.
77 Ibid, 875, 874.

205
evil”, πονηρότατος, is an adjective applied by Josephus to Cain.80 We shall come to that later. Allison speculates that Abel’s role as judge developed from his status as the first innocent to be murdered.81

The most that can be gathered from this single reference is that, consistently with the development of Cain’s role in 1 Enoch and Jubilees, his evil nature is made to have eschatological significance. His primaeval action in perpetrating the first murder constitutes his victim, his brother Abel, as judge of the world’s evil. Symbolically, Cain stands as emblematic of evil incarnate.

**Cain and Abel in Philo**

Philo of Alexandria – whose exact dates of birth and death we do not know, although it is known that he was born in about 30 BCE – is best described as a philosopher and theologian, his aim being to justify Judaism as a universal religion, capable of attracting those of all races and lands to it, without, however, abandoning or modifying its fundamental beliefs and practices.82 At the time of Flaccus, the Roman prefect in Alexandria, Philo led a delegation to Rome, aimed at convincing Caligula that Jewish opposition to worship of images did not indicate hostility to Roman rule itself.83 Viewed in this historical context, his work may be seen as an attempt to justify Judaism, its faith and institutions, to protect which it seems Philo would have accepted martyrdom, if necessary.84

Philo devotes four works, which provide a “running commentary”85 on the Pentateuch, to the Cain and Abel story, reworking and expanding it to

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80 Allison, Testament of Abraham, 280.
81 Ibid, 281.
84 Williamson, Jews in the Hellenistic World Ii: Philo, 17.
85 This characterisation is Borgen’s: Peder Borgen, Philo of Alexandria, An Exegete for his Time (Leiden, New York, Cologne: Brill, 1997), 103.
incorporate his own ideas on good and evil in the world. They are *On the Cherubim* ("The Cherubim"), *On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by him and by his Brother Cain* ("The Sacrifice of Abel and Cain"), *That the Worse is Wont to Attack the Better* ("The Worse Attacks the Better"), and *On the Posterity of Cain and his Exile* ("The Postery and Exile of Cain").

There are strong parallels between the descriptions of Cain in 1 John 3:12 and in Philo’s writings. Byron notes that the bracketing of Cain and anyone else who hates their brother as ἀνθρωποκτόνος in 1 John 3:15 is “not without precedence”, exempling, inter alia, Cain’s labeling as an ἀδελφοκτόνος no less than ten times, including once each in *The Worse Attacks the Better* (96), *The Posterity and Exile of Cain* (49), and *The Cherubim* (52). Some examination of these and other instances of Philo’s view of Cain and their contexts is needed.

In *The Cherubim* Philo indeed refers to Cain as τὸν ἀδελφοκτόνον and then as ἤπαρτον, “accursed” (52), but then in the next section he notes that when Cain was born (Genesis 4:1) his male sex is not noted, just his name (53). Philo explains how Cain was from birth associated with the thought that all things were his own possessions (64) and “unreasoning pride” (54)-(65). The idea therefore is that Cain was accursed from birth, and indeed representative of evil from the beginning.

In *The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain* we find Cain, τὸν φιλαύτος, the “self lover” blamed for making his thank-offering μεθ’ ἡμέρας, “after some days”. This is contrasted at (53) with Deuteronomy 23:21, “if you make a vow, do not be slow to fulfil it”, such slowness being a vice which at (54)-(58) Philo

86 See generally Painter, 1, 2 and 3 John, 233.
88 Indeed in Byron, “Slaughter, Fratricide and Sacrilege”, 528 it is noted that Philo refers to Cain as ἀδελφοκτόνος no less than ten times.
associates with forgetfulness, presumption and conviction of one’s own merits.⁸⁹

Cain is blamed for not offering πρωτογεννήματα, “first fruits” (52) – another attempt to rationalize the Lord’s preference for Abel’s sacrifice. Philo explains Cain’s action in giving his offering “after some days” as stemming from a desire in a mind seeking ἐαυτὸν προτίμων θεοῦ, “to honour itself before God” (72). Thus Philo sees this action as the outworking of Cain’s self-love. Philo’s thought is that Cain’s action in failing to offer first fruits stems from the same fault (72).

In The Worse Attacks the Better we find Cain cursed appropriately as an ἀδελφοκτόνος, “fratricide”, for the murder of a brother (96). It is earlier made clear by Philo that while Genesis 4:8, where Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him, suggests that Abel has been done away with, in reality ὁ Καίν ὑφ’ ἐαυτοῦ, Cain has been done away with by himself (47). The picture is of one who is doubly cursed by his own behaviour. Earlier Abel is described dualistically as φιλόθεου δόγμα, “a God-loving creed”, whereas Cain is φιλαυτόν, “a self-loving creed” (32).⁹⁰ A strong parallel exists here with 1 John 3:12b, “and why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous”.

In The Posterity of Abel and Cain we see Cain again referred to as ἀδελφοκτόνος (49), in a context where he is characterized as incurring more defiling guilt than an ἀνδροφονίας one, a man-slayer, making it clear that murder of a brother is even more serious than murder per se. Earlier it is made clear that Cain ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ θεοῦ μεταστάσα, left the face of God (12), which suggests a final curse. This contrasts Cain, the “deliberate

⁹⁰ As noted in Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 179 n.193, Jewish interpretation makes Cain amongst other things a model of unbelief: Schnackenburg instances inter alia Philo in The Posterity of Cain and Abel at 38; similarly Menken, “The Image of Cain in 1 John 3,12”, 202.
sinner” with the “wise man, who wants to see God”.91 The thought here is similar to that which yokes together 1 John 3:12 and 15, that Cain was from the evil one and murdered his brother, and all who hate a brother are murderers, who do not have eternal life within them.

To understand Philo’s presentation of Cain as evil from birth, and indeed an embodiment of evil itself, in the few examples that space allows in this study, one must understand Philo’s philosophical roots. As Berchman says:

[Philo’s] doctrine of the existence of two ontologically distinct realms of being, the authentic and the image, goes back to Plato’s *Timaeus*. The epistemological distinction between the opinion (doxa) and knowledge (episteme) provided the basis upon which Plato based the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible worlds (*Tim*, 27d-28e). In the *mythos* we are told that the two realms are relative as original or pattern (paradeigma) to its image or imitation (eikon; *Tim*, 29b; 48e).92

Similarly Borgen comments, referring to the scholarly debate as to the degree to which Philo can be placed within the Middle Platonist tradition, that:

Philo’s views on ‘ideas’ and ‘logos’ can illustrate this interpretation. Philo saw in Genesis a double creation, first that of the noetic world as model, then that of the sensible world, which was produced by God from the model. Philo draws here on Platonic thoughts which he has modified. While the model of Plato’s *Timaeus* was something independent of the Demiurge, the model in Plato’s exegesis becomes God’s creation.93

There is little agreement among scholars as to the extent to which Jewish thought, hellenization, mysticism and political concerns prevail in Philo.94 Putting aside the precise relationship between Philo’s and Plato’s thought (particularly in *Timaeus*, which is outside the scope of this study), it remains useful and necessary to understand Philo through a Middle Platonist lens. Using this approach, it becomes clear that Philo takes the Cain and Abel story from its OT context, where Cain is but an example of individual sin and its results, and reinterprets it in Middle Platonist terms so that Cain becomes, for Philo’s audience, the eikon of sin in the sensible world, in relation to its paradeigma or original pattern.

91Williamson, Jews in the Hellenistic World 1ii: Philo, 185.
93 Borgen, Philo of Alexandria, 7.
For example, Adam is presented in *The Cherubim* as “mind”, which exists before sense-perception (60), but when mind (Adam) joins with body (Eve), bodily perceptions dominate, then Adam names his son Cain, meaning “possession” ((53), (65)-(66)), symbolizing that the mind wrongly believes it is self-sufficient. So the teaching in *The Cherubim* is to rid oneself from “Cain” and recognize that God is the cause of the union ((99)-(100)) between body and soul, and the mind must be passive in its migration towards virtue. Cain is here presented as an allegory for sin itself, and therefore as evil by his very nature. Even within a framework presenting a human being as “practically the only being who having a knowledge of good and evil chooses the worst” (*Conf.* 176-8), Philo “can speak of bad individuals ‘whose nature does not ever allow them to act intentionally in an honest way’ (*Mig.* 216-20”). Certainly Cain as an allegory for sin itself in *The Cherubim* fits this description.

One therefore must understand also that Philo’s whole approach to OT interpretation is allegorical: his purpose is to derive from the OT text more general principles of theology and ethics by reference to OT stories in which he finds these ideas represented by particular figures and their actions. In *The Cherubim* are themes of “banishment and testing” (1ff.), and “the mistaken idea that what we have is our own and not God’s” (40ff.). In *The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain* one finds the “contrasting ideas of man as master and God as master” (1ff.), “the precedence of virtue” (11ff.), the “danger of tardiness and postponement” (52ff.) and “the stable and firm life of virtue” (88ff.). And as Williamson says of Philo’s allegorical treatment of the Cain and Abel story in *The Posterity of Abel and Cain*:

> Because of the nature of that method, which allows the exegete to find in the words of Scripture meanings which do not appear to reside in them, much of what Philo

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96 Ibid.
has to say has nothing to do with ‘the posterity of Cain’. 100

It can be seen from our earlier examples that Philo uses the Cain and Abel story in The Cherubim, The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain, The Worse Attacks the Better and The Posterity of Cain and his Exile to set up a more universal conflict between God and sin, of which Cain is the eikon, and thus between good and evil.

In summary, in Philo’s writings Cain’s portrayal has moved from that in the Hebrew Bible where he is a human actor in a drama where he is envious of his brother’s favour with God and kills him, then receives God’s curse for his act. It has moved beyond the LXX in which Cain’s evil is intensified, largely through changes of wording from the Hebrew to the Greek. In Philo, the picture of Cain reaches a culmination where he is an allegory for evil itself, bad by nature and doomed to eternal struggle with God for mastery over humanity itself, represented by Adam, “the mind”. As we shall see, the picture of Cain in 1 John 3 has much in common with such a portrayal.

Cain and Abel in Josephus

Josephus, born in 37 CE was, unlike Philo, primarily an historian and his overriding concern in his Judaea Antiquities was to legitimize, in a historical manner, Jewish faith and practice in the eyes of their Roman overlords. 101 This work was probably writing in 93 CE, in the thirteenth year of Domitian’s principate. 102 Josephus had by then lost imperial patronage, which he enjoyed during the reigns of Titus and Vespasian, when he wrote his Judaean War, 103 but he still had significant Roman patronage, probably both Jewish and Gentile. 104

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100 Williamson, Jews in the Hellenistic World Iii: Philo, 175-176.
103 Feldman, Flavius Josephus’ Judean Antiquities I-IV, xviii.
Unsurprisingly, Josephus’ unifying themes in *Judaean Antiquities* are the ἀρχαιολογία, antiquity, πολιτεία, constitution, and φιλοσοφία, philosophy of Judaean culture.105 Josephus’ *Judaean Antiquities* is “an all-out campaign to dispel the ridicule and misinformation that characterized literate Roman portrayals of the Jews”, and “a massive effort at legitimation, seeking to demonstrate the great antiquity and nobility of Jewish tradition”.106

Although the precise connection between his thought and Hellenistic philosophy and Jewish tradition is contested in scholarly debate,107 some Hellenistic influence on Josephus’ work is undoubted. Martin notes Josephus’ use of the concept of ἱεμαρμανή, “fate” or “destiny” at God’s good pleasure in *Judaean Antiquities* at XVIII, 13, among other places, pointing to this belief, held by the Pharisees, as distinguishing them from the Sadducees.108 Further, the Pharisaic belief in the “immortality of the soul” conditions Josephus’ use of Cain as the personification of evil endangering the human soul, as we have seen in Philo’s work.

Following Hadas, Yamauchi notes Josephus’ use of the full gammut of Greek literary style: he is rhetorical, pathetic, glorifying the past and wooing his readers.109 Yamauchi attributes to Josephus (and Philo) embarrassment at the OT’s anthropomorphisms and an intention to tone them down by allegory.110 Josephus in *Antiquities* (I:52-54)111, in his reworking of the Cain and Abel story, characterizes Cain – not just his deeds – as πνευμόνως, “thoroughly (or most) evil”, and Abel as having respect for “justice”,

In characteristically dualistic manner, Josephus contrasts Abel, the virtuous shepherd, with Cain, the evil plougher of the soil (I:53), and their sacrifices, milk and the firstlings of the flocks and the fruits of the earth, respectively (I:54). Here again, as with Philo, we see an *a priori* characterization of Cain as evil, in primarily allegorical fashion, so that his deeds might be expected to be evil, rather than vice versa.

Josephus’ presentation of Cain as “only interested in gain” (I:61) is consistent with the LXX picture in Genesis 4:7 of Cain’s failure to divide properly his offering to God. This last appears to present Cain implicitly as impious by nature.

Josephus uses the more intensive verb κτέινειν, which carries the connotation “put to death”, or “put and end to”, to depict Cain’s slaying of Abel (I:53, 55), which may be somewhat more emphatic than ὑπέκτεινειν which is used in the LXX, as we have seen, and which simply means “kill”.

More significantly, Josephus writes that after Cain’s denial to God of knowledge of his brother’s whereabouts, God accused Cain of being guilty of his brother’s murder, φονός, and marvels that Cain cannot tell what has happened to one whom ἀπολωλέκας, “you have destroyed” (I:57), conveying a more intense idea than simple killing, however terrible that may be in itself. The LXX account at Genesis 4:10, following the Hebrew, is that God’s address to Cain is “what have you done? Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground”. Thus Josephus’ omission of this account, and substitution of a direct accusation by God that Cain is his brother’s murderer, and has “destroyed” him, provides an even more intense description of Cain’s evil act.

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113 Yamauchi’s translation.
Even more significantly, Josephus writes that Adam’s passionate desire for more children arises ἀβέλου μὲν ἐφαγμένου, Κάιος δὲ διὰ τὸν ἐκείνου φόνον πεφευγότος, “after the slaughtering of Abel and the resulting escape of Cain his murderer” (I:67). Josephus’ use of ἐφαγμένου in this passage to describe Cain’s action is a significant intensification of that action, because σφαίζω carries the connotation of “slaughter”, as opposed to a simple “killing”, and the use here of φόνον conveys the idea of “murder”, unlawful killing. As we have seen, 1 John 3:12 itself uses σφαίζω to describe Cain’s act, rather than the less intensive ὑπέκτεινον used in the LXX account in Genesis 4. This is intensified by Josephus’ use of the term we have earlier noted in Philo, ἀδελφοκτόνος, “fratricide” (I:65) to describe Cain’s act.

With Philo, Josephus tries to rationalize the Lord’s preference for Abel’s sacrifice over Cain’s: Cain brought the fruits of the tilled earth to the Lord in sacrifice, whereas Abel brought milk, and the firstlings of his flocks (I:54). This offering was favoured by God, “who is honoured by things which grow spontaneously and in accordance with natural laws, and not by the products forced from nature by the ingenuity of grasping men” (I:55).

In the Hebrew text of Genesis 4 God may be seen as apparently capricious in preferring Abel’s sacrifice to Cain’s, without apparent explanation; Josephus provides an explanation, as does Philo, for this divine preference. And Josephus omits the Hebrew of Genesis 4:7. This may suggest that Josephus was using the LXX text: as noted above, it does not contain the Hebrew of 4:7, but does offer some explanation for divine preference for Abel’s offering: Cain is told by God, ὁρθῶς δὲ μὴ διέλης, “you have not properly cut it up”, or “divided it”.

Cain’s rejection by God is intensified by Josephus at (I:59) where God

116 As noted in Byron, “Slaughter, Fratricide and Sacrilege”, 528.
117 Loeb translation.
118 Feldman, Josephus’ Judaean Antiquities, 20 n.117.
119 Ibid.
In summary, Josephus’ account of Cain’s actions casts Cain as thoroughly evil, in dualistic contrast with Abel, a lover of justice. Cain is depicted intensively, as compared to the bare description of Genesis 4, as the destroyer and violent slaughterer of Abel. God’s preference for Abel’s sacrifice, a bare statement in Genesis 4, is rationalized by Josephus: Cain brought the products of the earth, but Cain brought firstlings, things that grow spontaneously. Cain’s departure was ordered by God, not on his own initiative after he was cursed by God, as in Genesis 4. Although, unlike Philo, Josephus probably wrote his *Judaean Antiquities* contemporaneously with, if not after, 1 John, so that its author may not have had potential access to Josephus’ work, *Judaean Antiquities* is a useful tool to ascertain the shape of the Jewish tradition of the time, which lies behind 1 John.

**Historical Summary**

We have seen that there is a considerable thought-shift in depictions of Cain in the Cain and Abel story between the original version in the Torah through the LXX and 1 Enoch and Jubilees, culminating in Philo’s portrait of Cain as one who is an ὀδελφοκτόνος, “fratricide”, and Josephus’ similar portrayal of him as πονηρότατος, thoroughly (or most) evil from the beginning.

An important characteristic of the Hebrew Bible is the unknowability of God. God’s preference for Abel’s offering over Cain’s is left unexplained. And the Torah, as we have seen, does not concentrate either on Cain’s nature to explain his murder of his brother. Indeed it does not make any statement about Cain’s character at all, apart from God cursing him because of his act. Instead, God’s favour for Abel’s sacrifice results in a murderous triad, in which Cain, despairing of God’s favour, enviously murders the

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brother who stands in the way of his attaining it.

In the LXX new ideas are introduced through a rewriting of parts of the Torah’s account of the story in Genesis 4:1-16. The LXX does use different words for the Hebrew הֵמֹת, “gift”, “offering”, used in both Genesis 4:4 and 4:5 for both Cain’s and Abel’s offerings: Cain’s offerings are a θυσία, “sacrifice”, but Abel’s are δεσπόζες, “gifts”. Further, in the Hebrew text God is said to gaze or not to gaze, הָעָדֵּשׁ on Cain and Abel and their gifts, whereas in the LXX God “looked upon”, ἐπείδεν, Abel and his gifts, but God “did not pay attention to”, προσέσχεν, Cain and his sacrifice. It is arguable that as הָעָדֵּשׁ is not translated elsewhere in the LXX by the verb προσέσχω, the translator wished to mark a divine rejection of Cain himself.

Moreover, the LXX does not translate the difficult Hebrew of Genesis 4:7a, “if you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is you, but you must master it”. Instead, in the LXX text in 4:7a the Lord asks Cain οὐκ ἐὰν ὄρθως προσενεγκήσας ὀρθῶς δὲ μὴ διέλῃς, ἵμαρτες, “have you not sinned if you have brought it correctly, but have not correctly cut it up?” This question is not present in the Hebrew text, and it may represent an attempt by the LXX translators to rationalize the Lord’s preference for Abel’s sacrifice over Cain’s, in terms of an error in ritual sacrifice. Also, in 4:7b in the LXX the Lord addresses Cain, ἠμορχασον πρός σε ἡ ἀποστροφή αὐτοῦ, καὶ σὺ ἀρξέες αὐτοῦ, “be still, and his obedience will be to you, and you will rule over him”. This difference clears up the ambiguity in the Hebrew Bible, in that Cain’s birthright can only be secured if he “does well”, but instead, being evil, he forswears it by murdering Abel. In these and other respects, the LXX portrays Cain more negatively than does the Torah. By so doing it provides later writers with a platform on which to expand the Cain and Abel story as an allegory for the ultimate, dualistic struggle between good and evil.

In the pseudepigraphical 1 Enoch, Cain is portrayed in still more negative terms. In 1 Enoch 22:7, in answer to the writer, the Angel Raphael
“answered me saying, ‘this is the spirit which went forth from Abel, whom his brother Cain slew, and he makes his case against him till his seed is destroyed from the face of the earth, and his seed is annihilated from amongst the seed of men’”. In this exegetical elaboration of Genesis 4:10, Abel’s blood, inanimate but personified in Genesis, is the seat of נмя, “life” or “soul” (Genesis 9:4), which the author identifies as נושע, “spirit”, which was an active being, familiar in the Hellenistic world-view: here the narrative of Genesis is interpolated with the motif of the dead pleading for vengeance. Further, in 1 Enoch 85:4, we have the visionary symbolism of a black bull, its colour symbolizing murder or sin and representing Cain, goring a red one, its colour symbolic of blood and representing Abel, and pursuing it over the earth. Omitted from 1 Enoch is any account of the Fall, and in its place we find this episode, portraying Cain as the first perpetrator of human sin – a sin of violence.

Similarly, in the pseudepigraphical Jubilees 4:31 we find Cain killed by the stones of his house, which fell on him, because he killed Abel with a stone, and he therefore was killed “in righteous judgment”, which certainly suggests the jus talionis, even if it is not executed by Abel himself. In Jubilees 4:7, we find “and for this reason we announce when we have come before the Lord our God all the sin which is committed in heaven and upon earth, and in light and in darkness, and everywhere”. The association of sin committed “on earth” with “darkness” here, along with the injunction to “announce”, i.e. acknowledge, sin before God, find an echo, not necessarily intended of course, in 1 John 1:5-7 with its dualism of light and darkness alongside sin and confession. Similarly, in a fragment of Jubilees which survives in Greek, 4:15, Cain is described as an ὀδηλφοκτόνος, the very description we find later in Philo. This makes it clear that in the author’s eyes, the treacherous attack on the neighbour is even graver because the neighbour is the murderer’s brother.

1 Enoch and Jubilees thus exhibit a rewriting of the Cain and Abel story in symbolic terms in which Cain and Abel serve as ciphers for forces of
darkness and light, with Cain portrayed very darkly indeed, as the first human sinner and a progenitor of evil.

In the Testament of Abraham in its earlier, Long Recension, Abraham is depicted as asking the “Commander-in-Chief”, a descriptor of God, who is “this most marvelous judge”, and in 13.2-3 the answer is “the son of the first-formed, the one called Abel, whom the most evil and fratricidal Cain killed”, who “sits here to judge all the creation”. Abel’s role as judge may have developed from his status as the first innocent to be murdered.

The most we can infer from this single reference is that, consistently with the development of Cain’s role in 1 Enoch and Jubilees, his evil nature acquires eschatological significance: his primaeval action in perpetrating the first murder confers on his victim, his brother Abel, the status of judge of the world’s evil, and symbolically, Cain is emblematic of evil personified.

In Philo Abel is described dualistically as φιλόθεος δόγμα, “a God-loving creed”, whereas Cain is φιλαυτόν, “a self-loving creed”. Philo’s narration of the story introduces new elements: for example, the teaching in The Cherubim is to rid oneself from “Cain” and to recognize that God is the cause of the union (99)-(100) between body and soul. Thus Philo uses Cain as a metaphor for evil itself. Cain himself becomes what his actions are taken by Philo to symbolize – ultimate evil.

Similarly Josephus in his reworking of the Cain and Abel story in his Judaean Antiquities, characterizes Cain – not just his deeds – as πονηρότατος, thoroughly evil, and Abel as having respect for justice, δικαιοσύνης. Josephus contrasts Abel, the virtuous shepherd, with Cain, the evil plougher of the soil, and their sacrifices, milk and the firstlings of the flocks and the fruits of the earth, respectively. Here again, as with Philo, we see an a priori characterization of Cain as evil, in primarily allegorical fashion, though Josephus’ focus is historical rather than philosophical, in
that he uses this story with many others to explain to Gentile readers the moral and theological foundations of Hebrew religion.

The point of tracing this thought-shift is to demonstrate that the Jewish tradition accessible to the author of 1 John by no means halted at the simple Hebrew narrative of the Cain and Abel story in Genesis 4:1-16. There the narrative runs from God’s unexplained preference for Abel’s sacrifice over Cain’s to Cain’s “downcast face” and his murder of his brother in the field, then to God’s curse on Cain and Cain’s departure to the Land of Nod. By the time 1 John came to be written, Cain and Abel in Jewish thought had come to represent allegorically the primal struggle between good and evil. We may now pass to the manner in which this thought-shift may have affected the author’s use of the terms σφάζω and ἀνθρωποκτόνος in 1 John.

Σφάζω and ἀνθρωποκτόνος in 1 John

In 1 John 3:11-12 we read:

Ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους· οὐ καθὼς Κάϊν ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν καὶ ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ· καὶ χάριν τίνος ἔσφαξεν αὐτόν; ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν, τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια.

This may be translated:

Because this is the command which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love each other, not like Cain from the evil one who slaughtered his own brother. Why did he slaughter him? Because his deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous.

We have already noticed that the LXX does not use the more intensive σφάζω, used in 1 John 3:12, to represent Cain’s killing of Abel at 4:8. In Genesis 4:8 in the LXX uses the simple word ὑπέκτεινεν, which just means “kill”, to translate the Hebrew וַיִּמְכָּר, “and he killed him”, which has the same meaning. We have seen that in the LXX, σφάζω occurs only a few times to translate the Hebrew verb וַיִּמְכָּר, and where it does (Zechariah 11:4, 5, 7; Jeremiah 12:3; 15:3; 19:6), heavy violence (and in Isaiah 22:13 in the

121 Grayston, The Johannine Epistles, 110.
LXX, sacrificial slaughter) is the concept conveyed.122 As we have also seen, Josephus writes that Adam’s passionate desire for more children arises ἀβέλου μὲν ἐσφαγμένου, Καίος δὲ διὰ τῶν ἑκεῖνου φόνου πεφευγότος, “after the slaughtering of Abel and the resulting escape of Cain his murderer” (1:67). Josephus’ use of ἐσφαγμένου in this passage to describe Cain’s action is a significant intensification of that action, because σφαζω carries the connotation of “slaughter”, as opposed to a simple “killing”,123 and his use here of φόνον conveys the idea of “murder”, unlawful killing. Cain is portrayed in 1 John as the original man-hater and man-murderer, and this interpretation of Cain’s story goes beyond what is reported in Genesis 4:4-9: Cain’s hatred in 1 John is the “original hatred” that comes from darkness.124

A reasonable conclusion, therefore, is that the author’s use of σφαζω in 1 John 3:12 derives from the tradition available to him, in which Cain’s action in killing his brother is intensified from an act of simple killing borne of brotherly jealousy, as portrayed in the Torah, to a manifestation of primaeval evil, done by a person who himself stands as the all-time personification of evil itself, such as we find in Philo and Josephus. Further, we have noticed that even in the LXX, Genesis 4:8 uses the simple word ὑπέκτεινειν, which simply means “kill”, to translate the Hebrew וְיִהְרְגֵהוּ, “and he killed him”, which has a similar meaning, even if the Greek is slightly intensified compared to the Hebrew. As Morgen notes, the LXX does in fact use σφαζω on other occasions, for example in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22, and in the directions for the celebration of Yom Kippur in Leviticus 16-17.125 To say, as 1 John 3:12 does, that Cain ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, “slaughtered his brother, is a great step-up from the simple LXX statement, ὑπέκτεινειν, and certainly from the original Hebrew וְיִהְרְגֵהוּ.

123 Menken, “The Image of Cain in 1 John 3,12”, 200; Klauck, Der Erste Johannesbrief, 205.
124 Gaugler, Die Johannesbriefe, 180.
125 Morgen, Les épîtres de Jean, 139.
This interpretation of the author’s use of σφαξζω in 1 John 3:12 is supported by the fact that it is a Johannine term in the NT, elsewhere occurring only in Revelation, and on each occasion is associated with heavy violence, not a simple act of killing. In Revelation 5:6, 9 and 12 the use of the verb σφαξζω refers to the “lamb” who was slain, referring back to Isaiah 53:7, where the “lamb” is led to the slaughter without protest or resistance. Granted, the “lamb” metaphor here may have either sacrificial or leadership associations, but also notable is Jesus’ non-resistance to the heavy violence against him in his crucifixion and death agonies. In Revelation 6:4 and 9 the same verb, σφαξζω is used in the context of martyrdom for the word of God (6:9): again, the point is the heavy violence to which Christians are subjected in dying for their faith. In Revelation 13:3 the subject is the heavy death-blow inflicted on the beast, and its miraculous recovery. In Revelation 13:8 the subject again is the lamb who was slain and his book of life. In Revelation 18:24 the theme is again martyrdom, with the blood of all those slaughtered on earth being associated with that of prophets and saints.

Though the context of these occurrences of the verb σφαξζω varies in Revelation, it always connotes heavy violence, slaughter, possibly directed to Christian believers. Because of linguistic differences, this text is seen, according to reasonably common scholarly consensus, as written in the last decade of the first century of the common era, not by the same author as John’s Gospel (or of 1 John, whether or not they are the same person), but as composed within a Johannine circle, with dependence on the same earlier traditions as John’s Gospel and 1 John. Nevertheless, the same connotation as that in Revelation, heavy violence, appears to be the intention in using σφαξζω in another Johannine work, 1 John 3:12.

128 Aune, Revelation 1-5, iv; similarly Beale, The Book of Revelation, 43-36; Boxall, The Revelation of St John, 7; Mounce, The Book of Revelation, 14-15;
129 Brown, Epistles of John, 441; Painter, 1, 2 and 3 John, 233.
Even so, the author of 1 John is not as concerned with Cain’s act as with the explanation for it, indicated by the rhetorical question in 3:12b, καὶ χάριν τίνος ἔσφαξεν αὐτόν. What we find in the answer provided in 1 John 3:12 is a straight identification of Cain as ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ and his deeds as πονηρὰ. We have seen that Josephus in Antiquities (I:52-54), in his reworking of the Cain and Abel story, characterizes Cain himself as πονηρότατος, thoroughly evil. This again suggests adoption by the author of 1 John of the view of Cain developed in the later Jewish tradition he inherited and which we have outlined. Further, the use of πονηρὰ in 3:12b, which is introduced by ὅτι, suggests inevitability, but not necessarily in the way the modern mind thinks of it, i.e. in terms of causality. It is better to think of this phrase simply as litotes, in which the affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary. What is the logic of this train of thought? Can we elucidate it in causal terms? Does 3:12 just mean in terms, as it says, and as many have thought in the past, that insofar as Cain murdered his brother, inevitably his works were evil? We must place “evil” and “evil one” in a larger literary context, and seek to produce a more satisfactory meaning than this traditional one. The Jewish tradition inherited by the author, as already discussed, may provide precisely that literary context. May that literary context indicate that in 1 John 3, as Brown puts it, “the whole sphere of Cain’s life was evil”? And that as Rhea Jones postulates, for John, Cain was not merely a murderer, but was from the evil one, and murdered his brother?

Thatcher argues that Lohr “just stops short” of asking why the LXX translators and the NT writers interpreted the Cain and Abel story in Genesis as they did, and in the case of the NT, enquiring “what factors shaped Christian memory of these tragic figures from the ancient past, and

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130 I am indebted to my supervisor, David Neville, for this suggestion: sed contra, Culy, I, II, III John: A Handbook on the Greek Text, 81, who considers ὅτι to be causal here.
131 Brown, Epistles of John, 441.
132 Brown, Epistles of John, 441.
133 Rhea Jones, I, 2 and 3 John, 137.
134 See Lohr, “Righteous Abel, Wicked Cain”, 485-496, n.61 supra.
what rhetorical purposes did the evocation of Cain and Abel serve”?

This question is right at the heart of our discussion of the role of the Cain and Abel story in 1 John 3. Thatcher correctly suggests that the LXX (and the NT) have gone far beyond the Hebrew Bible in portraying Cain’s offering and character as flawed, the NT perspective being coloured by the LXX reading. Why? Because present groups tend to present situations by “keying” them, as Thatcher puts it, to events in the past, and secondly because the remembered past helps a group form and maintain its collective identity. Therefore, in 1 John 3:12 we see that “the mnemonic potential of Cain and Abel is refracted through the lens of doctrinal conflicts” within a Christian community.

Elsewhere Thatcher explains further how this phenomenon works. He argues that “John’s understanding of his ethical obligations towards Jews, antichrists and others outside his community was not based on a fixed set of maxims drawn from the Mosaic law or Jesus tradition, but rather on a sacred past that provides an interpretative framework for current experience”. Thus Thatcher explains the extended reference in 1 John 3:8-15 to the Cain and Abel story as “driven by the Johannine premise that actions reveal spiritual pedigree”. Hence, “building on this ancient precedent, the Elder characterizes failure to love as a Satanic sin with moral consequences”: “those who hate their brother remain in death” (3:14), and “no murderer has eternal life abiding in him (3:15)”. In that John identifies the antichrists with Cain, the original murderer, Thatcher argues that “early Christians embraced and extended the premises of the Septuagint reading when applying Genesis 4 to current experience”. Precisely; we are mistaken if we look for complete logical consistency between John’s admonition to love

136 Ibid, 736.
137 Ibid, 737.
140 Ibid, 352.
141 Ibid, 353.
142 Ibid, 367.
one another and his hostility to the secessionists, the antichrists. John’s point in reaching imaginatively for the Cain example and viewing it through the grid of his community’s current experience is that its solidarity is threatened from without by hostility and dissent, and that mutual love in imitation of Jesus himself is the only antidote.

The “sacred past”, as Thatcher calls it, upon which John calls in 1 John 3:12 in the Cain example to illustrate ultimate evil, is not merely the unadorned story in the Torah in Genesis 4. This may be illustrated by the way in which the author explains in 1 John 3:13 why he appropriates the dire example of Cain in 3:12 (“because his own deeds were evil”) to illustrate the simple, yet profound point that his community will survive only if they love one another. In 3:15 the author deftly adds another equation: whoever is μισῶν, a hater of his brother, is ἀνθρωποκτόνος, a murderer. As already noted, in a fragment of Jubilees, 4:15, which survives in Greek, Cain is described by a related term, ἀδέλφοκτόνος. Further, in Philo’s The Worse Attacks the Better we find Cain cursed similarly as an ἀδέλφοκτόνος, “fratricide”, for the murder of a brother (96). In fact, as we have seen, the bracketing of Cain and anyone else who hates their brother as ἀνθρωποκτόνος in 1 John 3:15 is paralleled by Philo’s labeling of Cain as an ἀδέλφοκτόνος no less than ten times, including once each in The Worse Attacks the Better (96), The Posterity and Exile of Cain (49), and The Cherubim (52). We have also seen Josephus’ use in his Judaean Antiquities of the same term, ἀδέλφοκτόνος, “brother’s murderer” (I:65) to describe Cain.

Why does 1 John’s author use the related term, ἀνθρωποκτόνος to describe Cain? The thought development we have traced makes it clear that in the tradition available to the author of 1 John, Cain, by his very act of murdering his brother, demonstrates his origin: he is thereby proven to be from the evil one. As Beutler writes, he is dualistically classified as evil because of his action, by which he becomes the “tribal father”

143 Ibid, 351.
144 Byron, “Slaughter, Fratricide and Sacrilege”, 520.
("Stammvater") of evil teaching. It is notable that for the author, as for Philo, Josephus and the intertestamental pseudepigraphical writers, Cain does evil because he is from the evil one, not vice versa. His acts demonstrate his origins. By contrast, the original Cain in the Hebrew in Genesis 4 was cursed by God (Genesis 4:11) because of his evil act. There is no suggestion in the Torah that he was inspired or directed in it by the evil one.

Some parallels with – though not necessarily influence by – the Dead Sea Scrolls material produced by the Qumran community may exist here. In IQS 3:15-4:25 a very clear distinction is drawn between the “two spirits” of light and darkness, truth and falsehood, in which initiates into the community had to be thoroughly instructed. Indeed at IQS 3.21-22 we read:

21 Darkness is total dominion over the sons of deceit; they walk on paths of darkness. From the Angel of Darkness stems the corruption of 22 all the sons of justice, and all their sins, their iniquities their guilts and their offensive deeds are under his dominion.

This language and these ideas greatly resemble those in 1 John 3:12 where Cain is described as “from the evil one”. Further, the influence of the Dead Sea scrolls in Q252, where in 4Q252 2.8 the giving of the land to Abraham and in 4Q252 2.11 Abraham’s entry into the land are narrated, in apparent rehearsal of Genesis 15, has been detected in John 8. These passages have been seen as providing evidence of conflict within Judaism at the time, joined in by the NT writers, as to who was entitled to inherit the promise of Abraham. John 8:44, which we have previously noticed, implicitly denies to the Jewish leaders the title of Abraham’s children (cf. 8:39b). John 8:44 may show the influence of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Q252 as noted above, and also in IQS 3.32-4.15 as also set out above, where the two spirits of


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truth and falsehood are described. Brown sees *IQS* 3.17-22 as underlying 1 John 1:5-2:2, because they share a remarkable number of themes: “a dualism of light and darkness, truth and perversion; walking in light and not in darkness; a prince of light who enables the sons of righteousness (justice) to walk in light; the relation of truth to light; the ability of darkness to deceive; cleansing of sin; atonement; *koinonia*”. A similar sharing of themes, though not as pronounced – the descent of the sons of darkness from the evil one – occurs between Q252 and *IQS* 3.32-4.15 and 1 John 3:12.

This inherited tradition of “demonization” of Cain may well also explain the use by 1 John’s author of the intensive ἀνθρωποκτόνος to describe Cain. This is supported by the fact that the only other use of ἀνθρωποκτόνος in the NT is also from the Johannine tradition, in John 8:44 where Jesus says to the Jews of τοῦ διαβόλου that ἄνθρωποκτόνος ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, “he is a man-killer from the beginning”. John 8:44, as John 3:12 does, associates murder with the evil one. The author of 1 John in 3:12 may have had John 8:44 in mind. John 8:44, in saying of the devil that ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ οὐκ ἔστηκεν, “he does not stand in the truth”, also parallels 1 John 3:19 where the author’s audience is assured that by mutual love, the opposite of hatred, they will know they are from the truth. First John intensifies the portrait of Cain in Genesis 4:9 where, as we have seen, he is a simple human being who tries to lie his way out of trouble by denying that he is his brother’s keeper, by associating him as a liar with the evil one, as in John 8:44 where the devil is condemned: ὅτι ψεύστης ἐστὶν καὶ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ, “he is a liar and the father of lies”. This would fit with the tradition we have observed of characterising Cain as himself the embodiment of human evil.

Between 1 John 3:12 and 3:15 comes 3:13-14, where we read:

καὶ μὴ θαυμάζετε, ἀδελφοί, εἰ μισεῖ ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος. ἡμεῖς οἴδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωήν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς. ὁ μὴ αὐτὸν μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ.

This may be translated:

Do not be shocked, brothers, if the world should hate you. We know that we have crossed over from death to life, because we love our brothers. Whoever is not loving remains in death.

Here in 3:13-14 the author takes up the verb used in the preceding verse, μισεῖ, to equate the hatred of Cain for his brother with the attitude of the world toward the author’s audience. The same verb, μισεῖ, occurs in 1 John 2:9, to make a similar point. Those who hate a brother, while saying they are in the light, are confuted: they remain in darkness, in the same way as those who fail to love in 3:13 remain in death. Conversely, those who have crossed over from death to life must expect hatred from the world (3:13), but their consolation is that by mutual love they are in life — which, as indicated by the perfect tense of the verb μεταβεβήκαμεν in 3:14, is a permanent change, from one state to another152 — and whoever does not, remains in death. This is a pivotal statement of Johannine belief.153 The two steps in this uncompleted syllogism lead to the conclusion that the world remains in death. This further equates hatred with death. Why? The answer again is in 3:15: those who hate are murderers.

What overall narrative purpose does 1 John 3:12-15 therefore serve in the pericope on mutual love in 1 John 3? Despite many differing scholarly opinions, the best view is that this passage runs from 3:11 right through to 3:24.154 The word ἀγάπη and its cognates recur from 3:11 to 3:18, where we find a stepped exposition of hatred as identification with Cain, who was from the evil one (3:12), and of mutual love as identification with Jesus

153 Rhea Jones, I, 2 and 3 John, 139.
himself, who laid down his life for us (3:16). And the series of further steps in 3:19-24 are all predicated on love. By mutual love we will know that we are from the truth, and it will reassure us when our hearts condemn us (3:19-20). Whenever our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows everything, so if our hearts do not condemn us and we have boldness before God, we will receive all we ask because we obey God’s commandments and do what pleases God (3:20-22). God’s commandment is that we believe in the name of Jesus Christ and love one another, as he has commanded (3:23). All who obey God’s commandments abide in God, and God in them, and by this we know that God abides in us, by the Spirit given us (3:24). All of these stepped propositions – part of a “test of life”, to use Law’s phrase, adopted by Painter and others – proceed from the love command in 3:11 (cf. 2:7ff.).

Conclusions for Peacemaking Theology

As we have seen, Thatcher rightly suggests that even the LXX (and certainly 1 John 3:12) go far beyond the Hebrew Bible in portraying Cain’s offering and character as flawed, the NT perspective being coloured by the LXX reading. This is the result of a thought-shift, which moves from the simple portrayal of Cain in the Torah as his brother’s killer as a result of envy, to a tradition which portrays Cain as the archetype of evil itself in the world: a representative of the evil one himself. First John’s author draws a conclusion never reached in Genesis 4. The later Jewish tradition which embodied this thought-shift was available to 1 John’s author, and the way in which he in turn portrays Cain and his actions and origins strongly suggests that he employed this tradition.

Thatcher thinks this kind of use of the Cain example by the author of 1 John occurs firstly because present groups tend to reach present situations by

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155 Echoes of John’s Gospel are found at 1 John 3:12, 13, 14, 16: Culpepper, The Gospel and Letters of John, 265-266. We shall come later to parallels between the love commands in 1 John and John’s Gospel.
156 Thatcher, “Cain and Abel in Early Christian Memory”, 736.
“keying” them to events in the past, and secondly because the remembered past helps a group form and maintain its collective identity.\footnote{Thatcher, “Cain and Abel in Early Christian Memory”, 737.} Therefore, in 1 John 3:12, says Thatcher, we see that “the mnemonic potential of Cain and Abel is refracted through the lens of doctrinal conflicts” within a Christian community.\footnote{Ibid, 745-746.} This is convincing, because it is reasonably clear from 1 John 2:18-20 that the situation with which the author was dealing involved sectarian, doctrinal strife, emanating in his eyes from secessionists who had left the author’s community.\footnote{Brown, \textit{Johannine Epistles}, 469.} There is no reason to suppose that the secessionists were engaged in \textit{actual} killing, like Cain, but by accusing those remaining of not knowing God (a charge which may be implied from the ό λέγων slogans in 1 John, e.g. 2:9) they were striking at the identity and eternal life of those remaining.\footnote{Schnackenburg, \textit{Johannine Epistles}, 179.} The example of Cain, interpreted by the tradition inherited by 1 John’s author, lay at hand as a potent tool with which to argue the disastrous, and indeed eschatological consequences of hatred and division in the Johannine community. Further, if in 1 John 3:12 the author had John 8:44 in mind, two consequences may follow: murder, the summit of human violence, which for the author is the ultimate result of hatred, is the ultimate embodiment of evil, and lying to evade responsibility for it is just as much condemned by the author as the act of murder itself.

This appropriation of OT Scripture for hermeneutical purposes by 1 John’s author is imaginative and vivid. He does not simply use the Cain and Abel story to drive home the evils of enmity and hatred; rather, he uses it as a mnemonic literary device to awake in the imagination of his predominantly Jewish community the slaughter that resulted from Cain’s hatred of his brother, and perhaps also the even more horrifying slaughter the early Christians faced in the more or less contemporaneous reign of Domitian.\footnote{Schnackenburg, \textit{Johannine Epistles}, 132-133, 139-144; Brown, \textit{Johannine Epistles}, 338-342; Painter, \textit{1, 2 and 3 John}, 197-199.} These consequences will follow in the Johannine community if mutual love is not the rule.

It is this very use of a biblical tradition by 1 John’s author in an imaginative, hermeneutical way, in his mnemonic appropriation of the thought-shift over the centuries in the depiction of Cain, which legitimises in turn the hermeneutical use of 1 John 3:12-15 by modern peacemaking theologians to suggest that all violence is inherently evil because it lies at the root of hatred, which is the opposite of mutual love. John’s use of the Cain story in this way permits peacemaking theology to appropriate 1 John’s use of it hermeneutically as a mnemonic device to drive home in our own modern world the consequences of violence. Peacemaking theology may make this move without being tied hermeneutically – as distinct from exegetically – to the hostility 1 John’s author shows to his secessionist opponents. It need not be tied to the author’s largely negative vision of ὁ κόσμος, “the world”163 – entirely understandable in the situation his community faced – as hostile and to be opposed, or to the notion that the love command therefore only applies within the Christian community. Of course ὁ κόσμος is often hostile to Christians and the ideas they propagate – but that poses the question whether Christians must therefore be hostile to it in return. Jesus, of whom 1 John 2:2 says καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, extended to the whole world his expiation of sin, and he provides a model for us to imitate in loving the whole world.

To reinforce the love command, the author of 1 John uses not only the positive results of mutual love – that we will know we are from the truth (3:19), and we will receive all we ask from God (3:22) and he will abide in us and we in him (3:24)164 – but also the negative consequences if we disobey the love command. By his use of σφάζω and ἀνθρωποκτόνος as alarming descriptors of Cain’s actions and very nature, John illustrates how disobedience of the love command affects not only what we do, but who we are – our very identity. If we disobey it, we shall then be from the evil one, like Cain, and be murderers – not necessarily literally, but the reasoning of this pericope proposes that if we do not love, we will embrace

163 But see 1 John 2:2c and 4:9b.
164 The masculine pronoun is used solely for textual accuracy.
its opposite, which is hatred, the origin of murder itself. Thus we risk murder, mutual destruction, if we do not love one another, in obedience to 1 John’s commandment. That the author of 1 John should command mutual love within a community riven with sectarian strife is unsurprising. First John 3:11-18 forces us to look through the violence in our world, at its root, lovelessness. Hermeneutically, for the modern mind, in a world disfigured by cruelty and war, an equally strong warning is sounded by peacemaking theology – love one another or perish violently, by our own hands. The polar opposite of 1 John’s love command is Cain’s false defence in Genesis 4:9, that he is not his brother’s keeper: to the author of 1 John, we are our brother and sister’s keepers, whoever they may be, and we must not do violence to them, or our world will be destroyed in a never-ending cycle of bloody retribution.

Chapter 5 – Ἄγαπάω and ἀδελφός in 1 John

Introduction

The ideas of love and brotherhood, as they appear in 1 John, are embodied in John’s use of the verb ἀγαπάω and the noun ἀδελφός and their derivatives. In 1 John we find ἀγαπάω used throughout the letter, in 1 John 2:10, 2:15 (twice), 3:10, 3:11, 3:14 (twice), 3:18, 3:23, 4:7 (twice), 4:8, 4:10 (twice), 4:11 (twice), 4:12, 4:19 (twice), 4:20 (three times), 4:21 (twice), 5:1 (twice) and 5:2 (twice). Apart from John’s Gospel, 1 John uses this term more frequently than any other book in the NT. The noun ἀγάπη occurs in 1 John 2:5, 2:15, 3:1, 3:16, 3:17, 4:7, 4:8, 4:9, 4:10, 4:12, 4:16 (three times), 4:17, 4:18 (three times), and 5:3. It occurs more often in 1 John than in any other NT work, including John’s Gospel. Similarly, the noun ἀδελφός is found frequently in 1 John, at 2:9, 2:10, 2:11, 3:10, 3:12 (twice), 3:13, 3:14, 3:15, 3:16, 3:17, 4:20 (twice), 4:21 and 5:16. Frequency of usage proves nothing, except that it shows that 1 John is shot through with the ideas these words convey, and that they are not confined to any one unit, although the author’s command that his audience love one another has its own pericope, 1 John 3:11-24. Love and brotherhood are the mainsprings of the letter. These ideas are much appropriated in peacemaking theology, as commands of universal love and solidarity. This chapter asks whether 1 John itself justifies such uses, exegetically or hermeneutically. Are its love and brotherhood commands directed at the world at large, or confined to the author’s community?

Might a study of the Hebrew equivalents of the LXX words ἀγαπάω and ἀδελφός help to decide whether 1 John’s author intended them to embody universal commands, or directed them purely to the author’s own community? Central to the moral compass of first-century Judaism is the

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1 For the sake of brevity, and fidelity to the Greek text, “brother” and consequently “brotherhood” occur in this study to denote both brotherhood and sisterhood – no sexist assumptions should be read into this usage.
Torah. Therefore, although these words are undoubtedly used many times elsewhere in the LXX, this chapter studies their use in Leviticus and in Deuteronomy, to see if it assists in answering the question whether the commands they embody there are of universal love and brotherhood, or whether they were in truth limited to fellow Israelites. Then, recognising, as we have seen, that 1 John’s author was familiar with OT language, we shall then examine the use of these words in 1 John itself to see whether or not they embody universal commands.

This approach has its limitations. Again we must note Barr’s admonition that while it is often essential to undertake comparative etymological study to unlock the meaning of Hebrew words, etymology cannot impose a meaning on known usage of Hebrew terms, and etymological associations which appear to be theologically attractive cannot be allowed to assume command of the whole task of interpretation, without attending to the semantic context of the word in the passage under consideration. All this chapter seeks to do is to uncover ideas represented by certain words in selected OT passages which may underlie ideas conveyed by certain terms in 1 John. The Hebrew meaning of a word cannot, without attending to its use in its original context, determine the meaning of the apparently corresponding Greek word whose meaning is also context-dependent.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the better view is that 1 John was probably written by someone steeped in Jewish scripture, who wrote using Jewish thought patterns, and who did not hesitate to reach for the one OT citation in 1 John, the story of Cain and Abel, as an example of deadly hatred which would be familiar to his audience, as the antithesis of the love and brotherhood which he sees as the antidote to conflict in his community. So it is legitimate to examine the use of the Hebrew equivalents of the LXX verb, ἀγαπάω and noun, ἀδελφός in Leviticus and in Deuteronomy, in order to decide whether they embody universal or particular commands, so as to gain

2 Barr, Semantics of Biblical Language, 158-159.
some insight into their use in 1 John – always remembering their very different historical and theological contexts there.

**Leviticus**

Leviticus, especially chapters 17 to 26, has been aptly described as “emphasizing the holiness of God as the most important theological motif”.³ But in the process, human obligations to one’s fellows receive emphasis too, notably in chapter 19.

In Leviticus 19:17⁴ we first find in v.17a a prohibition of hating a brother, the same idea as one finds in 1 John 3:15, where hatred of a brother is equated to murder. The Hebrew פרֶּרֶשׁ, “brother” there is rendered in the LXX by ὀδήλφος, and ἀμώ, “hate” by μισέω, the same Greek words as are used in 1 John 3:15. The idea appears to be similar.

Hatred of a brother *in one’s heart*, forbidden in Leviticus 19:17a, is not just an emotion, but a mental activity: it is to be compared to the prohibition in Zechariah 8:17a⁵ showing the equivalence of רָע  תַר ע ֵ֗ה וּ א ל־תּ ַ חְַ יַ בִּ וּ ַ , “do not plot evil in your hearts” and ἀμώ, “hate”, so that Leviticus 19:17a implies the plotting of counter-measures.⁶ Such counter-measures obviously might include murder. The point of 19:17a is not mere avoidance of an emotion: it is that hatred begets action – the point in 1 John 3:15 is the same. The use of פרֶּרֶשׁ, “brother” in v.17a makes clear that even while being wronged by an antagonist, one must still think of them as a brother.⁷ Or as Lockshin aptly paraphrases Leviticus 19:17, following Rashbam, “don’t

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⁴ “You shall not hate your brother in your heart: you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself”.
⁵ “Do not contrive evil in your hearts against your fellow man”.
⁷ *Leviticus: A New Translation with a Commentary from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinical Sources* (translation and commentary by Rabbis Nosson Scherman and Hersh Goldwurm; Brooklyn NY: Mesorah Publications Ltd, 1990), 347.
brood with anger against your friend in your heart; confront your friend and explain what troubles you".  

The use of the infinitive absolute before the verb in 19:17b in the phrase הַזְּכִּיא (literally “you rebuke, to rebuke”, better translated “rebuke frankly”) makes this a very emphatic command, contrasting with the prohibition on hatred in 19:17a, which does not use that construction. This literary feature suggests that 19:17b is building towards a climax, a “command of commands” which sums up the whole unit. Leviticus 19:18b appears to be that climax.

Leviticus 19:17b is the natural corollary of v.17a: instead of hating the brother, one must reprove one’s neighbour or bear guilt oneself. This accords with Proverbs 27:5: “better is open rebuke than hidden love”. An interesting shift from בָּרִא, “brother”, ἀδελφός in the LXX, to γένος, “kindred” or “neighbour” occurs in v.17b, rendered in the LXX by πλησίον, which can also carry the meaning of “fellow man”. The commands in vv.17a and 17b are connected: we are given two forms of behaviour, one prohibited and the other commanded, although towards different categories of people. It may nevertheless be that בָּרִא and γένος are intended to carry the same or a similar idea. However, the command in the following verse, 19:18, to love one’s neighbour, uses yet another different word from בָּרִא or γένος: it reads לְרַעְךָ (lit. “to neighbour of you”). It is possible that בָּרִא is used in a figurative, non-literal sense to mean “fellow man” (or woman) in 19:17a. If that is so, the command not to hate one’s brother in this verse would extend to all who are members of one’s own community, or even beyond it. If the Hebrew intended this equation, it would be equally arguable that in the LXX, ἀδελφός and πλησίον carry the same idea. If so, 1 John 3:15 may possibly be read as prohibiting hatred of the ἀδελφός,

8 Rashbam’s Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers, 105 n.26.
9 Kleinig, Leviticus, 397.
brother, including πλησίον, “neighbour” or “fellow man” (or woman) in one’s community as well. However, for reasons which follow, this is tenuous.

Kugel reads 19:17 as saying that reproach of one’s neighbour is a precondition of the judicial process of lodging a charge.\(^{12}\) He finds in the Qumran literature evidence of the great importance placed on this commandment, especially in IQS 5.24-6.1 where we find injunctions to the community to “reproach each other in truth and humility and in loving consideration to a man”, and “let no one speak to him in anger or in contentiousness ... and let him not hate him in ... his heart”.\(^{13}\) This last seems in part to be an echo of Leviticus 19:17.

However “loving consideration to a man” in IQS here reflects the idea in 19:18b, not 19:17. A reasonably clear connection between Leviticus 19:17 and 18 is that in v.17, reproach, “getting it off one’s chest” is required, instead of silent hatred, and in v.18, vengeance or grudge-bearing against one’s neighbour is prohibited, and love is commanded. The Dead Sea Scrolls are some evidence that around the time 1 John was written, the Levitical laws in chapter 19, and by inclusion those in 19:17 and 18, were prominent in the thought-milieu of first-century Judaism. It is not too far a bridge to suppose that the author of 1 John knew of, and appreciated the significance, of the love command in Leviticus 19:18.

The idea underlying the command in Leviticus 19:17 to reprove one’s fellow, rather than hating them also underlies the positive injunction in 19:18b, to love the neighbour, which is connected structurally to, and is the antidote to, hatred of the brother (19:17a).\(^{14}\) Leviticus 19:17-18 is a unit. One should not allow hatred to fester, but rather confront and admonish the neighbour face to face, so avoiding grudges, a proper attitude encouraging


\(^{13}\) Ibid, 52-53; similarly Milgrom, Leviticus 17-22, 1652.

\(^{14}\) Christoph Nihan, From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 474.
love of neighbour: the final statement in v.18b contrasts directly with the opening one in v.17a.\textsuperscript{15}

To sum up, we have noted the shift from $\text{ὁδελφός}$, “brother”, in the LXX, in Leviticus 19:17a to $\text{τήμωρ}$, “kindred” or “neighbour” in v.17b, rendered in the LXX by $\text{πλησίον}$, which can also carry the meaning of “fellow man”. As already noted, the commands in vv.17a and 17b appear to be connected, in that we are given two forms of behaviour, one prohibited and the other commanded, although to different categories of people, but it may nevertheless be that $\text{ὁδελφός}$ and $\text{τήμωρ}$ are intended to carry the same or a similar idea.\textsuperscript{16}

Leviticus 19:18\textsuperscript{17} contains the classical formulation of the command to practice love toward one’s neighbour, $\text{לְרָעָ֖ךַּו}$. A different word from $\text{τήμωρ}$ in 19:17b, which has more the sense of “kindred”, is used in 19:18. This may suggest that 19:18 extends the love command in 19:17a beyond one’s immediate kindred. The injunction “you shall love your neighbour as yourself” has been seen by Rabbi Akiva as the most important principle in the Torah.\textsuperscript{18} In 19:18 the Hebrew $\text{וְאָהָבֶּהוּ}$ is rendered in the LXX by the Greek verb $\text{ἀγαπάω}$ – the same verb as we find in the many citations with the meaning “love” in 1 John listed at the beginning of this chapter.

Brueggemann refers to the concentration of Torah teaching in Leviticus about the need to “maintain an order of sacrifices and a holy priesthood that are pure enough to function effectively in the presence of the holy God”. He also notes a second tradition of interpretation taking as its \textit{leitmotif} the concept of “neighbourly justice”, and taking as its key reference point the delivery of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. To Brueggemann, this suggests

\textsuperscript{15}Levine, \textit{Leviticus}, 129.
\textsuperscript{16}Noth, \textit{Leviticus}, 141.
\textsuperscript{17}“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of the sons of your people, but you should love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord”.
that the obedience of Israel to the same holy God requires “a neighbourly economy in which the exploitative practices of Pharaoh would be excluded”, referring particularly to Leviticus 19:34, 36; 35:38, 42, 55; and 26:13, 45. But who is the “neighbour” spoken of there?

A common Christian view of Leviticus 19:18 is that it is a universal love command, not confined to one’s own community or even Israel itself. Wenham sees the words “love” and “neighbour” in 19:18 as being “as wide-ranging in their scope and meaning in Hebrew as the corresponding English terms”. Boyce writes of 19:18 that “such love leaves vengeance and grudges and seeks for our neighbour what we so all covet for ourselves”. Willis says 19:18 commands a “holiness” which “involves someone’s behaviour towards the poor and the handicapped, and even toward foreigners with whom they are unfamiliar”, arguing, with Brueggemann, that this disposition assumes a creator God who has delivered people from death and slavery to life and righteousness, so that they will react by imitating the righteousness shown them. But to Porter, unlike the NT in Luke 10:25-37, Leviticus 19:18 “means the sense of brotherhood which should be felt with every member of the Israelite sacral community”, and that “it does not have the universal application that Jesus gives it”. Some Jewish scholars are of this view. Milgrom holds that the Hebrew לְר עֲךֵַָ֖ to your neighbour” in Leviticus 19:18 does not “embrace everyone, including non-Israelites”, as it “clearly” does in Exodus 11:2, pointing to Leviticus 19:34, which commands love for ה ַ גָּ ַ ר “the alien”, as yourself, and suggests that in 19:18 לְר עֲךֵַָ֖ “to your neighbour”, therefore means “fellow-Israelite”. Levine translates 19:18 as “love your fellow as

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19 Brueggemann, Old Testament Theology, 211.
20 Wenham, The Book of Leviticus, 269.
yourself”, noting a negative paraphrase by Hillel, “what is hateful to you, do not do to your comrade”, which suggests that the command is limited to one’s own community.\textsuperscript{25} He sees Leviticus 19 as a \textit{midrash} on the Decalogue.\textsuperscript{26}

Might a resolution to this disagreement be found in determining whether the command to love the neighbour in Leviticus 19:18b is universal, by examining how this verse is related to other religious and ethical laws in Leviticus 19? The chapter is remarkable for combining cultic, ritual laws and other, non-cultic laws extending more generally to human behaviour. Scholars have seen a common thread between these apparently disparate groups of laws. Milgrom groups religious duties together in vv.2b-10, after an introduction in vv.1-2a, then ethical duties in vv.11-18, then miscellaneous duties in vv.19-37.\textsuperscript{27} This grouping works, provided the duty to honour one’s parents and the Sabbath in v.3 is seen as primarily religious. This seems justified, for two reasons. First, the injunction from the Lord there is to honour \textit{my} Sabbath. Second, the command to honour one’s earthly parents comes straight after the injunction to honour one’s heavenly parent, the Lord, on the Lord’s own day, the Sabbath.

Similarly Marx sees all of these commands in Leviticus 19 as related in two ways. Firstly, it propounds an ethic founded on two main principles, limiting Israelites in their dealings with fellow countrymen in not taking advantage of a dominant position, and in the religious sphere, prohibiting all contact with spiritual beings other than God, and secondly, it considers sacrificial worship and social ethics to be related areas, governed by the same principles.\textsuperscript{28} This linkage is convincing. One example is illustrative. The prohibition in v. 10 on stripping one’s vineyard bare, with the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[124] Rashbam’s Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers, 107 n.32; Leviticus: A New Translation, 348.
\item[26] Levine, Leviticus, 124; similarly Marx, “The Relationship between the Sacrificial Laws and the Other Laws in Leviticus 19”, 4.
\item[27] Milgrom, Leviticus 17-22, 1596-1597.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
associated command to leave the fallen grapes for the poor and the alien, is primarily a religious duty, but also an ethical one. So as Kaminsky puts it, “Leviticus conceptualises holiness as a unity of proper ritual and ethical conduct and also affirms that religion is not a private matter between each individual and God”. Another unifying characteristic in Leviticus 19, to which Kline points, is the association between God-oriented material in each of its units with material not so oriented. A convincing example, offered by Kline, is the unexpected association in 19:35 between honest weights and measures and “the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt”.

Thus there is broad scholarly consensus that the cultic and ethical commands in the later chapters of Leviticus march together, and are interdependent, firstly because ethical practice in the ancient world of Leviticus is seen to be underpinned by community solidarity conferred by common ritual observance, and secondly because such interdependence arises since both ethical practice and ritual observance are commanded by God, and each solidifies the Israelites’ relationship with God in an inseparable way. As Trevaskis puts it, “the idea of ‘wholeness’ appears common to the ideas of holiness and ethics” in Leviticus.

These features apply particularly to Leviticus 19:18 in its immediate context in chapter 19. We have seen that Milgrom groups religious duties, after an introduction in vv.1-2a, together in vv.2b-10, then ethical duties in vv.11-18, then miscellaneous duties in vv.19-37, and that this taxonomy is useful and cogent. But even within the ethical injunctions in Leviticus 19:11-18 there are sometimes interspersed religious ones. For example, in 19:11, stealing, dealing falsely and lying are proscribed, and in 19:12 profaning the Lord’s name is forbidden. In 19:13 fraud, stealing and keeping back one’s

29 Kaminsky, “Loving One’s (Israelite) Neighbour”, 125.
30 Moshe Kline, “‘The Editor was Nodding’: A Reading of Leviticus 19 in Memory of Mary Douglas,” JHS 8.17 (2008): 2-59, 33.
32 Milgrom, Leviticus 17-22, 1596-1597.
labourer’s wages are interdicted, and in 19:14 mistreating the deaf and blind are proscribed, and fear of the Lord is enjoined.

Leviticus 19:18 fits this pattern, for taking vengeance is first forbidden, which is in reality a religious prohibition, because it constitutes a usurpation of the divine prerogative. Then love of neighbour, an ethical duty, is enjoined. In 19:18 there is an inextricable link between a religious prohibition on presuming to do what God alone can do, by avenging oneself against the neighbour, and the command to love that neighbour instead. What we see in 19:18 is nothing less than two inextricable religious and ethical commands, a ban on private violence against the neighbour, punishment of past wrongs being God’s business, not ours, and a command to love the neighbour instead, even if they have done one wrong.

Despite this, Leviticus 19:33-34, commanding love of the alien as oneself, are still needed, because in 19:18 it is “to your neighbour”, לְר עֲךֵַָ֖, that love is commanded, whereas in 19:34 it is owed to ה ַגָּר, “the alien”, which suggests that they are different categories. One must reluctantly disagree with the view that the love command in 19:18 is universal: if it were, why would 19:34 be needed at all? On the other hand, reading 19:18 together with 19:34, one notes that the same verbal construction, וְאָ ה בְַתַַָ֥, “and you shall love”, translated in the LXX by Ὄγαθος, is used in both verses. The effect is to extend the love command, first “to your neighbour”, לְר עֲךֵַָ֖, and then to ה ַגָּר, “the alien”, so that taken overall, and reading it with the other “holiness” obligations in Leviticus 19, the love command in the chapter, read as a whole, is universal, or very nearly so.

How then may Leviticus 19 impinge on NT interpretation? Allbee sees a “hermeneutical bridge” between Leviticus 19:11-18 and the NT: he proposes that the same love of neighbour that is explicit in Jesus’ command in Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-34, described by him as the unifying

33 Ibid, 1651.
foundation of the law and the prophets, is already implicitly recognised as such in Leviticus 19:11-18. Allbee correctly concedes there is not perfect symmetry, because the NT gives love the priority over law (cf. Romans 13:8; Galatians 5:13), whereas the OT puts love in a legal context, thus giving law the priority. Leviticus 19:18 is a good example. Allbee points out that Leviticus 19:11-18 falls within the “holiness code” section (chs 17-26) and that the statement “you shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” in 19:2 (cf. 20:26) is the context for 19:11-18, as well as for the rest of the Code. Another way of putting it is that to be קדשים, “holy ones” (19:2) is to keep God’s law, including God’s ethical commands, and especially that in 19:18b, to love one’s neighbour as oneself.

Coming to the command “but you shall love your neighbour as yourself”, Allbee notes, importantly, that 19:18b, “you shall love your neighbour as yourself”, begins with the conjunction ו used adversatively (“but”, “on the other hand”), and its wording, לְרָעָבָה לְרָעָבָה מִרְוָה (literally “but you love your neighbour of you as yourself”) uses the injunctive form of the imperfect, expressing a strong command. Wenham sees v.18b as a theological climax to the whole passage, and Allbee agrees, suggesting that love of neighbour at least minimally prevents infringement of any of the various prohibitions in 19:11-18, as it is the common concern of all of them. Thus love of neighbour, says Allbee, is not just another single command in this pericope, 19:11-18, but the foundation and unifying principle of all of the laws in it. Allbee argues that “but you shall love”, וְאָהֲבַת in 19:18 also has its positive side, firstly because in 19:17 the command to “reprove” is linked to the love command in the very next verse, and secondly in that in 19:34, the

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36 Ibid, 149.
37 Ibid, 163.
40 Ibid, 164.
command to love “the alien”, יָדָיו, as oneself, as with 19:18b, requires practical concern for those not as well placed as oneself.\textsuperscript{41} Even if one sees this last concept as restricted to “resident alien”, i.e. an alien living within Israel’s borders, as Milgrom suggests,\textsuperscript{42} the love command in Leviticus 19 is near-universal.

Allbee’s argument is convincing. Firstly, the syntax of the command suggests that it is very strong. Secondly, 19:18b falls at the end of the unit from 19:11 to 19:18 containing ethical commands (using Milgrom’s useful classification noted above) and it is easy to see it as a climax, purely because of its position. Thirdly, each of the prohibitions from v.11 to v.18 – dishonesty (vv.11-13), cruelty to the disabled (v.14), failure to do justice (v.15), slander and profiting at one’s neighbour’s expense (v.16), hatred, with a command to reprove instead (v.17) and vengeance, with a command to love instead (v.18) are indeed sins against one’s neighbour: if one loves one’s neighbour, one is unlikely to infringe any of these prohibitions. Finally, and very significantly, “and you shall love”, וְאָהֲבֵּ֥הּ indeed surfaces again in 19:34, this time directed not just at the other, the neighbour, but at one who is at once not related by ties to oneself and less fortunate than oneself, “the alien”, יָדָיו.

To sum up, the command to love the “neighbour” in 19:18b may be restricted to one’s fellow Israelite, only to be extended in 19:34 to one who clearly does not fit this category, the “alien”. This recurrence of “and you shall love”, וְאָהֲבֵּ֥הּ in 19:34 suggests that since the same attitude is required “to your neighbour”, לְרֵעֵךְ in 19:18b as to “the alien”, יָדָיו in 19:34, the love command in Leviticus 19, read as a whole, is universal or nearly so, not particular and limited to one’s own people.\textsuperscript{43} Allbee shows convincingly that love of neighbour is indeed the foundational principle behind the

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 165.
\textsuperscript{42} Milgrom, Leviticus 17-22, 1704-1705.
\textsuperscript{43} Wenham, Leviticus, 273. As Do notes, exampleing its LXX use in Leviticus 19:18 and 34, ἀγαπάω may connote a social relationship: Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 254.
The Torah’s ethical principles in Leviticus 19:11-18. In that Leviticus 19:18, read with 19:34, embodies a universal love command, or very nearly so, he is essentially correct. Thus, as Allbee says, 19:18b may form a “hermeneutical bridge” to Jesus’ love command in Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-34. It may be argued that it forms a similar hermeneutical bridge to the ἀγάπη theme which recurs so frequently in 1 John, as noted above, noting again that significantly, ἀγάπαω is the LXX’s verb where it translates "but you shall love”, in Leviticus 19:18b and 19:34. Such a bridge may help to discern whether 1 John’s love commands toward one’s brother are universal.

In the Qumran material we find in the Damascus Document at CD VI:20-21 direct references to Leviticus 19 in a passage containing interspersed ritual instructions and rules for daily life: at VI:18, for example, keeping the Sabbath “according to its exact interpretation” and the festivals is enjoined; at VI:19 the day of fasting must be kept; at VI:20 “holy portions according to their exact interpretation” must be set aside; and at VI:20-21 each must “love his brother like himself” and “strengthen the hand of the poor, the needy and the foreigner”.

Further, in CD VI:20 we find a command to love the βрαζ, “brother”, as ourselves – the same association found in 1 John 3:11-17 – not a “neighbour”. CD VI:20 contains an obvious echo of Leviticus 19:18b, but appears to use “brother” interchangeably with “neighbour”. Might the author of 1 John 3:11-17 have intended the same interchangeability? Eisenman notes that after this reference to “loving the brother”, we find “God-fearers” and “fearing God’s name” referred to in CD VIII:42-43; he says the context is exactly that in 1 John 4:18, which is one of “loving

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47 “In love there is no fear, for perfect love casts out fear; for fear is concerned with punishment, and whoever fears has not attained perfection in love”.

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one’s neighbour”, “being built up” or “fortified”, and “perfection”. This is
cogent.

Similarly we find Leviticus 19:17 and 19:18a referred to in CD IX:8-9,
probably connected with the prohibition on “tale-bearing” in Leviticus
19:16.49 This is a passage of legal midrash aimed at holding grudges and
taking vengeance, and requiring instead, reproof of one’s neighbour.50 This
may be the same idea as that of hating the brother, contained in 1 John 3:15.
The connection between “tale-bearing” in 19:16, hatred of the neighbour
(19:17), taking vengeance (19:18a) and loving the neighbour (19:18b) is
obvious: the first three phenomena are all instances of failure to love the
neighbour. Hatred of the brother is such a failure.

However any suggestion that Leviticus 19:18 was exegeted by the Qumran
community as a universal command must take into account the fact that this
community was essentially sectarian in character. The emphasis on
separation, seen in the Damascus Document in part of the passage we have
already noted, CD VI.19, “according to what was discovered by those who
entered the new covenant in the land of Damascus”,51 suggests that the
neighbour-love injunction from Leviticus 19:18b, reiterated at CD VI.20-
21, was intended to apply as between the members of the community in
which it was written, not to the world at large, from which the community
members were so keen to separate themselves, in the interests of perfection.
This is also reflected in the Rule of the Community, at I QS I:8-11, where we
find the commands to “be united in the counsel of God and walk in
perfection in his sight, complying with all revealed things concerning the

48 Robert Eisenman, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the First Christians (Shaftsbury, Dorset:
similarly Aharon Shemesh, “Scriptural Interpretations in the Damascus Document and their
Parallels in Rabbinic Midrash”, in The Damascus Document: A Centenary of Discovery –
Proceedings of the Third International Symposium of the Orion Centre, 4-8 February 1998
(eds. Joseph M Baumgarten, Esther G Chazon & Avital Pinnick; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 161-
176, 174.
50 Steven D Fraade, “Looking for Legal Midrash at Qumran”, in Biblical Perspectives:
Early Use & Interpretation of the Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls – Proceedings of
the First International Symposium of the Orion Centre, 12-14 May 1996 (eds. Michael E
regulated times of their stipulations; in order to love all the sons of light, each according to his lot in God’s plan, and to detest the sons of darkness, each one in accordance with his guilt in God’s vindication”. This same problem may seem to arise in relation to the community in which 1 John was written. But as Fitzmyer correctly notes, the hatred found in the Qumran literature (for example at IQS 1:10-11, where the Essenes were made to swear to hate “wrongdoers”, τοὺς ὀάδικοις) is not found in the teachings of Jesus recorded in the Johannine writings, nor, one might add, in 1 John.

Furthermore, there appears little doubt that the Damascus Document (CD) dates largely from the first century CE, so that the possibility of any textual interrelationship between CD and 1 John needs to be approached with caution. A balanced view of the relationship between the Qumran literature generally and the Johannine literature is still that of Brown, who comments that “the prevalence of the theme of brotherly love in both the Qumran and the Johannine literature is not a conclusive proof of interrelationship”, but “it is certainly remarkable that the New Testament writer who shares so many other ideological and terminological peculiarities with Qumran should also stress the particular aspect of charity which is emphasized more at Qumran than anywhere else in Jewish literature before Christ”.

Leviticus 19:18b is best seen as embodying a command to love one’s neighbour as oneself in circumstances where the “neighbour” may be one’s kinsman, one’s fellow Israelite. Reading 19:18b with 19:34, Leviticus 19, read as a whole, may present a truly universal love command, or nearly so.

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52 Ibid, 71 (italics added).
53 Fitzmyer, “Qumran Literature and the Johannine Writings”, 125.
Leviticus 19:18b alone is cited in Matthew and Mark in that way. Is it likely that the Johannine community knew of the Levitical love command, and that it underlies the love commands in 1 John? We shall come to that later.

Deuteronomy

Just as Leviticus contains the Torah’s love commands connecting the twin religious obligations to love the Lord and one’s neighbour, Deuteronomy sets out a corresponding secular Torah obligation to love the neighbour, which is yet linked to divine love. It is equally relevant, therefore, to examine Deuteronomy’s use of the Hebrew word אָהּב in verbal form, rendered in the LXX by the Greek verb ἀγαπάω, in order to uncover possible Deuteronomic influence on 1 John’s use of this same verb and its cognates.

Some years ago Weinfeld described Deuteronomy’s laws as having a “humanist tone”. Following Driver, Weinfeld writes that of the three constituent elements in the book, historical, legislative and paranetic, the most important and characteristic is the third. To him, underlying Deuteronomy’s law and history is a “humanistic-moral outlook which forms the basis of the book as a whole”. 55 It may be that this emphasis occurs because in a traditional society such as Israel, the economic system had to stand within the legitimating effect of cultural traditions, in order to meet problems in social systems in Judaean society. 56 And these problems in Israel’s society have to be met, according to Deuteronomy, by its people’s actions, in co-operation with their Lord, not by a permanent connection in which the Lord is permanently obliged to ensure fertility and plenty. 57

Over the years other scholars have followed this trend in Deuteronomic interpretation. To Deere, the book’s main thought is “obedience through

love”, so that its supreme command is to “love Yahweh and one’s neighbour with all the heart and soul”.\(^{58}\) Toombs writes that Deuteronomy’s Covenant shows a triangle of relationships, between God and Israel, Israel’s response to God’s initiative, and the relationship of members of the Covenant community to one another.\(^{59}\) Consequently, “in the thought of the Deuteronomist, justice and love are closely akin, for justice is nothing less than love with its coat off, in action in society”.\(^{60}\)

Deuteronomic love, with its origins in divine love for Israel and its working out in social obligations, is well explicated in a representative passage, Deuteronomy 10:12-22. This unit begins with the question to Israel, “what does the Lord require of you”, and is bound together by a sustained linkage between God’s “love”, לְאַהֲבָה (lit. “to love”) for Israel (v.15) and its obligations to others, entailed by God’s love itself. The command to love, לְאָהֲבָה (lit. “so you love) “the stranger”, לָאָהֲבָה is found in v.19, and it is instructive to trace how vv.10-18 lead up to and are connected with it.

In vv.12-13 we see the commandment to love, לְאָהֲבָה (lit. “and to love”) and serve God with all one’s heart and soul, and to keep God’s original commandments, and also those given “today”, in this passage. The commands of 10:12-22 cancel out the Golden Calf incident and are a reinstatement of the Shema; they are a full renewal of Israel’s covenant after her sin.\(^{61}\) In v.12, and in all those subsequent to it in Deuteronomy 10:11-22 using the Hebrew word בְּלִי in verbal form, it is rendered in the LXX by the Greek verb ἀγαπάω – the same verb we find in our citations in 1 John.

The foundation for the command in vv.12-13 to love God and keep God’s commandments is found in vv.14-15 where God’s majesty over heaven and earth is affirmed, and God’s action in setting God’s heart on Israel’s

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\(^{58}\) Derward W Deere, “An Introduction to Deuteronomy”, SJT 57.3 (1964), 7-16, 10.


\(^{60}\) Ibid, 407-408 (emphasis in original).

ancestors and their descendants alone is proclaimed. Next comes in v.16 the curious command to “circumcise the foreskin of your heart”, and to be “stubborn no longer”. The idea of circumcision here is suggested by the election of Abraham in Genesis 17, and is used figuratively here to denote setting a mark of God’s election on spirit and soul. Then in v.17 the “God of Gods and Lord of Lords”, the “great, mighty and awesome”, who is not “partial” and “does not take a bribe” is introduced. A hymnic, liturgical expression is used first to link God’s majesty with God’s characteristics of impartiality – God has no need of offerings to change God’s behaviour: though God has chosen Israel, God does not discriminate in judgment between his people and other peoples.

Therefore (v.18) God grants justice to the orphan and widow, and loves, and provides food and clothing for, the “stranger”. Such a person is to be religious obligation, for example, not to eat anything that has died a natural death: the Israelite is enjoined to give it “to a stranger”, לַגְּרַנְדִּי or “to a foreigner”, לְגַרַנְדִּי (Deuteronomy 14:21). Weinfeld proposes that the wording of v.18 signifies that God gives justice to the stranger too. Tigay sees “to a stranger”, לַגְּרַנְדִּי as referring to resident aliens – and since the context is human behaviour towards those one meets in one’s daily life, this may well be so – but the fact that “love”, אָהֵב is extended by God not only to Israel (v.15) but also to the resident alien is a sign that it extends farther than God’s elected people might have supposed. God’s love is more than impartiality between the claims of his people and those of the stranger – God loves both, without distinction. Verses 17-18 do not connote God as a

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62 Do perceptively notes that in Deuteronomy 10:15, the Hebrew word נְבָנָי, ἀγάπην in the LXX, conveys the idea of unconditional divine love: Do, Re-thinking the Death of Jesus, 253, 260. This therefore is the love to be modelled by the Deuteronomic audience.
64 Ibid, 32.
judicial figure sitting in judgment: rather a ruler, granting help to the weak and poor.\textsuperscript{67}

In v.19 we then find the crowning human obligation to “love”, בְּנֵךְ the “stranger” or “sojourner”, רַע,\textsuperscript{68} precisely because the Israelites, to whom the command is addressed, were “strangers”, גִּבּוֹלָה in the land of Egypt: needy, vulnerable outsiders.\textsuperscript{69} Strangers were vulnerable, being unprotected by clan and family,\textsuperscript{70} and if unprotected may end up as slaves, as indeed the Israelites did in their Egyptian captivity\textsuperscript{71}. Hence the command not to do them harm, indeed to love them, as God does (v.18). This command is ultimately grounded in the Covenant relationship established by God (Exodus 22:21-24, and see Leviticus 19:33-34, noted above).\textsuperscript{72} Here, instructions for worship and service of God are inseparable.\textsuperscript{73}

Lapsley takes up this connection which we have seen in Deuteronomy 10:12-22 between God’s love, בְּנֵךְ, and justice, rightly suggesting that the command in v.16 to “circumcise the foreskin of your heart” is needed, not only because of God’s sovereignty and majesty, but because of God’s concern for justice: the love shown by God in this way manifests itself, not only in practical concern for food and clothing for “strangers”, but in deep and empathic love for them.\textsuperscript{74} Israel must love the stranger (v.19), firstly because God does: the controlling factor in Deuteronomy 10:12-23 in understanding the five occurrences of בְּנֵךְ is the nature of God’s love.\textsuperscript{75}

Lapsley then suggests perceptively that the second motivation to love the stranger in v.19, the remembrance that the Israelites themselves were

\textsuperscript{67} Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1-11, 439; similarly Brueggemann, Deuteronomy, 131; Peter Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1976), 207.

\textsuperscript{68} Driver, Deuteronomy, 126; ADH Mayes, Deuteronomy (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Publ. Ltd., 1979), 211.

\textsuperscript{69} Brueggemann, Deuteronomy, 131.

\textsuperscript{70} Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1-11, 440.

\textsuperscript{71} Brueggemann, Deuteronomy, 131.


\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, 362.
strangers in Egypt, does not operate through intellectual recall alone: the empathic response required here to the “stranger” in Israel is part of an emotional identification with the stranger.\(^{76}\) One might think that this is the corollary of the injunction to “love”, אָהֵב God with all one’s heart and soul (v.12), with which this passage begins, and which is its mainspring.

Vogt proposes that because the alien, widow and orphan are never referred to as “poor” in Deuteronomy, nor bracketed with them (cf. Zechariah 7:10), they are considered to be people who, like the Levites, are ordinarily landless, and are to be integrated fully into the life of the nation: like the Levites, they were to serve as a “barometer” of the nation’s obedience.\(^{77}\) This is convincing, and consistent with Deuteronomy 10:18-19: God loves the “stranger”, גָּר. This imposes a direct, divinely ordained obligation for Israel also to do so – it is not a matter of charity, but of a duty to give the stranger, the alien within its gates, loving support.

This intimate connection between the command to love the stranger in Deuteronomy 10:19 and God’s own love of the stranger in 10:18 is reinforced by vv.20-22 following it, in which we see Israel commanded to fear the Lord, to worship him alone, and to swear by his name, because he is their praise, and their God who has done great and awesome things which their own eyes have seen, so that from their seventy ancestors who went down to Egypt, God has made them as numerous as the stars in heaven. This vivid religious poetry makes it crystal clear that the obligation to love strangers in v.19 is of a piece with the rest of their worship – God has loved them, and so must Israel love the strangers in their midst.

The term “brother”, בֵּנוֹ is not found in Deuteronomy 10:12-23, but it is used repeatedly in Deuteronomy 15:1-11, not in the sense of “male sibling” but of “fellow Israelite”. Here, as we shall see, there is strong emphasis on

\(^{76}\) Ibid, 363.
the obligation of generosity to the needy brother, used in this sense – but here, we shall also see, it does not extend to the "foreigner".  

Deuteronomy 15, as part of the Deuteronomic Code, stands on a secular foundation: dealing with loans and debts, it stands with other chapters dealing, at least in part, with secular themes, such as chapters 16 (the judiciary), 17 (the monarchy), 20 (the military), 21, 22 and 24 (the family and inheritance), 25 (litigation and quarrels), and 19 (trespassing and false testimony): in this, says Weinfeld, it “stands in contrast to the Priestly document”. We shall limit our study here, for reasons of space, to Deuteronomy 15:1-11, mandating particular obligations to the "brother".

This unit begins with laws concerning the “Sabbatical year”, occurring every seven years. It imposes an obligation in vv.1-2 to remit debts every seven years against a "brother" (ἀδελφός in the LXX), “brother”, but v.2 extends this obligation also to his fellow/neighbour. Tigay sees "brother" and "fellow" as equivalent terms, “fellow, that is, kinsman”, comparing this verse with v.12, where, he says, “fellow Hebrew” is literally “Hebrew kinsman”. Brueggemann sees both categories as signifying “fellow members of the covenanted community”, i.e. Israel. Is it correct to limit the obligations to the brother, "brother" and "fellow", here to fellow Israelites? We have already noted the permission in v.3 to exact a debt, rather than remitting it in the Sabbatical year, against a "foreigner". In Deuteronomy, “foreigner” does not necessarily carry the same idea as “alien”, “stranger”.

Deuteronomy 14:21 makes this clear. So in Deuteronomy 15:1-18 can a

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78 See 15:3, and note also 23:20.
79 Moshe Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 188.
80 Tigay, Deuteronomy, 146.
81 Brueggemann, Deuteronomy, 164.
82 “You shall not eat anything that has died a natural death: give it to the stranger or to the foreigner”.
83 Mayes, Deuteronomy, 248.
In vv.4-6 we read that in fact there will be no-one in need among the Israelites because the Lord is sure to bless them in the land in which they have divine permission to live, if only they obey the whole command given them. We read that when the Lord their God has blessed them as promised, they will give birth to many nations, but will not borrow, but rather rule over many nations, who will in turn not rule over the Israelites. In face of such a protean promise to the Israelites, if they obey God, who among them could be in need? In vv.7-8 we find the command to the Israelites that if any הַנַּחַל, “brother” among them is in need, they should not be hard-hearted or “tight” with them, but should open their hands, willingly. 84 Who is the הַנַּחַל here? Certainly not the “foreigner”, יָרֵקְנ. Such a person passes through Israel, and is not integrated into the community, and is not recommended as the subject of Deuteronomic charity here. 85 Such a one could not be said to be “among” the Israelites. Surely it is not likely that in strict exegetical terms the command here includes the “alien”, הַגָּר, in view of the inclusion of this term with “foreigner”, יָרֵקְנ in Deuteronomy 14:28? 86

Driver, however, comments that the spirit in which these verses are conceived is in accord with the philanthropic motive apparent elsewhere in Deuteronomy. 87 He raises the possibility that vv.7-11 are meant to apply generally: “the prospect of a reduced income in the near future is not to check the Israelite’s liberality towards any that solicit from him pecuniary aid”. 88 This finds little adherence among more recent commentators, but

84 Tigay, Deuteronomy, 147.
85 Mayes, Deuteronomy, 248.
87 Driver, Deuteronomy, 180.
88 Ibid, 181.
may gain some support from Deuteronomy 10:18 where we find side by side God’s justice for the orphan and widow and provision of food and clothing for the “stranger” or “alien”, גֵּר. As noted above, Weinfeld proposes that the wording of 10:18 signifies that God gives justice to (i.e. makes just provision for) the stranger too.89

In v.9 we find a dire warning not to think meanly that the seventh year is approaching, and therefore be hostile towards one’s needy גֵּר, “brother”, giving them nothing, lest they cry out to the Lord, so one incurs guilt. The idea is that guilt builds and leads to punishment, as merit leads to reward; cf. 6:25.90 Finally, in vv.10-11 we find a correlative assurance that generous and ungrudging giving leads to divine blessing, and a command to Israelites to open their hand to the poor and needy גֵּר, “brother” in their land, where there will always be needy people. In the end, it would seem an over-strict exegesis of the text here to suppose that its generous benefactions are not to extend at least to the גֵּר, the resident alien. The theme of brotherhood serves Deuteronomy’s deeper concern that Israel respond properly to God’s generosity towards it.91 An obligation to respond by “open-handed” giving (v.11) to the גֵּר, the resident alien, too, best fits with this theology.

To Von Rad, from the first sentence to the last, Deuteronomy in its preaching is concerned to “make the old cultic and legal traditions relevant for their time”.92 The law of remission (Deuteronomy 15:1-2) does not have social or economic roots: it is a *sacral* obligation.93 The lawgiver, once the apodictic command in 15:1-2 is given, turns to preaching: the recipient of the law must realise that it is not the law which drove them to adopt an anti-social attitude to the poor.94 Lapsley, following Anderson, rightly criticises Von Rad’s approach as appealing to a higher “spiritual” love of God, and as

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90 Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 147; Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 166.
exemplifying a tendency in Christian scholarship to characterise the Jewish scriptures as containing “overly punctilious behavioural norms”. This is cogent. Von Rad’s exegesis of 15:1-11 misses the intimate connection between vv.1-2 and 3-11: remission of debt is as much an expression of open-handed, divinely commanded generosity as is giving to one’s needy brother. Deuteronomy 15:1-2 is as much an expression of the “secular foundation” of the Deuteronomic Code as is 15:3-11.

To sum up, Deuteronomy 15:1-11 is a seamless series of commands to the Israelites based on divine concern for the debt-ridden and needy. It is based on pure human obligation, even though it warns of divine justice, at the behest of the spurned brother, if its injunctions are ignored (v.9). The “brother”, , is probably not limited to the full citizen of Israel: it may well include the resident alien. The mainspring of this obligation is supplied by 15:7: as God has given his people the land in which their towns are situated and they ought not therefore be themselves “hard-hearted” or “tight-fisted”, so in 15:8 are they commanded, in love and obedience, to respond to the needy and powerless in their own land with generous giving which is “open-handed”. The wording of 15:8, , literally “hand of you you open”, contrasted in 15:7 by , literally “fist of you you tighten”, is so powerful that it has spawned the modern opposing phrases, “open handed” and “tight fisted”. Deuteronomy 15:1-11 therefore links Israel’s generosity to their poorer brothers with their relationship with God. Israel’s obligation to be generous is reciprocal: as God has been generous to them, so must they be to the needy other.

**Possible Influence of Leviticus and Deuteronomy on 1 John**

We have noted the many citations in 1 John of , and that apart from John’s Gospel, 1 John uses this term more frequently than any other book in

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96 Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 188.
the NT. ἀγάπη also occurs very frequently in 1 John, and as already noted, it is used more frequently there than in any other NT text, including John’s Gospel, and similarly, ἀδελφός is found very frequently in 1 John.

In the LXX the Hebrew verb לְבָנָה, “love” is translated in Leviticus 19:11-18 and in Deuteronomy 10:12-22 by ἀγαπάω, and in Leviticus 19:11-18 and in Deuteronomy 15:1-11, the noun ἡδέλφη, “brother” is translated as ἀδελφός. Might the usage and context of these Hebrew words and their Greek equivalents, and the ideas underlying them, cast some light on the ideas conveyed by their Greek equivalents, as used in 1 John? Again Barr’s warning must be heeded, that while it is often essential to undertake comparative etymological study to unlock the meaning of Hebrew words, etymology cannot impose a meaning on known usage of Hebrew terms: theologically attractive etymological associations cannot assume command of the whole task of interpretation.97 This is even more the case when we trace the recurrence of LXX words in a NT context. We must attend to the very different situation and context in which the Greek terms ἀγαπάω and ἀδελφός are used in 1 John.

Having said that, the basal principle in 1 John 4:11,98 with its κοθωσ theology, its imitation of God as a basis for ethics, has much in common with both Leviticus 19:2 and Deuteronomy 10:18-19, examined above, and also Deuteronomy 15:15.99 As van der Watt notes, the divine love testified to in 1 John 4:11 is “concretized” in 3:16-17, where love for others in giving up one’s life for them, and helping those in need, are enjoined.100 Κοθωσ in 1 John 4:11 has a double meaning: not only should you love one another in the same way as God has loved us, but also you must do so because God

97 Barr, Semantics of Biblical Language, 158-159.
98 “My beloved ones, since God loved us so much, we also should love one another”.
99 David L Baker, Tight Fists or Open Hands? Wealth and Poverty in Old Testament Law (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2009), 214 n.54. Deuteronomy 15:15 may be translated “remember you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you: this is why I am giving you this command today”.
loved you so much.¹⁰¹ The thought in Deuteronomy 10:18-19 is similar: you were strangers in Egypt, so you must love the stranger, both because God loves the stranger, and also in the same way.

First John has its own pericope devoted to mutual love, 3:11-24. It is instructive to look at the ideas of love and brotherhood developed in this unit alongside their use in Leviticus 19 and in Deuteronomy 10 and 15, represented by the Hebrew בַּעַל and גַּּלְּקָם, rendered both in the LXX and in 1 John by ἀγαπάω and ἀδελφός.

Comparing Leviticus 19 and 1 John 3:11-22, we find in both texts halakah, instructions for daily living, interspersed and interconnected with theological material, haggadah, in which God’s ways toward humankind as set out in Scripture are exegeted and explained. In Leviticus 19:18b the Hebrew verb בַּעַל is rendered in the LXX by the Greek verb ἀγαπάω – the same verb we find in the many citations in 1 John listed at the beginning of this chapter. The Hebrew בַּעַל, “neighbour” in Leviticus 19:18 becomes πλησίον in the LXX. Although love of the “neighbour”, πλησίον is not found as a command in 1 John, the command to love one another in 1 John 3:13 is not necessarily inconsistent with this idea.

We find in 1 John 3:11 the message heard from the beginning, that we must love one another, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους. Leviticus 19:18¹⁰² contains the classical OT command to love one’s neighbour. We have traced the arguments that the command in 19:18 to show love “to your neighbour”, בַּעַל, is extended in 19:34 to הַגָּר, “the alien”. Might they apply to the love command in 1 John 3:13? Such a proposition appears tenuous. First John displays remarkable hostility to sectarian opponents, those who “went out from us” (2:19). Their slogans are repeatedly condemned (cf. 1:8, 4:20) and they are characterised as ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, “from the world” (4:5). Moreover,

¹⁰¹ Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 270.
¹⁰² “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of the sons of your people, but you should love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord”.

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τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, “the things of the world” are condemned as unworthy of love (2:15-17). And the secessionists themselves are characterised as ἀντίχριστοι, “antichrists” (2:18). First John is structured around a series of “tests of life”, each of which involves rejecting the teaching of the secessionists by refuting their slogans.¹⁰³ How could a faithful Christian love the opponents in 1 John?

But as Painter writes, true it is that we do not find any injunction to love one’s neighbour, as distinct from one’s brother, ἀδελφός, in 1 John, but the epistle affirms that God’s love is for the world, and God’s will is to save it (1 John 2:2; 4:14; cf. John 3:16; 4:42; 17:20-26; 20:21).¹⁰⁴ First John 2:15-17 does not require hatred of those who are not believers: it expresses a clash of values within the believers’ community in relation to “the world”.¹⁰⁵ But hatred of the world itself is not commanded. How could it be? Jesus is the atoning sacrifice, not only for the sins of the believers, but for those of the whole world (2:2), and the Father has sent the Son as saviour of the world (4:14). But shot through the epistle is hostility to the things of the world, its impermanence and hatred, over which Jesus must triumph (2:15-17, 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 3, 4, 5, 17; 5:4, 5, 19). In 1 John, ὁ κόσμος is regarded ambiguously. The world might hate the believer (3:13), but that does not require reciprocal hatred of the world by the believer – far from it. The author’s response is counterintuitive: far from hating the world in return, his community is commanded simply to love one another.

Granted that in 1 John 3:11 one of the author’s main concerns is to ensure solidarity within the believing community against the secessionists by mutual love. But this is not inconsistent with God’s wish that the world – including the secessionists – be saved by the gift of the Son as ἴλασμος, an atoning sacrifice (2:2, 4:10) for its sin. Indeed Rhea Jones’ suggestion that ὁ

¹⁰³ Law, Tests of Life, 5-6; similarly Dodd, Johannine Epistles, xxxiv; Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 70-71; Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, xxxi; Brown, Epistles of John, 92-93; Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 3-6; Grayston, Johannine Epistles, 14-18; Marshall, Epistles of John, 15-16; Stott, Letters of John, 44-47.
¹⁰⁴ Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 182.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
πρεσβύτερος as the author of 1 John had *missional* aims is convincing: rightly, he sees the statement at 1 John 2:19 as to the secessionists having “gone out” from the author’s community as indicating that the secessionists did so “with a sense of intent, of mission”. One might expect 1 John’s author to have similar aims in reply. Viewed in this light, 1 John may be seen, not just as a tract enjoining mutual solidarity among Johannine community members, but as embracing and seeking to include those beyond it by outward-directed proclamation of divine love.

In Leviticus 19:17 we find a prohibition against hating a brother, which is of course the same idea as one finds in 1 John 3:15, where hatred of a brother is equated to murder. In Leviticus 19:17 the Hebrew בנים, “brother” there is rendered in the LXX by ὁδῆλφος, and έχθρα, “hate” by μισέω, the same Greek words as are used in 1 John 3:15. The idea appears to be similar, except for the identification of hatred with murder. But who is the ὁδῆλφος, “brother” in 1 John 3:15, whom one must not hate? The equation with Cain, who murdered his brother, in 3:12 (discussed in chapter 4, above) suggests one who is close, and it may be that the author is referring in 3:15 to the secessionists’ failure to love their (former) brothers, perhaps before they left.

But the converse does not necessarily apply: 1 John 3:15 does not contain a command to hate the secessionists *themselves*. Could it be that the secessionist is still an ὁδῆλφος in 3:15, whom the believers must not hate? Against this is the reference in 2:19 to those who “went out from us” and hence did not “belong to us”. But 3:15 can still be read as teaching against hatred of former brothers, while remaining hostile to the ideas they

107 “You shall not hate your brother in your heart: you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself”.
110 Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 190.
propagate: certainly it does not require such hatred. Condemnation of hatred by the Cain analogy in 3:12 and identification of hatred with murder in 3:15 are so strong that they are not to be read as mere condemnation of the secessionists’ attitude to those who remain in the community. The idea is that all hatred is corrosive, and has drastic consequences, and is at all times to be avoided. It can be argued that 1 John does not counsel hatred of the secessionists, and may even condemn it. But as there is no command to love “the stranger” or “the alien”, תַּמָּן – translated by the LXX as προσήλυτον in Leviticus 19:34 – in 1 John 3:13-24, it still appears unlikely that the command ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, “we must love one another” in 1 John 3:11 is universal.

What of the possible influence of Deuteronomy 10:12-22 and 15:1-11 in 1 John 2:11-24? In 1 John 1:1 we find a declaration to the reader of what was from the beginning, ἀπ’ αρχῆς, and in 3:11 we again learn of the message heard from the beginning, ἀπ’ αρχῆς, that we should love one another. This is virtually a copy of 1:5, where we read of the message we have heard ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, from “him” (referring to “his Son Jesus Christ”: 1:3). This expression is found eight times in 1 John (1:1; 2:7, 13, 14, 24 (twice); 3:8, 11) and is ambiguous: among other things, it may refer to the ἐντολή, commandment (2:7) or the ἀγγελία, message (3:11) heard ἀπ’ αρχῆς, “from the beginning”.

For Schnackenburg, the emphatic solemnity of the message, ἀγγελία here takes on the meaning of a commandment. As noted above, Barker writes that the commands of Deuteronomy 10:12-22 cancel out the Golden Calf incident and are a reinstatement of the Shema; they are a full renewal of Israel’s covenant after her sin. In a similar way, 1 John 1:1, in a clear echo of the Prologue in John 1:1, restates God’s revelation τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς, “of the word of life”, which we have heard ἀπ’ αρχῆς, from the beginning, and similarly 1 John 3:11 reinstates a commandment heard ἀπ’ αρχῆς, from the beginning, that we must love one another. There

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111 Brown, Epistles of John, 440.
112 Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 120, 237.
113 Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 178.
114 Barker, The Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy, 103.
115 Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 4.
are Deuteronomic echoes in the use of ἔντολη, commandment in 2:7, which becomes the ἀγγελία, message in 3:11, to love one another. The idea of a commandment is covenantal – to love because we are loved: since God loved us so much, we ought to love one another (4:11). That same mainspring of the love commands in Deuteronomy 10, divine love, occurs at 10:15, that God set God’s heart on the people’s ancestors alone. Similarly the mainspring of the love commands in Deuteronomy 15 is divine love, at 15:15, that God redeemed the people, who were slaves in the land of Egypt.

What of the possible influence of the command in Deuteronomy 10:18-19 to love “the stranger”, הגר, in 1 John 3:13-24? In Deuteronomy 10:18 God is portrayed as giving justice to the orphan and the widow, and loving the stranger, and in 10:19 the Israelites are commanded likewise to love the stranger, as they were strangers in the land of Egypt. In 1 John 3:16, we find a similar idea of imitative love: Jesus laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. But we must still ask, how can the ἀδελφός, the object of the love enjoined in 1 John 3:16, include “the stranger”, הגר, of Deuteronomy 10:18-19 (translated by the LXX as προσήλυτον) or even the secessionists who are not strangers, but known opponents?

There is another possible parallel between Deuteronomy 10:19 and 1 John beyond our pericope, 1 John 3:11-24. In that Deuteronomy 10:19 is intimately connected to 10:15, where we are told that God set the divine heart in love on Israel’s ancestors, one might compare it to 1 John 4:7a where we are commanded to “love one another, because love is from God”. In the same way, 1 John 3:23-24a commands that its audience remember that as God’s commandment is that we believe in God’s Son and love one another, so all who obey God’s commandments abide in him. As noted in chapter 4, Thatcher argues (in the context of the Cain reference at 1 John 3:12) that “early Christians embraced and extended the premises of the
Septuagint reading when applying Genesis 4 to current experience”.\footnote{Thatcher, “Cain the Jew the Antichrist”, 367.} In a similar way, the command at 1 John 3:23-24a may well be a recollection and reapplication of Deuteronomy 10:19 to the current circumstances of the author’s divided community.

Coming to possible parallels between Deuteronomy 15:1-11 and 1 John 3:11-24, the “brother”, \( \text{γάδερ} \), in Deuteronomy 15:1-11 is probably not limited to the full citizen of Israel: it may well include the resident alien, \( \text{γάδερ} \). But the difference is that in 1 John, there is no command to love the “stranger” or “alien”, \( \text{γάδερ} \), translated by the LXX as \( \piροσή\lambdaυτων \), in 1 John 3:13-24 – or anywhere else. In the absence of such an indication, it may appear difficult to argue on purely \textit{exegetical} grounds that the command \( \alphaγαπῶ\muε\nu \text{ἀλλήλους} \), “we must love one another” in 1 John 3:11 extends to humanity generally, as its use by peacemaking theologians would suggest.

In 1 John 3:17 we find a rhetorical question: how does God’s love abide in one who has the world’s goods and, seeing a brother, \( \text{ἄδελφος} \) in need, refuses help? In Deuteronomy 15:7-8 we find a similar command to the Israelites that if any \( \text{γάδερ} \), “brother” among them in any of their towns in the land their God is giving them is in need, they should not be hard-hearted or “tight” with them, but should open their hands, willingly. Indeed, as we have seen, in Deuteronomy 15:9 we find a dire warning not to think meanly that the seventh year is approaching, and therefore be hostile towards one’s needy \( \text{γάδερ} \), “brother”, giving them nothing, lest they cry out to the Lord, so one incurs guilt. This is a similar idea to that in 1 John 3:17, that God’s love does not abide in a person who refuses help to the needy \( \text{ἄδελφος} \), brother, which may be a direct allusion to Deuteronomy 15.\footnote{Black, “The First, Second, and Third Letters of John”, 418.}

The verb \( \muένεω \), “remain”, “stay”, “abide”, used in the rhetorical question in 1 John 3:17, is used earlier in this same pericope in 3:14 to build a crucial
antithesis: ἡμεῖς οἴδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, ὅτι ἂγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς· ὁ μὴ ἂγαπῶν μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ, “we know that we have crossed over from death to life because we love one another, but one who does not love abides in death”. 118 Granted, the author is probably thinking in 3:14c of the secessionists, who are not real believers and so do not receive eternal life. 119 But the implied threat in 1 John 3:17 is that one who refuses help to the needy brother, i.e. fails to love him, abides in death (3:14). 120 Similarly in Deuteronomy 15:9 the cry of the needy brother to the Lord, if he is given nothing, condemns the person who fails to give to a similar fate: divine wrath.

First John 3:18, requiring love in truth and acts, is also in similar vein to Deuteronomy 15:9: the thought in both verses is that what matters to God is the practical demonstration of love, not mere profession. In Deuteronomy 15:9 failure to give, not mere failure to love, is condemned. Similarly, in 1 John 3:18 the author enjoins active, continuing love for needy brothers. 121 But in 3:17 the ἄδελφος, “brother” is not necessarily the same person as the ἀδελφός, “brother” in Deuteronomy 15:9. Again it needs to be emphasized that there is no indication in 1 John that this concept includes the προσήλυτος, “alien” or “stranger” of Deuteronomy in the LXX.

Further, the promise of divine blessing for generous giving to the needy brother in Deuteronomy 15:10 expresses a similar thought to 1 John 3:19-20. 122 It is that if we are generous in love, which involves giving to the needy brother (3:17), we will receive reassurance from God, who knows all. In 3:19, the sentence beginning καὶ ἐν τοῦτῳ does not merely refer back to 3:18, but is a summary of the teaching about the love command at 3:10-

118 As already noted, this is a pivotal statement of Johannine belief: Rhea Jones, 1, 2, and 3 John, 139.
119 Brown, Epistles of John, 446.
120 Again masculine forms are used purely for textual accuracy.
121 Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 236.
122 “And by this we will know we are in the truth and it will encourage our hearts before him whenever they condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and God knows all things”.

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18. The end result of love, which implies giving generously, is divine reassurance.

The promise of divine blessing for generous giving to the needy brother in Deuteronomy 15:10 is similar to 1 John 3:19-20: if we are generous in love, which involves giving to the needy brother (3:17), we will receive reassurance from God, who knows all. Both texts tie divine blessing to love in action towards one’s fellow.

**Conclusion**

Before summing up our findings in this chapter, it is useful to pause briefly to reflect on the dominical love command in John’s Gospel. The full significance of its being dominical can be appreciated in light of Barrett’s famous observation (speaking of John 1:1) that John intends that the whole of his Gospel shall be read in light of this verse”, so that “the deeds and words of Jesus are the words and works of God”. Whether or not this Gospel and 1 John are of common authorship – a question outside the scope of this study – it is feasible to trace a hermeneutical trajectory in relation to the love command from the LXX through the dominical injunctions in John’s Gospel to 1 John. The LXX was available to, and used by, Greek-speaking first century Christians, including the Johannine community, and the Fourth Gospel contains specific LXX citations: see for example John 1:23 (Isaiah 40:3). And many scholars now doubt the “Baur consensus” that John’s Gospel has little historical value, and consider that both its

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123 Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 200.
124 “And by this we will know we are in the truth and it will encourage our hearts before him whenever they condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and God knows all things”.
125 No attempt is made here to reach conclusions on the extensive scholarship about the scope of the love command in John’s Gospel, which is beyond the aims of this study.
narrative and its discourse material contain good, early tradition, even though the discourses display Johannine literary style.

The love command in John’s Gospel first occurs at 13:34, ἐντολὴν καινὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, “I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you too should love one another”. Torah ethics required love of neighbour (Leviticus 19:18) and imitation of God’s own character (cf. Leviticus 11:44, 19:2, 20:26, 21:8), but what is new here is the standard for this love: “as I have loved you”. In predicting that he would lay down his life for others, and love them to the end (13:1), Jesus valued his disciples above himself. It is significant that 13:34 is contained in the unit which includes the footwashing (13:5): this anticipates


the love shown in the crucifixion. The aorist ἠγάπησα is a reference to the passion, not just to the footwashing.

At John 15:12 a similar command occurs, Ἄρτι ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ ἢ ἐμὴ ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς, “my commandment is this, that you love one another, just as I have loved you”, repeated at 15:17, ταῦτα ἐντέλλομαι ὑμῖν ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, “my commandment is that you love one another”. This occurs in the same unit as Jesus’ use of the vine and branches metaphor (15:1-5), “a major symbol of the connection between the personhood of God, the advent of Jesus and the formation of the Church”. What occurs at 15:12 is a renewal of covenant. That is an OT theme: as Beasley-Murray identifies, at 15:12 we have “the call to love God (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), recited daily by Jews and conjoined by Jesus with the command to love the neighbour (Leviticus 19:18; cf Mark 12:29-31”).

Significantly, John 15:12 is immediately followed by Jesus’ saying about laying down one’s life for one’s friends in 15:13 – which, as Barrett reminds us, is what Jesus himself did, as echoed in 1 John 3:16. John 15:12 and 1 John 3:16 can be seen together as the ultimate Christian extension of the Torah obligation to love the neighbour in Leviticus 19:18.

From the Torah texts we have examined, we may indeed trace a hermeneutical trajectory through Jesus himself in John’s Gospel, in the dominical love command, to love as he has loved, contained at John 13:34 and 15:12, 17 to 1 John 3:11-18. This unit bears a strong textual resemblance to John 15:9-16:4. The dominical ἐντολὴ in John 15:12 (and indeed at 13:34) to love one another becomes the ἀγγελία to the same

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135 Dorothy Lee, Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Theology and Gender in the Gospel of John (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 100
137 Beasley-Murray, John, 274.
139 Coombes, 1 John: The Epistle as a Relecture of the Gospel of John, 131-136.
effect in 1 John 3:11. In both cases a καθεῶς ethic emerges. In John 13:34 and 15:12, 17 the connection between divine and human love is direct: the command is to love one another “as I have loved you”. That linkage is not present at 1 John 3:11, but it appears later at 4:11, ἀγαπητοί, εἰ οὗτος ὁ θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν. Both John 15:12 and 1 John 3:11 (read with 4:11) reflect the connection between human and divine love seen in both Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the units surveyed above.

We have seen that the author of 1 John was probably steeped in Judaism. The style and theology of the letter demonstrate a high degree of Jewish influence, even though it cites the OT only once (the Cain analogy in 3:15), and probably its audience was steeped in the Jewish scriptures. So it is legitimate to look at how two of 1 John’s major themes, love and brotherhood, as represented by the words ἀγάπη and ἀδελφός, are treated in three OT passages where the Hebrew equivalents of these LXX words occur, and to ask whether there is similarity in the ideas conveyed by these words in 1 John 3:11-24, the pericope dealing particularly with the need for mutual love of the brother, but remembering the very different situation addressed by 1 John as compared with the three OT texts examined in this chapter.

There is little doubt that, even exegetically, Leviticus 19:17-18 and Deuteronomy 10:11-19 and 15:1-11 broadly support the theology in each of the citations from peacemaking theologians at the beginning of this study. Leviticus 19:17 contains a direct command not to hate the brother, πάντας in one’s heart, which requires a change in motivation, not merely in attitude, so violence can be stemmed at its source. Leviticus 19:18 enjoins love, βραδῦς (ἀγάπη in the LXX) of the neighbour, ἄνθρωπος (πληροῖον in the LXX) as oneself. Leviticus 19:34 also requires love of the (resident) alien, ἴππος (προσήλυτον in the LXX) as oneself, even though it is not clear that the neighbour, ἴππος includes the (resident) alien, ἴππος. So too Deuteronomy 268
10:19, for example, with its command to love the alien or stranger, ἀλληλούϊα, because the Israelites too were strangers in Egypt (from which God rescued them) clearly enjoins imitative, undiscriminating love, as a reflection of God’s own love. As another example, Deuteronomy 15:9-11 warns against denial of the needs of the brother, πλησίον, lest they cry out to God and bring down guilt on the ungenerous one, and promises divine blessing on the generous giver, and commands open-handed giving. The brother, πλησίον, may well extend at least to the resident alien, ἀλληλούϊα. The central themes of Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the units surveyed above are, broadly speaking, the need for undiscriminating love, manifested in deeds, in generous giving to those in need, prompted by God’s generosity to needy Israel.

We have seen that some of these themes reappear in 1 John 3:11-24. Certainly in 1 John 4:11, outside the present unit, there is a καθεν ὄς theology, that we must love each other because God loves us and καθεν ὄς, just as, God loves us.¹⁴⁰ In the same way, Deuteronomy 10:18-19 enjoins love of the stranger because God loved the people of Israel and delivered them from Egypt. Leviticus 19:18 enjoins love of the neighbour, πλησίον in the LXX – a word not found in 1 John 3:11-24, or elsewhere in the epistle. Instead love for the brother, ἀδελφός is enjoined. Alison, Schwager and Yoder rightly see love for one another in imitation of God’s love as a cornerstone of 1 John, but love for the ἀδελφός, brother in 1 John does not extend to the πλησίον, neighbour in strict exegetical terms. But in the very different situation we face today, of human hostility that is not only intracommunal but national and international, with civil and international war breaking out everywhere, and with consequent refugee flows to more fortunate societies such as our own, is it not legitimate to see the “brother” of 1 John in any neighbour we may encounter?

¹⁴⁰ As Culpepper remarks (in the context of the same word, καθεν ὄς, in 1 John 5:25), “adverbs seldom carry theological significance, but in the Johannine writings, just as draws comparisons that trace the course of revelation and lay bare the lines of authority”: Culpepper, The Gospel and Letters of John, 260.
Certainly 1 John is hostile to the doctrines of the secessionists, the “antichrists” who “went out from us” (2:19), but it does not require hatred of them – its response is rather to embrace mutual love. It proclaims God’s Son Jesus Christ as the atoning sacrifice for the sins, not only of the community but of the whole world (2:2), and it also affirms that the Father has sent the Son into the world that we might live through him (4:9) who is saviour of the world (4:14). But throughout the epistle we also find hostility to the things of the world, its impermanence and hatred of believers, over which Jesus must triumph (2:15-17; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 3, 4, 5, 17; 5:4, 5, 19).

So ὁ κόσμος in 1 John is ambiguous – God loves the world, but not its evils and hostility, and it is over these that Jesus must win victory – not its inhabitants, who are included in God’s saving love.\(^{141}\) So the love for one another, enjoined in 1 John 4:7, is *in consequence* of God’s love (4:11) – as it is in Deuteronomy 10:18-19. It is natural, given that it is written against the secessionist’s errors, as the epistle sees it, that it promotes love, internal solidarity within its community as an antidote to secessionist hostility and division – but the secessionists themselves are not the object of hatred: instead, that is to be avoided. If hatred is the sin of the secessionists, nothing is gained by compounding evil and hating them in return.

First John 3:17, with its command to help the brother, ὁ δίκαιος in need finds a parallel in Deuteronomy 15:1-11, with its requirement of “open-handed” giving to the needy brother, ἄνδρα, who may well include the resident alien, ἔθνος. In both texts the requirement is theological, and intimately connected with God’s generosity to the giver. The next verse, 1 John 3:18, sums this up. Love for one another must be “truthfully enacted”, as Deuteronomy 15:7 enjoins.\(^{142}\)

But for those who would find in 1 John an ethic of universal love and caring, the problem still is that there is no indication that the brother,

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\(^{141}\) Parsenios, *First, Second, and Third John*, 67-68.

\(^{142}\) Black, “The First, Second, and Third Letters of John,” 419.
But again it is fruitful to see how 1 John marches with John’s Gospel, in proclaiming God’s love for the world in God’s gift of the Son. John 3:16-17 bears some textual resemblance to 1 John 4:9-10. In both cases the Son is “sent” by God into the world as a gift of love: the same verb, ἀποστέλλω, conveying the idea of revelation, appears in the aorist, ἀπέστειλεν in John 3:17 and in the perfect, ἀπέσταλκεν in 1 John 4:9. Sending may be the most frequently occurring Christological expression in the Fourth Gospel. If the dominical command in John’s Gospel, repeated in 1 John, is to love one another in imitation of divine love, and that divine love is revealed to the world in the sending of the Son, the Johannine love command may surely be used hermeneutically, supporting an ethic of love for the whole world. The accusation by some scholars that John’s Gospel reflects a sectarian hatred of the world, and a love command aimed exclusively at the author’s own community, is answered by John’s missionary concern: the disciples, like Jesus, are sent into the world (John 17:18) that it might believe that the Father sent the Son (17:21) and has loved it even as the Father has loved the Son (17:23). Certainly the love

144 Brown, Epistles of John, 517.
145 Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 266.
146 Rhea Jones, 1, 2 and 3 John, 182.
147 See e.g. Jack Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament (London: SCM Press, 1985), 100. Even Reinhartz, while regarding John 15:12 as “the Johannine version of Leviticus 19:18”, sees it as “difficult to read this verse as a challenge or corrective to exclusivism”: Adele Reinhartz, Befriending the Beloved Disciple (New York/London: Continuum, 2001),142.
command at the footwashing (13:34) means that the disciples will be set apart by their love for one another.149 But as Rensberger says, “the commandment to love one another is conceived in John as part of the community’s witness to outsiders and as a continuation of Jesus’ own love and possibly of his witness as well”.150 The same is true of 1 John: as Black remarks, “1 John does not advocate revenge on those who hate the community”, but rather, “their hatred becomes the foil against which love within the church should more brilliantly gleam”.151

The accusation of sectarian hatred in the Fourth Gospel also sits ill with the Johannine Jesus’ acceptance of the faith of the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-30).152 Johannine missionary concern is also evident in 1 John.153 One sees it at 2:2, where Jesus is spoken of as the atoning sacrifice περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, at 4:9 where Jesus is sent εἰς τὸν κόσμον, and at 5:4-5, referring to conquest of the world by faith in the Son. The conquest spoken of here does not promise destruction of the world: the verb νικάω used in 1 John 5:4-5 occurs also in Jesus’ words as reported in John’s Gospel at 16:33,154 where he promises the disciples peace, ἐιρήνη, despite persecution, assuring them of his conquest of the world.155

Up to a point, Girard is right to say that 1 John offers a genuine epistemology of love, provided that one understands that this is a hermeneutical, not an exegetical statement: love in 1 John is a means of internal solidarity in a community beset by division and hostility from without. The “brother” of whom Alison speaks is any fellow member of the

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154 Brown, Epistles of John, 570.
155 This reference renders the “peace” theme much more important in this section of John’s Gospel than its two occurrences would suggest, because the teaching in the entire section is motivated by Jesus’ concern to instil peace in his disciples: Neville, A Peaceable Hope, 106-107.
human race: in 1 John, however, it is one’s fellow community member, united in opposing the secessionists. Schwager is right to pose hatred and murder as ultimately identical, but the “haters” in 1 John who are stigmatised by the Cain analogy are first and foremost the secessionists. Swartley’s shalom for the neighbour in need is extended in 1 John to fellow community members in need, not to the whole world. And Yoder’s idea of suffering servanthood is commended in 1 John as a posture towards those within its remaining community, not the world in general.

Nevertheless, overarching all of these reservations, God in 1 John loves the world, as shown by sending the Son as an atoning sacrifice for the sin of the whole world (2:2; cf. 4:10), and the Son was sent into the world that we might live through him (4:9). Hermeneutically, 1 John 2:10-11 can be seen as a genuine epistemology of love, and as noted earlier, ἀγάπη and its cognates appear constantly in 1 John, and in 3:11-24 the connection between God’s love and that which must be shown to the brother, ἀδελφός is inextricable. Hermeneutically, if not exegetically, it is legitimate to offer this pericope as an epistemology of love, which leads to peace, shalom, and support of the needy other, who need not be a fellow community member, but any fellow member of the human race.
Chapter 6 – Peacemaking in 1 John

Introduction

During the course of this study, using certain keywords, we have seen that a peacemaking hermeneutic of 1 John, as practised in some modern peacemaking theology, is not fundamentally inconsistent with its text and what may reasonably be seen as its background in the OT, in some intertestamental literature and in the Qumran literature – although on occasions some peacemaking theologians pay insufficient attention to John’s conflict with the secessionists and his resulting rhetoric.

As noted in chapter 1, the dominical, Johannine formula εἰρήνη ὑμῖν, “peace be with you” (John 20:19, 20:21, 20:26) is not found in 1 John, and neither are the other uses of εἰρήνη in John’s Gospel (John 14:27 [twice]; 16:33). The word εἰρήνη appears in 2 John 3 and 3 John 14, but it appears nowhere in 1 John. With the possible exception of Revelation, 1 John might seem the very last NT text on which to build a theology of peacemaking or non-violence. This final chapter argues that while such a proposal has some difficulties, on balance it has firm foundations. Here we shall attempt to construct an original peacemaking hermeneutic for reading 1 John. Some repetition of previous material is necessary in order to demonstrate how such a hermeneutic can be constructed from John’s use of certain keywords representing themes crucial to his epistle.

As we shall see, John’s hostile rhetoric toward his opponents is not inconsistent with a peacemaking hermeneutical approach to 1 John. This question has been lurking below the surface in all of the exegesis of both 1 John and the LXX and other texts which precedes this chapter. It is simply not good enough to extract from the epistle its injunctions concerning God’s nature as love, God’s love for humankind and the need for men and women in turn to love each other, just as God has loved us, central though they be to its themes, and build on them alone a peacemaking hermeneutic of the
epistle as a whole, without attending to its overall purpose and its literary features – including its polemic. To produce a coherent peacemaking hermeneutic of 1 John, one must anchor it in its text, and demonstrate that it is consistent with John’s overall purpose and his language, his polemic, as a whole.

To this end, we shall in this final chapter first examine why it is that the theology and ethics of the secessionists – to judge from their boasts or slogans as reported by John – are seen by him as such a threat to his remaining community. We shall see that to John, these claims threaten, not only the theology of his audience – its understanding of God and God’s purposes in Jesus – but consequently its cohesion, its fellowship. The very continued existence of John’s community is threatened in his eyes. So John first needs to isolate the errors of the secessionists. At bottom, the errors stigmatised appear to over-spiritualise Jesus, to misrepresent and minimise his earthly nature, and thus to deny the reality of his humanity and therefore the reality and significance of his earthly life and death, in short, the love for humanity demonstrated by God in Jesus’ incarnation and death.

Of course the exact beliefs of the secessionists are hard to pinpoint. History has been written by the victors, and the opponents are known only through their “boasts”, as quoted and stigmatised by John.

It is notable that John does not content himself with strong polemic denouncing the errors of his opponents. He moves on to build a positive theology and an ethic, inextricably linked, of divine love necessitating human love. Most of his statements in his epistle are positive exposition of God’s love in Jesus, and commands to do likewise. The outworkings of these themes involve key concepts represented by the words we have examined in the last three chapters, ἰλασμός, and then ὀφάζω and ἀνθρωποκτόνος, and their opposing ideas, ἀγάπαω and ἀδελφός. We shall demonstrate, in a recapitulation of the place of these themes in John’s overall purpose – to resolve tensions within his community by right belief
and mutual love – how they present a theology and an ethic of peacemaking, of mutual love and self-giving. Some more detailed exegeses of these words in their respective contexts in 1 John appear in earlier chapters, but it is necessary to recapitulate these more briefly here for a different purpose, which is to show that a hermeneutic of peacemaking may be derived from 1 John that is truly anchored to the text of the epistle.

Using this approach, we shall see that John’s use of the term Ἰλάσμως, and the concepts underlying it, elaborate a picture of God that is consistent with this theology and ethic of mutual love and self-giving, because God has first shown love and self-giving to humanity. Sin is the problem dividing men and women, both from God and from each other, so self-evidently it must be dealt with. This has already happened, once and for all, by God’s gift of the Son as Ἰλάσμως for sin. This gift works, not by a transaction between the Father and the Son in which the Son by his death pays at his Father’s command the violent price due to the Father from humanity for its sin, but by a cleansing of sin by the Son’s blood in his life and death, freely given in love for humanity (1 John 4:10), and not just for John’s community of believers, but for the whole world (2:2b). In this different sense, Jesus’ atoning death is indeed sacrificial. John’s aim in expounding this theology is not only to promote its effects on human reconciliation. As God achieves a cosmic reconciliation between God and humankind through Jesus’ life and death as a cleansing of sin, a model of human behaviour emerges, entailing mutual love, without violence and death-dealing.

John’s point to his community is that if one sees Jesus as truly the Ἰλάσμως for sin, the vice of imagining oneself as part of an inner circle of “spiritual” believers who have risen above sin (cf. 1 John 1:8, 10) loses its point – God by the gift of the Son has dealt with sin once and for all, and humanity need only accept the Son’s advocacy for us with the Father (2:1) and his atoning sacrifice for us (2:2) to deal with sin. Thus the divisive and love-denying effect of an “in group” of spiritual people, who have a superior claim to righteousness over those without, is eliminated. Peace results from mutual
equality under God through the Son’s cleansing of all sin – the sins of all – by his blood (1 John 1:8).

Similarly we see that John deploys the words σφαξω and ἀνθρωποκτόνος in order to demonstrate the end result, the inevitable concomitant, of hatred of the brother (3:15) or sister. “Disunity is death” is a popular modern political maxim, but it serves here to encapsulate John’s teaching that without love, his community will fall apart and devour itself. John associates hatred and murder, not just with other forms of sin, but with the evil one himself: Cain, who murdered his brother, is from the evil one (3:12). So in John’s teaching, Cain, the bringer of violent death, is the ultimate personification of evil – not just the one who jealously kills his brother for bringing a gift favoured by God (Genesis 4:4), but the one who commits the ultimate primordial sin, the violent annihilation of a brother. The ultimate opposite of John’s ethic of mutual love is murder – violence stemming from hatred of the brother or sister. John’s proscription of hatred follows from his demonstration in the Cain example of the manner in which hatred disrupts human relations – on the other hand, peaceful relations are restored by mutual love, the antithesis of hatred.

Next, in this chapter John’s use of the words ὀγκατάω and ἀδέλφως is shown to be a positive outworking of his theme of mutual love. We have seen that the ideas of mutual love and brotherhood in 1 John 3:11-24 probably have their origin in the Jewish scriptures, in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, through the LXX version available to John and his community. But John’s reworking of them in his epistle contains a new element: that Jesus laid down his life for us, so we ought to do the same for one another (3:16). Brotherhood and sisterhood entails this extreme

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1 As we have seen, John’s community was probably influenced in its ideas, indirectly if not directly, by those of the Qumran community and its interpretations of the Jewish scriptures: see generally Painter, Quest for the Messiah, 35-47. But Painter has more recently warned that too-ready assumptions about connections between ideas in 1 John and the Qumran literature are to be avoided – for example the notion that 1 John 5:21, “little children, keep yourselves from idols” is metaphorical, based on the Qumran expression “idols of the heart” (IQS 2.11); Painter thinks 5:21 makes more sense in a Gentile context: Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 79.
obligation, because of John’s realised eschatology: we have passed from
death into life because we love one another (3:14a). Willingness to die for
the brother or sister is the ultimate act of love, as murder is the ultimate evil.
Peacemaking by willing victimhood for the brother or sister, in imitation of
Jesus, is a discernible theme here.

*John’s Polemic against the Secessionists*

John identifies the secessionists as those who broke fellowship with his
community: they “went out from us” and “did not belong to us” (1 John
2:19), and he stigmatises them as “antichrists” (2:18b). But it is significant
that the epistle does not explicitly introduce them earlier, although they are
implicitly present in the ἐὰν ἔπιστομον formula at 1:6, 1:8 and 1:10. The
epistle starts with the very positive proclamation in the “little prologue” that
what is declared is “what we have seen and heard”, if not from the earthly
Jesus himself, then most likely from those who knew him and/or inherited
very early tradition as to his identity and deeds. After the “little prologue”,
John begins with the theme of God as light (1:5) and κοινωνία, “fellowship”
with God which is denied to those walking in darkness (1:6) – a theme
immediately extended to fellowship with one another through walking in the
light (1:8).

John now uses the polemical language against his opponents: if we say we
have fellowship with him but are walking in darkness, we lie (1:6); if we say
we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1:8); if we
say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1:10).
These ἐὰν ἔπιστομον, “if we say” statements appear at this early point partly
in contrast with “what we have seen and heard” (1:3) – i.e. the true teaching
we have inherited – but also to refute his opponents from the very start.

But John’s claims in reply to the secessionists’ boasts are positive. From the
beginning he promises fellowship with one another, through cleansing of
humanity’s sin by the blood of Jesus, God’s Son (1:7). This atonement for
sin by cleansing and thus expiating it immediately solidifies John’s
community as free from the effects of wrongdoing. Reconciliation with God effects reconciliation with one another.

To innoculate his community against the secessionists’ boasts, John must first cut the theological ground from under them by strongly polemical, antithetic language. But it is not directed personally against the people making false claims, so much as at the false claims themselves. “Walking in darkness” is a rejection of fellowship with God, and therefore with one another. Claiming sinlessness is self-deception – failure to recognise the existence of evil, and its consequences. So to say is not to water down the intensity of John’s polemic: it is simply to recognise that it is directed primarily against the ideas underlying the claims themselves, not those making them – although he certainly demonises them, quite literally on occasions, in the process.

This polemic continues in 1 John 2, but still the secessionists themselves go unmentioned. If someone says they have come to know Jesus, but disobeys his commandments, they lie, and the truth is not in them (2:4). Whoever hates a believer walks in darkness (2:11). But in each case a negative is preceded by a positive. In view of this, it is understandable that some distinguished commentators have thought that John’s polemic is directed at tendencies within his community, not opponents outside it. However the resumed polemic against the opponents, this time stigmatising them as “antichrists” who “went out from us” (3:18, 19) militates against this view. Even more intensely, the “liar” and the “antichrist” is the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, and denies the Father and the Son (3:22). But again the intense language is deployed to defend central tenets of the tradition derived from what has been heard and seen (1:1), rather than to demonize the secessionist opponents – although one must acknowledge that it has that effect.

But is John’s polemic against sin itself, as making the sinner lawless (3:4) and a child of the devil (3:8), aimed at the secessionists? This time it appears indeed to be aimed also at tendencies within John’s own community: the words πᾶς, “everyone” beginning 3:4, and the opening words ὁ ποιῶν commencing 3:8, more appositely refer, in context, to anyone who does what is stigmatised, not just a particular group who exhibit this behaviour. This strengthens the argument that the polemic in 1 John is aimed primarily at the tendency itself, at a lifestyle of continuous sinning, and not so much the opponents themselves – even though they are still active and posing present danger.

The warning against believing “every spirit” and against “false prophets” (1 John 4:1) is however in a different category. Clearly John has particular and present opponents in mind: those who do not “confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (4:2), and who have “the spirit of the antichrist” (4:3). Of course the opponents do not literally deny Jesus – rather, they do not have a true estimate of him and his nature. But it cannot be said that John is here stigmatising only a wrong tendency in his own community. “They are from the world” (4:5) stigmatises present opponents, not just a wrong tendency. So does “those saying ‘I love God’ and hating their brother are liars” (4:20).

Two characteristics in his opponents are condemned by John: their deviant views as to Jesus’ nature and their failure to love, their fellowship-breaking. Moreover, these two tendencies are connected in their effects in at least two respects. First, if the earthly Jesus is seen through a docetic lens as only appearing to be human, the potency of his example is lost. John’s καθός

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3 Rhea Jones, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 119.
4 Connell’s suggestion, that ὄντιχριστοί here may refer to “those who have anointed with chrism, and who by their separation from the community have opposed or betrayed (anti – against) the unifying material of anointing (-chrism, -christ), by which they had marked and been marked for life in the church” (Martin F Connell, “On ‘Chrism’ and ‘Anti-Christ’ in 1 John 2:18-27: A Hypothesis,” *Worship* 83.3 (2009): 212-234, 217-218) is tempting, but given 2:22, identifying the antichrist with the “liar, he who denies that Jesus is the Christ”, it seems clear that the antichrist is simply one who denies Jesus’ divinity, and thus Jesus himself.
5 Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 223.
ethic surfaces at many points in his epistle: “whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (2:6); “just as it [Jesus’ anointing] has taught you, remain in him” (2:27); “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (3:2); “he who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure” (3:3); “he who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous” (3:7); “love one another as he commanded us” (3:23); “because in this world we are like him” (4:17). True it is that God, not Jesus, is the exemplar in many of these occurrences of καθως in 1 John. But the model of divine love in the gift of the Son falls away if Jesus is not at once “Christ” and “come in the flesh” (4:2), because there is no other fully earthly person who is God, on whom to model ourselves.  

Second, the negative result of not walking in God’s light is to break fellowship with one another and to walk in darkness (1:5-7). Here κοινωνία is not just with one another (1:7), but with Jesus himself (1:6). “Walking in darkness” signifies the absence of light, by which the Father is revealed to humanity (cf. John 1:4). The test of being in God’s light is loving the brother or sister (2:9-10). The resolution of this syllogistic reasoning is that God is love (4:8). To fail to love one’s fellow is to misunderstand God’s true nature as embodying love itself.

Seen in this light, John obviously had to undermine the theological underpinning of his opponents’ boasts, not only because they denied Jesus’ earthly nature, but because this denial had the potential to break fellowship...

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6 But a cautionary note must be sounded here. That Jesus Christ is ἐν σαρκί ἐληφθότα, “come in the flesh” in 4:2, given that the perfect participle is used, may simply to employ “come in the flesh” as a given attribute of Jesus as “the Christ”, not as a theological assertion: by itself, it may not necessarily signify that the secessionists denied the Incarnation: so Brown, Epistles of John, 492-493; Martinus C de Boer, “The Death of Jesus and his Coming in the Flesh (1 John 4:2),” Nov T XXXIII, 4 (1991): 326-346, 332-345; but see Brown, The Epistles of John, 493: he considers that the author’s theology is that only in the incarnate Jesus does one find “the Christ”; similarly Rhea Jones, 1, 2 and 3 John, 166. This reading would imply that the secessionists did deny the Incarnation. In the absence of any writings from the secessionists, the point is moot.

7 Zane C Hodges, “Fellowship and Confession in 1 John 1:5-10,” B Sac 129 (1972) 48-60, 51.

in his remaining community. It is unsurprising, therefore, that his rhetoric is vehemently condemnatory.

But John’s prescriptions of love and brotherhood, even assuming they were intended by him to be limited to his community, are hardly typical of what we would recognise today as a cult or sect. His quotations and condemnations of the opponents’ boasts are not linked to negative rules and proscriptions of various forms of belief and behaviour deployed as boundaries to define who is within the group and who is not. Rather, they are linked to invitations to love and enjoy fellowship within his community, by imitation of the generosity of God in his gift of the Son. John’s realised eschatology signifies that all who love God and therefore their fellows are accepted now within the divine κοινωνία, by walking in the light and therefore being cleansed from sin by Jesus’ blood (1:7), after confession of sin (1:9), which implies, not just acknowledgement of sin, but a change of orientation to God.9

To illustrate this, one might wonder what reception John might give, or might recommend to his followers, to a former secessionist who sought to rejoin his community. Would it be unforgiving condemnation for past errors, and fear or suspicion lest they be repeated? Or would it be that given to the prodigal son – one of love and acceptance after a recognition of error? Surely the author who links knowledge of God’s true nature as love with a commandment to love one another would favour the latter approach, not the former.10

9 Interestingly, the verb ὀμολογέω, used in 1:9 with the meaning “confess” is used with its cognate noun in the LXX to translate the Hebrew root יָדַן, “offer” (Jeremiah 44:25, Leviticus 22:18), which suggests more than cursory agreement with a truth, so that confession of sin in 1 John 1:9 may include agreement with God about the offensive and unacceptable nature of the sin: Ed Glassock, “Forgiveness and Cleansing according to 1 John 1:9,” B Sac 166 (2009): 217-31, 220-222.

10 John’s ostracism of Diotrephes in 3 John 9-10 (assuming common authorship of 1, 2 and 3 John) would not seem to conflict with this view: Diotrephes remains an opponent, not acknowledging John’s authority and spreading false charges against him, according to John. His desire for pre-eminence, his refusal of hospitality to John and his followers and his false teaching animate John’s condemnation of him (Black, “The First, Second, and Third Letters of John,” 464). Certainly there is no indication that Diotrephes seeks reconciliation with John.
Sectarian groups usually define themselves over against “the world”, seen as sinful, hopelessly corrupt and doomed to destruction, as opposed to the “chosen” group members, who alone will be saved. The rhetoric of 1 John is sometimes used to reinforce this view. Certainly “the world”, ὁ κόσμος, is usually portrayed in negative terms by John. At 1 John 2:15 (twice), 2:16 (twice), 2:17, 3:1, 3:13, 4:4, 4:5 (three times), 5:4 (twice) and 5:19, ὁ κόσμος is presented in unequivocally evil terms, in dualistic contrast to all that God stands for. For example, at its second appearance in the epistle, at 2:15-17, ὁ κόσμος stands as a symbol of all that is evil, in contrast to the love of the Father, which is not in the world, in contrast to those who do the will of God living forever (2:17).

But in contrast to these negative occurrences, ὁ κόσμος in its very first appearance in the epistle, 2:2, is used positively – Jesus is ἴλασμός for the sin of the “whole world”. In 4:9, Jesus, God’s only Son, is sent “into the world, that we might live through him”. And in the following verse, 4:10, he is sent by the God who loves us to be the atoning sacrifice, ἴλασμός for our sins. In 2:2 and 4:10, therefore, God’s embrace excludes no-one in its salvific intent, including those in “the world” beyond John’s own community – and even including, by implication, the secessionists. Likewise in 1 John 4:14b the Father sends the Son to be the saviour of the world, τὸν υἱὸν σωτῆρα τοῦ κόσμου. How does John know this? The clue is in 4:14a, καὶ ἡμεῖς τεθεάμεθα καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν, “we have seen and we testify”. Here the plural “we” most likely signifies John speaking for his community, as tradition-bearers. It refers back to the introductory announcement in 1:1-2 of the word of eternal life. The use of the perfect τεθεάμεθα lends special prominence to the testimony of the writer.

Thus the final picture emerging from John’s fierce rhetoric against the secessionists’ destructive theology and love-denying ethic is not one of a

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11 Brown, Epistles of John, 522.
sect defining itself over against the world, by narrow boundaries, condemning to destruction all who fall outside it. It is one of rejection of destructive theology and ethics, countered by love, and held in tension with such rejection. John wants to condemn with all his breath what he identifies as the secessionists’ wrong view of Jesus, as not the true Son of God who was at once truly human, and the lack of mutual love this engenders. But at the same time he wants to affirm as strongly as he can that God, in all-embracing love, has sent the Son to deal finally with sin by expiating it, by cleansing humanity from it by his blood. This free gift is for all – even the secessionists, if they will embrace it by confessing that Jesus is the Son of God who yet came in the flesh, and will walk with God by loving all in John’s community. Thus peacemaking in John’s community, and indeed among those beyond it who will join it in love, is consistent with, and certainly not excluded by, John’s rhetoric.

Today we may legitimately derive from 1 John, despite its fierce rhetoric against the secessionists, a peacemaking hermeneutic of love and inclusion of the other, because John’s antidote to the exclusive and fellowship-breaking ideas of the secessionists is not the drawing of stricter theological and ethical boundaries between his own community and the secessionists. It is a positive theology, which places at its absolute centre the reality of Jesus’ earthly incarnation as truly human, and his mission as God’s anointed one, the Christ. As the Son in his life and death is God’s loving gift to us, so we ought to love one another. Such a theology and ethic is thus embracing and inclusive of others, without fear and hatred, and their inevitable result, violent death. How this is so will emerge further from our brief recapitulations of our keywords in their context in 1 John.

** indonesia and Peacemaking in 1 John**

We have seen how 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 portray Jesus as ἴλασμός, “expiation” or “atonning sacrifice”, for sin. How can this idea provide a

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14 In chapter 2 of this study there is an extended discussion of the origins and uses of the term ἴλασμός and its cognates in the OT, and how it is that it conveys the idea of expiation.
basis for a peacemaking hermeneutic of 1 John if, as argued previously, Jesus is then ἡλασμός for sin through cleansing by his blood (cf. 1:7)? The clue lies in the fact that, as already noted, this ἡλασμός is accomplished for the whole world.

In 2:2a-b Jesus is the “atoning sacrifice for our sins”, ἡλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, but lest ἡμῶν be given triumphant significance by his community audience, John adds in 2:2c, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ δόλου τοῦ κόσμου, “not for ours only but for those of the whole world”. There is clearly a “conflict that goes beyond semantics”\(^\text{15}\) between John’s use of κόσμος in 2:2c and the negative uses highlighted above. In 1 John 2:2c the thought is close to John 3:16-17, “for God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through him”, and John 12:47, “for I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world”. In 1 John 2:2c, God’s intent is to save the whole world from sin through Jesus as atoning sacrifice, to cleanse or expiate its sin.

The same positive theme emerges in 1 John 4:9, where we read that ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, “God’s love was revealed in this way among us”, that “God’s only Son was sent into the world”, εἰς τὸν κόσμον, “so we might live through him”. As in 2:2c, so in 4:9b the world is included in God’s salvific intent in the gift of the Son, as ἡλασμός for our sins (4:10). And 4:9 and 2:2c affirm that he is ἡλασμός, not only for the sins of John’s audience but for those of the whole world.

But how can this positive view of “the world” prevail if “everyone born of God overcomes, νικῶν the world, and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith” (5:4)? Or if “who is it that overcomes [νικῶν] the world”, but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” (5:5), and if “the whole world [ὁ κόσμος ὅλος] is under the rule of the evil one” (5:19)? The

not propitiation for sin. However the NRSV translation of ἡλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 as “atonning sacrifice” remains apt: it neatly avoids the idea of propitiation but retains that of sacrifice.

\(^{15}\) Brown, Epistles of John, 223.
answer may be that in 1 John, the ideas of “the world” as at once the
demonstration of evil, and in need of, and indeed worthy of salvation by
God are held in tension. In 1 John the evil of the world is ultimately
responded to by God, not by fierce and final rejection, but by God’s loving
gift of the Son as ἵλσμον for the sins of the whole world.

This divine gift is indeed fundamental to our picture of the deity in 1 John.
First John 2:2, as discussed earlier in this study, functions as the climax to
the unit from 1:5 onwards, where the themes of light, standing for God, and
fellowship, standing for humanity in right relationship with God, are
developed to show how walking in the light and fellowship are ensured by
God’s dealing with sin. There is no hint of divine wrath, which must be
assuaged by the blood of the Son. Far from such a theme, 1 John 1:7 simply
affirms fellowship with one another through walking in the light, and
through the blood of Jesus cleansing us from all sin. The secessionist boast
of being without sin is condemned, and forgiveness by a “faithful and just”
God is promised on confession of sin (1:9).

“He who is faithful and just”, πιστός ἐστιν καὶ δίκαιος, conveys two
separate notions. The first, faithfulness, refers to God as the keeper of
covenant promises: Deuteronomy 7:9, which speaks of “the faithful God
who keeps covenant loyalty with those who keep his commandments”,
comes to mind here.16 Thus the epithet in 1 John 1:9, πιστός, “faithful”,
pictures God as loving Father who is with his people always. The second
epithet, δίκαιος, “righteous” or “just”, is more ambiguous: does it portray
God as always merciful to the penitent sinner, or as visiting punishment
without mercy on the sinner unless divine anger is sated? The context of
forgiveness of sin after repentance would suggest the former.

Confession of individual sin is a Christian inheritance from Jewish practice
on the Day of Atonement when a sin-offering is presented (Leviticus 5:5).17

16 Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 31; Strecker, Johannine Letters, 32 n.30; Brown, Epistles of John,
209;
17 See generally Schnackenburg, The Johannine Epistles, 82.
The action in this cultic observance is that the people, after confession of sin, present their sin-offering, a sheep or a goat, to be offered by the priest as an atonement for their sin (5:6) and the priest sprinkles the blood of the animal (or bird: 5:7) on the side and base of the altar: it (the blood) “is a sin-offering” (5:9c). “The priest shall make atonement on your behalf for the sin you have committed, and you shall be forgiven” (5:10b).

First John 1:7 raises the question of how the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, and 1:9 points a way toward the answer, which is given in 2:1-2. If we, contrary to John’s hope, do sin, “Jesus Christ the righteous” stands as advocate with the Father (2:1b), and he is the ἴλασμος, the reconciling sacrifice for our sin (2:2a) – just as the blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement effects divine forgiveness of sin – in both cases after personal confession. But in the case of Jesus, the new ἴλασμος, the atoning sacrifice is not provided by humanity at all, but by God in the gift of Jesus. On a proper reading of 2:2a, what must be “turned” away is not God’s anger against us, but our rebellion against God – by appropriate contrition (1:9).  

It is a mistake to read 1 John 1:7-2:2 as signifying simple substitution by the Father of the Son as sin-offering in place of the OT animal or bird on the Day of Atonement. In 1 John the whole ritual is turned on its head – far from humanity offering Jesus to the Father as a vicarious payment for sin, God instead provides cleansing of sin by the blood of the Son, in loving gift of God’s own self through the Son. It is unsurprising that over the centuries theologians such as Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas, followed by Luther and Calvin, assimilated the concept of cleansing of sin to the doctrine of justification, and therefore to notions of divine justice requiring a price for sin, paid not by us, but by Jesus in our stead. But as demonstrated in

chapter 3, such notions are essentially a gloss on 1 John 2:2, and do not represent its original meaning.

This becomes clearer when one sees how the other occurrence of ἵλασμος in 1 John 4:10 functions in its immediate context, 4:7-12, which is part of a larger unit, 4:7-21, devoted to the Father’s love in the gift of Jesus and its result, the divine command to love one another. “Let us love one another” in 4:7a really functions as an introduction to the meat of the verse in 4:7b, “everyone who loves is born of God and knows God”.20 The word ὅτι, beginning 4:7b is causative: we must love one another “because love is from God”.21 And the words ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ in 4:7b show that mutual love is not simply learned from God by example, but a supernatural gift conferred by rebirth.22 Hermeneutically, mutual love emerges as an inevitable concomitant, for the believing Christian, of God’s love for humanity. God’s sending of the Son as the ἵλασμος for our sins (4:10), to which this passage builds up, is the ultimate expression of this love. That God loved us (rather than the other way about) in 4:10 asserts that the proof of God’s love is the gift of the Son as ἵλασμος.23 Again, this word signifies God’s love, not satisfaction of God’s wrath.

Σφάζω, ἀνθρωποκτόνος and Peacemaking in 1 John

First John 3:12 urges John’s community not to be like Cain, who was from the evil one and murdered, ἔσφαξεν, his brother. First John 3:15 proclaims that the one who hates a brother is a murderer, ἀνθρωποκτόνος, and all murderers do not have everlasting life abiding in them. These verses function within a sub-unit from 3:11 to 3:18 depicting the contrast between love and hatred.24

20 Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 207.
22 Rhea Jones, I, 2 and 3 John, 180.
23 “Vv. 9 and 10 are pure gold, enshrining the very heart of Christianity”: Victor Bartling, “We Love because He Loved us first (1 John 4:7-21),” CTM 23 no 12D (1952): 868-883, 878.
24 Although many scholars see this unit as commencing at 3:10 (e.g. Smalley, I, 2, 3 John, 179), 3:10 is better seen as the culmination of the previous unit, dealing with the children of
First, 1 John 3:11 identifies the command to love one another as the message, ἡ ἀγγελία, which his audience has heard from the beginning, ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς. This may refer simply to the beginning of the tradition handed on by its bearers, or it may recall 1:1, what was ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, from the beginning. Even assuming the former, less exalted meaning, John’s intention is to associate the love command with what has been the tradition “from the beginning”. Elsewhere in the Johannine corpus, it is indeed a dominical command (John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17). It is therefore absolutely central to Christian proclamation, and it is the antidote offered in 1 John to the division in the author’s community, and the pivot on which the epistle turns.

Then in 3:12a we find the negative statement: “we must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother”. Being like Cain does not simply connote having a similar personality to Cain’s, or committing a similar crime. As we have seen in chapter 4, by the time 1 John was written, Cain had come to be associated in Jewish intertestamental literature and in contemporary writings by Philo and Josephus as the embodiment of evil. This is confirmed by the further statement in 3:12 that Cain was “from the evil one”, ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ. For John, evil is to be resisted and overcome, not by violent means, but by faith (5:4-5).

The question in 3:12b, “and why did he murder him?”, which answers itself, “because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s were righteous”, might appear tautological, but it is not. Neither is it a psychological explanation – which might be anachronistic – but an expression of Johannine dualism. It refers to Cain’s moral defects as against his righteous brother Abel, in a

God. Then 3:11 marks a change of subject, where the demonstrative oti begins the explanation in 3:11-18 of why it is that the one who does not love their brother and sister does not do righteousness and is not of God (3:10): Painter, 1, 2, and 3 John, 232. This sub-unit is best seen as ending at 3:18, because 3:19 introduces a new subject, the grounds for confidence before God: ibid, 244. The larger unit, dealing with the whole subject of mutual love, extends on to 3:24.

True it is that 1 John contains no equivalent of the Matthean command in 5:39 not to resist evil: see generally John Piper, Love your Enemies (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012), 53, 188 n.109. But that does not signify that violence is invited by John here.

Brown, The Epistles of John, 443.
brief midrash on Genesis 4, continuing the theme of the children of God and the children of the devil in 3:1-10. For those who are children of the devil, sin is not merely a symptom, but the root of their being.27

The following statement, “brothers, do not be surprised that the world hates you”, in 3:13 is connected to 3:12b: the intention is to associate the world’s hatred with that of Cain, which is diabolically inspired – just as hatred of one’s fellow Christian is.28 Here, ὁ κόσμος is best seen as referring, not to worldly temptations or desires (cf. 2:15), but to unbelieving humanity in its rejection, first of Jesus and then his disciples (cf. John 15:18; 17:14).29

First John 3:14 contrasts life and death, using the criterion of mutual love. Loving here has present eschatological consequences, as does failure to do so. The reverse, hatred, is again associated in 3:15 with murder: “the one who hates the brother is a murderer [ἀνθρωποκτόνος] and all murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them”. This is an astonishing and, at first sight, an exaggerated association. But John’s thought here is still associated with the example of Cain, who hated his brother to the point of murder.30

In 3:16, John commends the converse of murder, laying down one’s life for another. In love, Jesus laid down his life for us, so we ought to do the same for one another. Here John takes the Cain story and juxtaposes it with Jesus’ actions.31 Far from hatred to others, which leads to violence and murder, we ought to practise mutual love, and be prepared in love to lay down our lives for one another, as Jesus did. Love is then extended at 3:17 to practical consequences, in the rhetorical question, “if the one who has the good things of the world looks on their brother needing things but shuts out any feeling towards him, how can the love of God abide in them?” This leads to the general statement in 3:18, “little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action”.

27 Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 179.
29 Schnackenburg, Johannine Epistles, 180.
30 Brown, Epistles of John, 447.
31 Rhea Jones, 1, 2, and 3 John, 141.
From 1 John 3:11 to 3:18 we see a stepped argument, first commanding love for one another and then tracing Cain’s example of hatred leading to murder, resulting from his evil nature, associating it with the world’s hatred, then urging in its stead mutual love, with a final reminder that all who hate are murderers without eternal life abiding in them. Then John illustrates the consequences of mutual love – laying down one’s life for the brother or sister, and sharing the world’s goods with them. This is a powerful condemnation of violence and advocacy of love and sharing, even to the point of death, in realised eschatology\textsuperscript{32} which brings the sharer and life-giver into harmony with God, by their practice of Jesus’ love.

John’s condemnation of hatred and murder also carries a prophetic word to the church of today, which it must receive and pass on. It must stand in solidarity with the victims of hatred, violence and murder, denouncing these evils, even if perpetrated by the church itself. The church must be a faithful tradition-bearer, and guard the revelation entrusted to it, regardless of the world’s values and beliefs. But if it succumbs to fear of the world outside, that fear will beget hatred. The violent persecutions of opponents by the church were founded in fear, lest it be contaminated by opposing ideas. In totalitarian and semi-totalitarian societies the church has, in fear for its survival, in reprehensible accommodation of an evil state apparatus, often stood beside oppressors, instead of courageously proclaiming God’s love in Jesus, and the need to love one another – even dying for one’s fellow.

\textit{’Αγαπάω, Ἀδελφός and Peacemaking in 1 John}

The “love commandment” first occurs in 1 John in the sub-unit extending from 2:7 to 2:11.\textsuperscript{33} John’s identification of it as an “old commandment” (2:7) which we have had from the beginning”, ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς may again be a

\textsuperscript{32} The term “realised eschatology” is used here to refer to the entry into human history of Jesus and his revelation, by which the believer is brought into a present, or realised relationship with God – or in Johannine terms, ἐν τῷ φωτί, “in the light” (cf. 1 John 1:7).

\textsuperscript{33} The preferable view is that the second unit in 1 John 2 starts at 2:3 (Brown, \textit{Epistles of John}, 277) but there is a change of subject at 2:7, from knowing God by keeping God’s commandments to the “old commandment” to love one another.
reference back to 1:1, where John refers to the tradition which was passed on “from the beginning”: John’s “we” in 1:1-4 claims the prerogative of the tradition bearer.\(^{34}\) Or 2:7 may be a reference to Jesus’ self-revelation during his ministry,\(^{35}\) for, as we have seen, in the Johannine tradition it is a dominical command (John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17). In Jesus, “the divine reality or authenticity of the love command is actualized”.\(^{36}\)

Ironically, as indicated by the adverb πάλιν, “yet” in 2:8, intended to introduce a statement contrasting with the “old commandment” one in 2:7, the love command is for John also a “new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is disappearing and the true light already shines”.\(^{37}\) Again the reference to a “new commandment” may be to its being dominical: Jesus himself called it “new” (John 13:34).\(^{38}\) Certainly the motivation created by divine sacrifice, requiring human love (1 John 3:16; cf. 4:11) appears new. But the consequence of such love, which is help for the needy brother (3:17) reflects the Deuteronomic command of generosity to the fellow community member (Deuteronomy 15:7) and needy neighbour (15:10) in consequence of divine redemption (15:15). The reference to “darkness” and “light” here refer to “the world” which is “passing away” (2:17) and to God as “light” (1:5).\(^{39}\) God’s light is revealed now, in Jesus’ coming.

In 2:9-10 we see the contrasting statements that “the one who says ‘I am in the light’ but hates a brother is still in darkness”, and “the one who loves a brother lives in the light, and in him there is no stumbling block”. The hypocrisy inherent in hatred coexisting with claiming to be “in the light”, i.e. in harmony with God, is seen by John in 2:9 as characteristic of the secessionists. John’s use of the ὁ λέγων formula in 2:9 makes this clear. His point is that hatred of a co-religionist, a “brother” is inconsistent with


\(^{36}\) Black, “The First, Second and Third Letters of John,” 393.


\(^{39}\) Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 171.
harmony with God, symbolised by “light”: hating a fellow believer is a “sign of the bondage of darkness”. On the other hand, in 2:10 loving a brother means walking in the light, in harmony with God: “stumbling block” or “cause for stumbling”, σκάνδαλον in 2:10 makes it clear that John is thinking of the blinding effect of darkness as a cause for stumbling.

The sub-unit culminates in 2:11 with the statement that “the one who hates a brother is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know where to go, because the darkness has brought blindness to him”. This is a reference back to the “stumbling block” of 2:9 – in darkness there is a stumbling block, caused by moral blindness. John hints at the loss of direction of the secessionists who have left the community.

The thread of John’s argument in 2:7-11 is that an old, and yet new commandment is that his audience should love one another, because it is consistent with knowledge of, and harmony with, God, whereas hatred, characteristic of the secessionists, is not. Again John combats dissension in his community by pointing out that hatred has eschatological consequences: by practising it, we risk lasting disharmony, not only with our fellow but with God. Here John’s close identification of love with the divine nature, later made explicit (4:8), makes hatred of the brother, the co-religionist, out of the question for the true Christian believer. Peace and harmony in John’s community is not just an ideal, not just the true badge of the believer, but eschatologically essential. This applies both to the present, and in the future, in eternal life (1:2, 2:25, 5:11, 5:13, 5:20).

Apart from 1 John 2:7-11, John uses the words ἀγάπαω and its cognates, and ἀδελφός very frequently in his epistle. We have examined their use in 1 John 3:11-18. More particularly, we have noticed that John advocates, in
response to the world’s hatred, which is predicted for his community, \cite{Cf. John 15:18} not hatred and rejection in return, but holding in tension a prophetic judgment on the world’s evil and violence, and mutual love, generosity and preparedness to lay down one’s life for the brother or sister.

First John carries a prophetic word for the church today, in its proclamation that all Christians must practice ἀγάπη toward one another, and see one another as true ἀδελφοί, brothers and sisters. John confronts the fellowship-breaking hatred and exclusivism of the secessionists, not with hatred and rejection in return, but with inclusive love and brotherhood. The church must practice these virtues too, not only as between its diverse components with their many variants in doctrine and practice, but toward those of other world faiths, or none.

But in practising love and brotherhood with all, it must not lose its catholicity – its proto-creedal proclamation of Jesus as the one who truly came in the flesh and is the Christ, God’s anointed Son who is the ἱλασμός for sin, and of the need to walk with God in love for one another and in acceptance of God’s cleansing or expiation of sin by the blood of Jesus. A purely exemplarist, non-sacrificial model of the atonement risks missing this divine dimension of God’s love in Jesus, the Christ. Such a model does not require Jesus as the Christ, the divinely anointed gift, at all, and is equally valid if Jesus is purely human, without any divine attributes at all. First John tells as strongly against such accommodation as it does against Jesus as spirit only, devoid of genuine human attributes and suffering.

**Conclusion: A Peacemaking Hermeneutic of 1 John**

Two cautionary notes must first be sounded here. The first is that this study makes no pretence at dealing with wider themes in NT theology which do not appear in 1 John, such as the Pauline teaching on justification and the divine covenant with humanity. The second is that this study does not

presume either to affirm or deny the traditional divine attributes of wrath and final judgment, so prominent in the Johannine book of Revelation, because the emphasis in 1 John is on realised eschatology – unity with God in the here and now. Divine judgment, which is potentially final, is certainly present as a prominent theme in 1 John – witness for example the frequent references to “darkness” (1:6, 2:8, 9, 11), “death” (3:14, 5:16, 17), and “eternal life” (1:2, 2:25, 3:15, 5:11, 13, 20) – but such judgment is not necessarily final. “Walking in the light” (1:7), confession of sin (1:9), reliance on Jesus as παρόκλητος (2:1) and ἰλασμός (2:2), love (3:14), and God-given life (5:16) are the remedies.

A peacemaking hermeneutic is used here to mean one displaying the characteristics of love, reconciliation, forgiveness, and abstinence from violence. Does this fit 1 John? This study provides an affirmative answer to this question. Little further summary of how this is so is attempted at this final point, in view of the extensive discussion at the end of our chapters, dealing with the ideas conveyed by our keywords, of the manner in which they are consistent with, and supportive of, the use of 1 John by certain peacemaking theologians, and, by close analysis of the ideas they represent in the LXX and elsewhere, with a peacemaking hermeneutic of 1 John. So we shall leave behind our various citations of 1 John by these theologians, and offer only a short recapitulation of our major findings in previous chapters.

First, we have seen in our study of the keyword ἰλασμός and the ideas it represents in 1 John that in the LXX, God is more often the subject, rather than the object of the action. Where God is not the subject, the direct object of the action is usually the person, place or object being cleansed, and God is the indirect object. The person, place or object is cleansed before God, so they are rendered once again holy in God’s sight. We have seen that there is mutual illumination in the uses of ἰλασμός in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. In opening with the statement ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, John is proclaiming at 4:10 that God’s act in sending the Son as ἰλασμόν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν was the ultimate act of costly, self-giving love. The wrathful Father is not in
view in 4:10, so this idea should not be read into 2:2, when the idea of reassuring love is introduced by 2:1: παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα. Then comes the reassurance, καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. The loving bond between us and the Father is not broken by sin, because we have a παράκλητος, a “friend at court” (2:1b) in Jesus, God’s Son, who cleanses us from all sin (1:7b). The idea of the gift of the Son in 2:1-2 is further expanded by 4:10. There we meet the explicit statement that the Father’s gift is of Jesus, who ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, as an act of divine love. Then 4:10b makes explicit another thought implicit in 2:1-2: that the Father gives the Son as ἱλασμός for our sins.

Second, we have seen from our tracing of the treatment of the Cain and Abel story from Genesis 4 in the Hebrew Bible, through our study of the keywords σφάξω and ἀνθρωποκτόνος and the ideas they convey, how even the LXX, and certainly the NT in 1 John 3:12, have gone far beyond the Hebrew Bible in portraying Cain’s offering and character as flawed, the NT perspective being coloured by the LXX reading, and possibly by the treatment of the Cain and Abel story in the intertestamental pseudepigrapha, Philo, Josephus and the Qumran literature. This is the result of a thought-shift, moving from the simple portrayal of Cain in the Torah as his brother’s killer as a result of envy to a tradition which portrays Cain as the archetype of evil itself in the world: a representative of the evil one himself. The tradition embodying this thought-shift clearly influenced the writer of 1 John, and the way in which he in turn portrays Cain and his actions and origins suggests that he employed this tradition. By his use of σφάξω and ἀνθρωποκτόνος as alarming descriptors of Cain’s actions and very nature, John illustrates how our failure to love affects not only what we do, but who we are – our very identity. These words depict the polar opposite of what John enjoins – mutual love in imitation of the divine love that gave us the gift of the Son.

Third, in our study of the keywords ἀδελφός and ἀγαπάω, we have seen that 1 John 3:17, with its command to help the brother in need, finds a
parallel in Deuteronomy 15:1-11, with its requirement of “open-handed” giving to the needy brother, ἄδελφος, who may well include the resident alien, ἀλόγος. In both texts the requirement is theological, and intimately linked with God’s attitude to the giver (diving blessing in Deuteronomy 15:10, God’s love abiding in the giver in 1 John 3:17). But for an ethic of universal love and caring in 1 John, the problem is that there is no indication there that the brother, ἀδελφός includes the neighbour, πλησίον, or the stranger, προσήλυτον. First John does not require hatred of the secessionists, or exclude love for them, as distinct from their ideas, but there is still no positive command to love them – hardly surprising in a situation of dogged opposition to secessionist doctrine and division.

As argued in the preceding chapter, however, even though it contains no command to love the secessionists, 1 John may be used hermeneutically, employing the love command in John’s Gospel and supporting an ethic of love extending even to one’s enemies. First John throws up great exegetical difficulty in the path of an ethic of universal love derived from it, but hermeneutically this is a valid solution. Certainly John condemns unequivocally the polar opposite of such love, which is hatred and killing of one’s enemies. This is the very essence of a peacemaking hermeneutic of 1 John. Let the final word go to John, in 3:15a: πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφόν αὐτοῦ ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἐστίν.
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