REMAIN IN ME (JOHN 15:5).
THE FOUNDATION OF THE ETHICAL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN THE FAREWELL DISCOURSES

PATRICK J HARTIN

ABSTRACT
It is argued that the model of relationality-response best epitomises the ethical direction of the Scriptures. In examining the ethical teaching of the farewell discourses (Jn 13-17), attention is given to discovering the ethical emerging from the narrative of Jesus’ relationship-response to the Father, to his disciples and to the world. The account of the footwashing with which the farewell discourses begin presents a connection to the salvific work of Jesus. By this action Jesus prophesies in a symbolic way that he is to be humiliated in death. The ethical life of Christians remains a response to what Jesus has done on their behalf. What emerges from this examination of the farewell discourses is that love gives rise to the whole ethics of discipleship. United with Jesus the believer is called to lead a specific way of life. It is not an ethics of laws or ends, but an ethics that has a person, Jesus, as its very centre. Love is the cornerstone for this relationship. The call and choice that God has made of believers is one that results in love and in bearing fruit. In the final analysis the response to which the disciples of Jesus of all generations are called is that of a unity of love in imitation of the response that Jesus demonstrated through his relationship with the Father.

1 MORALITY AS REMEMBERING
The purpose of this study is to investigate the foundation and the consequences of the ethical dimensions of the farewell discourses. At the same time I wish to place this study within a particular context. There is not much value in just speaking about the ethics1 of the New Testament, or of a particular word, 

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1 Although the term ‘ethics’ is derived from the Greek word ἀθοσ, in English a distinction is drawn between ‘ethics’ and ‘ethos.’ ‘Ethics’ refers to the treatment of moral questions, the science of morality, and the rules of conduct. ‘Ethos’ on the other hand denotes ‘the characteristic spirit and beliefs of a community, people, system, literary work, or person’ (Sykes 1986:331). This consideration of the farewell discourses is interested not so much in the characteristic spirit of this work, but rather in the whole field of morality that it considers: What moral questions arise in this section? What is the basic approach towards morality that is understood? With what ethical model does this writing operate? All these are questions which relate to the field of ethics in particular.
unless one can ask the further question: 'What are the implications of these ethical considerations for today?' It is this particular question which also produces some of the strangest results. Recently, the issue of how to consider the place of Scripture within ethical decision making has received more and more attention. Curran & McCormick (1984) have illustrated this well in their collection of essays by scholars who have been considering this issue. Four major approaches towards the use of the Bible in Christian ethical decisions² have been used and are in use:

(a) Deontology: The basic starting-point rests on the viewpoint that the Bible as the word of God considers the will of God for humanity. Once having discovered the law in the Bible one immediately sees this as presenting an eternal, unchangeable law for all time.

(b) Teleology: This approach aims at focussing upon the ends or goals of the action. Ideals are presented according to which one strives to direct one's life.

(c) Basic principles: This approach strives to reduce morality to one specific principle which gives direction to all else. The situation-ethics of Fletcher (1974) is a good illustration, which focuses attention on the primacy of the principle of love.

(d) Relationship-response: This is a more recent approach which views the Christian as living in a relationship with the God to whom a response is made in faith and action.

It is my contention that one must allow the ethical to emerge from the Scriptures themselves. It is only in this way that one will be able to see which approach the Scriptures tend to embrace. Only then can one pursue the further question concerning the relevance of this for the present.

Recently more and more attention has been given to the narratological approach in interpreting the Scriptures. This also has marked importance for the ethical perspective of the Scriptures.³ This approach can, I believe, help in examining the ethical interpretation of the farewell discourses. These discourses fall very clearly within the framework of a narrative, a narrative of Jesus' farewell meal and discussion with his disciples.⁴

² For a more detailed treatment of these approaches see Hartin (1987, 1990 and 1991).
³ I am indebted for this narratological approach to the thoughts of Stanley Hauerwas which have had a marked influence upon theological ethics particularly in the United States.
⁴ Usually a distinction is drawn between narrative material and discourse material. Here, I
The pages of the Scriptures set forth narratives which illustrate the relationship of God with the world, first of all exemplified in the life of Israel, and then through the life of Jesus and the early church. The very purpose of the Scriptures is to call believers to a life of response. Christians are called forth to respond to this God, not in isolation, but as part of a community. Being part of the present community of believers, the Christian is called upon to remain true to this memory of the Scriptures.

The questions with which the writers of the Scriptures were concerned in relation to action were not so much: 'What is the goal of this action?' or 'What is the law?', but 'How should I respond to what is taking place?' (Niebuhr 1963:67). An examination of the wisdom and paraenetical literature of both testaments shows the preoccupation with presenting the hearer with the type of life that s/he should lead in relationship to one another and to God. It is this relationship which must be preserved and one's responses either support or hinder this relationship. The renewal of biblical studies has given impetus to this model of relationality-response (Curran 1984:182) as the direction to follow in striving to discover the ethical perspectives of the Scriptures. A theme such as the covenant, which is central to both the Old and New Testaments, gives expression to the bond that God wishes to exist between himself and those whom God has called into a relationship.

A further question needs to be briefly considered. In what way do the Scriptures issue a call to their readers to implement the action that is presented? One cannot simply transpose individual responses from the world of the Bible to the world of today. The gulf between these worlds must be respected. The issues and problems with which the Bible battles are their issues and problems, and the answers they gave to them must of necessity remain their answers. As Ricoeur (1989:286) has argued, our questions and answers must remain our questions and answers. One cannot simply take over the questions and answers of a former world and culture, and insert them into our own world. Yet, at the same time, the Bible offers a paradigm of how we can act in the world. It shows, by way of analogy, that we are called to a relationship with the God of forgiveness and love, just as Israel, Jesus and the early church were called. We are called to give a loving response to this God who has called us to a life of relationship with him and with one another.

The hermeneutical rule which I see as the only operable one would be: our answers should be to our problems what the answers of the biblical writers were to the prob-
lems of their time, as we perceive them by means of biblical exegesis. This relation of analogy between the question-answer relationship of today, and the question-answer relationship of the primitive church seems to me the best approximation to the kind of truthfulness that we expect from a Christian hermeneutical theology.

(Ricoeur 1989:286)

The narratives of the life of Jesus that are offered to us have as their aim helping Christians to situate their lives in relation to that life and to call forth analogous responses in the situations that are unique to them. In reflecting upon the significance and meaning of the life of Jesus, the early church learned to see in these events a continuation of the dealings of God with Israel. Israel bore witness to a group of people who lived in a relationship, in a community, with God. Both Israel and Jesus show God's way with the world. Consequently, the early Christians believed that by imitating the path of Jesus they were learning how to be like God and how to become citizens of the kingdom.

In examining the ethical teaching of the farewell discourses (Jn 13-17) attention will be given to discovering the ethical emerging from this narrative of Jesus' relationship-response to the Father, to his disciples, and to the world. The search is not for norms, or laws, but for the relationship-response that the life of Jesus presents, which in its turn becomes the analogy by which Christians of today respond to the God who is calling them into a relationship.


It is my intention to trace a path through the narrative of the farewell discourses with an eye to allowing the ethical dimension to emerge from the narrative. As a starting-point I shall adopt Schnackenburg's division of the discourse material (1982:vii-viii).

Without doubt the life of Jesus was characterised as a life of service to the Father and to humanity. But, this life demonstrates a special type of service. When Jesus responds to the needs of others, he does so in such a way that his mission and his relationship with the Father clearly emerge. At the same time his life of service becomes an example for the life of service to which he calls his followers.

The narrative of the farewell discourses commences with an account of the washing of the disciples' feet (13:1-20) which is essential for understanding the farewell discourses. This account presents the very foundation for the ethical life of the Christian. Two points of importance emerge from this account:

2.1 The footwashing and the death of Jesus (13:1-11)
The opening verses of the narrative contain a compressed statement (verses 1-3)
which relates to the salvific work of Jesus. The Father has given everything into the hands of the Son who will bring salvation through dying on the cross. In this sense Jesus as the servant of the Father becomes the servant of humanity. The action that Jesus performs in washing the feet of his disciples is on the superficial level an act of hospitality; but, in this action the relationships are reversed. Whereas it was the task of the servant to wash the feet of the master as a sign welcoming him home, Jesus, the master, is the one who performs this action for his disciples. Peter perceives that the roles are being inverted and immediately questions (verse 6) this action: ‘Master, are you going to wash my feet?’ Jesus’ response is that they will only understand the significance of what he has done much later. This all fits in with other incidents in the Johannine Gospel whereby at the cleansing of the temple (2:22) and at the entry of Jerusalem (12:16) the narrator comments that ‘His disciples did not understand this at first, but when Jesus had been glorified they remembered that these things were written about him and that they had done this for him’ (12:16). This incomprehension indicates a depth in the action that is only understandable after the Resurrection.

There is more to the footwashing than simply an act of hospitality. Ultimately, Jesus is stating that the significance of the footwashing is a symbol of his death as a servant. This is supported from the very context of the episode which commences with a reference to his impending betrayal by Judas (Jn 13:2). At the same time it is noted that ‘the hour’ of Jesus had come in which he was to pass ‘from this world to the Father’ (Jn 13:1). It is this ‘hour’ of Jesus which will embrace his betrayal and death. So important is this action of Jesus that without it the disciple is not able to obtain his inheritance with the Lord. ‘Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me’ (Jn 13:8). This action is not meant to serve simply as an example. It is an act of service; and as such it foreshadows or symbolises that ultimate act of service, namely his death, which communicates the inheritance of eternal life to those who embrace Jesus.

The simplest explanation of the footwashing, then, remains that Jesus performed this servile task to prophesy symbolically that he was about to be humiliated in death. Peter’s questioning, provoked by the action, enabled Jesus to explain the salvific necessity of his death: it would bring men their heritage with him and it would cleanse them of sin.

(Brown 1966:568)

2.2 The ethical servant role that the believer must live in relation to one another (13:12-30)

The believer has been baptised into the salvific death of Jesus, and consequently must follow this servant role of Jesus: ‘I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do’ (13:15). The action of Jesus be-
comes an example, a model, an analogy for the way the believer is to act. Jesus does not intend that the believer literally washes the feet of others as he did; but, rather he intends that the very meaning of the symbolism of the action must be carried out. The response-relationship of Jesus becomes the response-relationship to which every believer is called. The service of another in humility to which this action testifies must become the hallmark of a follower of Jesus. But, even more than this. On the deeper level, just as Jesus gave his life as a life of service of God and of humanity to the ultimate extent of dying on the cross, so too the Christian is called upon to be willing to participate in this trial of Jesus and to sacrifice her/his life if necessary. The Johannine school also interpreted this imitation of Jesus as involving the readiness to embrace a self-sacrificing death: ‘The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers’ (1 John 3:16) (cf Schnackenburg 1982:24).

The follower of Jesus, who imitates the service of Jesus, by serving others in a humble and self-sacrificing way is, in effect, bringing them into contact with the self-sacrificing death of Jesus. The community of the disciples of Jesus is built upon their association with his death and it is this very death that gives them the ability to bring those they serve into association with the same death.

3 THE ETHICAL CONSEQUENCES

3.1 Jesus’ departure and return to the Father (13:31-14:31)
Once Judas departed into the night to be with the forces of darkness Jesus turns his attention to his closest friends. The narrative unfolds with successive disciples being the centre of attention. By focussing attention on the different characters of the narrative, one will be able to see how the ethical dimensions emerge from this consideration. The momentum of the narrative develops through the incomprehension of the disciples.

3.1.1 The gift of a new commandment (13:31-35)
These verses present the transition between the supper and the actual discourses that follow (Perkins 1990:974). The events of the passion have been set in motion by the departure of Judas. ‘The hour’ of Jesus’ glorification is announced with a reference to the now (vōv). ‘The whole force of the statement is therefore concentrated in this word vōv, but it does not point emphatically to a situation during the meal, but rather draws attention once again to Jesus’ “hour”, which was mentioned at the very beginning of the whole section and which marked the time when he “had to depart out of this world to the Father”’ (13:1) (Schnackenburg 1982:49). Jesus has both ‘been glorified’ as well as ‘will be glorified’. This mixture of past and future appeared previously in 12:28 ‘I have glorified it and will glorify it again.’ This illustrates that the glorification of Jesus can be viewed from
two different perspectives. Following the suggestion of Thiising (1960:193-198), the aorist (€8o€5άσθη) should be viewed from the perspective of the totality, namely from the perspective of the whole passion, death, resurrection, and ascension that is part of the ‘hour’ that has commenced and into which Jesus has now entered. Jesus has passed into the totality of that moment, his hour, and in this sense he has been glorified. Seen from the perspective of the future (€8o€5άσθη), it refers to the glory that will follow when Jesus ultimately returns to his Father.

The glorification of Jesus demands that he has to leave his followers, and this absence (which will be experienced as presence in another form) is ultimately the problem with which the whole section has to grapple. His departure brings with it ethical implications. As he departs, he leaves his followers with a direction for action; he gives them ‘a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.’ (13:34)5 This commandment is further developed in 15:12-17. The emphasis that Jesus places on it is that it is new. While this commandment is found among the Old Testament commandments (e.g Lev 19:18; as well as 1QS 1:9-11), its newness arises from the imitation that the disciple must make of Jesus’ love. Disciples must model their love on that of Jesus’ self-sacrificing love for humanity. Love for one another must be the distinctive sign of the disciple of Jesus. Consequently, the ethical implications of the narrative show that the self-sacrificing life of Jesus becomes the model by which followers of Jesus must direct their lives. One’s actions are determined by love. The self-sacrificing love of Jesus is the model according to which disciples strive to lead their lives. At the same time the disciples of Jesus are easily recognisable, not so much by what they believe, but by the mutual love that they demonstrate, one for the other.

3.1.2 The question of Peter (13:36-14:4)
The narrative is carried forward by Peter posing a question to Jesus: ‘Master, where are you going?’ (13:36). As was the case previously in the scene of the washing of the feet, Peter again fails to understand the meaning of what Jesus has said. In replying to the question Jesus hints at the prospect that Peter will eventually follow Jesus to a similar death. The use of the verb (άκολουθοσάι) places it once more in the context of the ethics of discipleship: his whole life is meant to be one modeled upon that of Jesus and it will ultimately culminate in a fate similar to that of Jesus. Service of Jesus implies being attentive to the words of Jesus

5 The term love has become so commonplace in the English language that it is almost without content. This is not the case here. The notion of love in the farewell discourses is given a very specific content in that it demands that one love in the way in which Jesus has loved. He becomes the example to follow; and this example demands that one embrace a self-sacrificing life that is prepared to die on behalf of others.
and at the same time being open to being led where one does not wish to go (Jn 21:18) (Schnacken­burg 1982:56).

Jesus’ farewell discourses proper begin here. One finds united here a mixture of theological ideas, blessings and admonitions. The starting point seems to be a deep anxiety because of Jesus’ departure — a concern which affects not just the immediate circle of Jesus’ followers, but extends throughout all generations. ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled’ (Jn 14:1). Despite his departure Jesus promises his followers that there is a way to him and that they know the way: ‘Where I am going you know the way’ (Jn 14:4). Once again the ethical relevance of what Jesus has taught becomes evident. The glorification of Jesus entails his departure from the midst of his followers, but nevertheless his followers are provided with a way by which they can come to him. The life of the Christian has as its goal following the path mapped out by Jesus.

3.1.3 Thomas (14:5-7)
Thomas provides the opportunity for Jesus to explain himself further by posing the question: ‘Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?’ (14:5). The answer given by Jesus is that the goal is attained not by following some method or procedure, but by the following of a person, namely Jesus himself.

This leads to the statement of Jesus ‘I am the way and the truth and the life’ (14:6) which indicates that Jesus is not merely a guide to salvation, but he is also the very origin of life and of truth (De la Potterie 1966:907-42). The ethical implications are important. Truth and life explain in what sense Jesus is the way. He is the way in the sense that he is the truth; his mission has entailed leading humanity into an understanding of what their life entails. At the same time he is the way in the sense that his mission also entailed the communication of life to humanity: ‘I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly’ (10:10). Jesus is the origin as well as the foundation of life and all who come to Jesus participate in this life. The followers of Jesus receive an understanding of the truth as well as the very life of God enabling them to live in union with the Father and the Son. Consequently, Jesus emphasizes the point that the only access to the Father is through Jesus. (‘No one comes to the Father except through me’ (14:6).

3.1.4 Philip (14:8-21)
The question of Philip: ‘Lord, show us the Father; that is all we need’ (14:8) enables the narrator to continue the teaching of Jesus even further. When the narrator presents Jesus as ‘the way’ he does not have in mind that Jesus is leading people into the heavenly realm of the Father as was the case in certain of the Apocalyptic writings of the time. Rather, Jesus is the very revelation of the Fa-
ther: ‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father’ (14:9).

The narrator now shifts the attention to the disciples themselves. Jesus makes a number of promises to them. He promises that they too will do the very works that he himself performed and ‘even greater ones than these’ (14:12). Hereby, they are seen to continue the activity of Jesus. He also promises that he will hear their petitions provided that they are addressed in his name: ‘And whatever you ask in my name, I will do’ (14:13). These actions of the believer will all serve to glorify or make known the Father.

Jesus' further promises indicate the particular way in which he continues to remain present in his followers. He returns to the theme of love, whereby the love of the believer for Jesus is demonstrated by keeping the commandment of loving one another. As a reward for such mutual love Jesus promises the sending of another Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, so that it may remain with them forever (14:16-17). A circular path is operative here. Jesus departs from this world only to return through the Paraclete. Central to this path of the absence-presence of Jesus is the ethical response of love to which the community is called. Those disciples who love will in their turn be loved by the Father and the Son and through the presence of the Paraclete the Father will be revealed to them (14:21).

3.1.5 Judas [not the Iscariot] (14:22-31)
Again the narrator gives the meaning of Jesus' teaching the possibility of further development by means of a question addressed this time by Judas [not the Iscariot]. Jesus had spoken of revealing himself to the disciples by means of indwelling. For this reason Judas is concerned as he is looking for a visible demonstration of God's power that will cause fear and consternation. The answer that Jesus gives almost avoids replying to the question, as he wishes to stress the teaching he has already made. The feelings of anxiety and fear that his community knows now on the advent of his return to the Father must give way to the feelings of joy and peace in that Jesus is returning to the Father and they have been promised the Paraclete, who will lead them to an understanding of all that Jesus had taught. It is not a new teaching; instead, it is a reminder of all that Jesus had taught. The final words of this discourse end with a reminder of the path that Jesus' life has led — a path that has demonstrated total love and obedience to the Father: 'I do just as the Father has commanded me' (In 14:31). This relationship of Jesus with the Father must serve as a model for the relationship of the believer with Jesus.

3.2 Discourse on exhortation to the community (15:1-16:4a)
The following sections come as a surprise in that the discourses continue even after Jesus has indicated his desire to leave: 'Get up, let us go' (In 14:31). Nevertheless, they do present a further penetration of the same themes that have already been considered.
3.2.1 The allegory of the vine (15:1-17)

This allegory (or developed metaphor) highlights ethical action which shows that the source and origin of all action must rest in being united with Jesus. Jesus is the vine for which the Father takes great care by pruning the dead branches of the faithful. The essence of 15:1-8 is the phrase: 'Remain in me (μένατε ἐν ἐμοί) (verse 4). In fact the verb (μένος) occurs eighteen times in this section showing its importance as a theme. Remaining in Jesus, and Jesus remaining in his disciples are two sides of one coin, for this is an attempt to describe one relationship between Jesus and the disciples. They remain in Jesus through faith; Jesus remains in them through love and fruitfulness.

This passage wishes to emphasise the total dependence of the believer upon Jesus (which is a major theme of Johannine thought): the insistence is made that in order to bear fruit one must remain united to Jesus, and it is only those who are united with him who bear fruit.

The expression μένειν ἐν focuses attention on the present possession of 'eternal life' (to use the central Johannine metaphor) in believers which becomes the source for their activity. 'Bearing fruit' is symbolic for the possession of eternal life which ultimately expresses itself in the communication of that life to others. Consequently, there are two dimensions to this 'bearing fruit'. One 'bears fruit' in the possession of 'eternal life'; and this, secondly, leads to the communication of this life to others. To remain united with Jesus should result in a special type of action, a special way of life which continues the mission of Jesus in the world. While the 'bearing fruit' undoubtedly referred in the first instance to the missionary endeavour of the community in bringing more and more people to accept Jesus, nevertheless it cannot be simply restricted to this. The 'bearing fruit' should be used to embrace the entire way of life of the believer and of the community to which the believer belongs: 'because without me you can do nothing' (verse 5). Again it is the indwelling of Jesus in the community and in the life of the believers that enables them to bear fruit in the above sense.

Just as the notion of 'to remain' was central to 15:1-8, so the notion of 'to love' becomes central to 15:9-17. The Father loves the Son, who in turn loves the believers. Consequently, they are called upon to remain in his love. The response of Jesus to the Father, by which he has kept the Father's commandments and remains in his love, becomes the paradigm for the way in which the believers are called upon to keep Jesus' commandments and to remain in his love. Besides being something ethical, the notion of love here should also be seen to encompass something metaphysical. For John love is connected to existence or to remaining in Jesus. As Dibelius (1927:174) has noted, love refers to one's being as a result of a divine quality communicated to it. The love of which Jesus speaks
begins with the Father's love for Jesus (15:9), it then develops into Jesus' love for his friends (15:12-13), and ultimately results in the disciples' return of love for Jesus (15:14) and further demonstrates itself in love for others (15:17). As in the rest of the Gospel the initiative always remains on the part of God or of Jesus. The choice is initiated by Jesus, not by believers. Yet, the novelty here is that this choice is directed towards bearing fruit, towards ethical action. The choice that Jesus has made in calling them to become friends results in their bearing fruit.

3.2.2 Hatred from a hostile world (15:18-16:4a)
Whereas previous sections of the discourses focussed their attention on life within the context of the Christian community in its relationship with the Father, with Jesus and with one another, this section turns its attention to the attitude of a hostile world to the community of believers. The way of life of Jesus is to be repeated in his followers. Just as he received opposition and hatred from 'the world,' so too will his disciples. The response of the world to Christian believers is identical to that experienced against Jesus. Hatred, opposition, persecution and even death is the lot of those who follow Jesus. ‘Whatever the particulars, John 15:18-16:4a presumes that hostility from an unbelieving world will be a permanent facet of Christian life’ (Perkins 1990:976). Consequently, a permanent result of the Christian's ethical life will entail opposition and suffering from a world that does not only reject its values, but also seeks to suppress those values.

3.3 Discourse of consolation for sorrowing disciples (16:4b-33)
The purpose of this discourse serves to offer consolation to those believers who are experiencing suffering. At the same time it adds the impetus towards bearing witness to the world and avoiding the danger of disintegrating into sectarianism. The discourse begins with a further consideration on the role of the Paraclete (16:4b-16). The focus of attention lies on the presence of the Spirit of truth who will guide the disciples into an understanding of the revelation of Jesus. Ultimately, the belief that Jesus has overcome the world (16:17-33) gives direction to the lives of the believers. Once the disciples come to understand what the glorification of Jesus entails, they will realise that the world has not triumphed over Jesus, nor will it triumph over them. While persecution and suffering may be the lot that they experience, ultimately they are given hope that the victory experienced by Jesus over the world will be a victory in which they will participate.

3.4 Jesus' prayer for unity for the disciples (17:1-26)
The narrator brings the farewell discourses to a fitting conclusion with the prayer that Jesus addresses to his Father on behalf of believers present and future. Jesus shows that the mission his Father had given him to perform has been successfully
carried out. Jesus has made known the divine presence on earth and he now returns to this divine presence. Here one sees very clearly the relationship that exists between Jesus and the Father, a relationship that is based upon love. From his own relationship with the Father Jesus turns to pray for his disciples (17:6-19). In essence his prayer is that the disciples will be protected by the power of God. Above all it is for unity that he prays: that they may be one and that this unity will be based upon the unity that exists between Jesus and the Father. Finally, Jesus prays that they will be dedicated totally to God's service just as Jesus was: the response that Jesus had given to his Father is the same response that Jesus prays his followers will be able to give: 'As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world' (17:18).

For future disciples (17:20-26) Jesus prays as well, and his prayer is again one that focuses upon unity. These statements on unity imply a horizontal unity (the relationship of believers among themselves) and a vertical unity (the relationship of the believers to the Father and the Son). A number of important aspects of this unity need to be observed:

3.4.1 Some type of vital unity is demanded
When the unity of the Father and the Son is held up as the model for unity, it is more than just some form of moral unity. The Father gives life to the Son. Consequently, the unity of Christians with the Father and the Son is a vital unity, in which they too receive life from the Father and the Son. It reminds one of the saying in John 6:57 'Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.'

3.4.2 The unity that is demanded must also entail some form of visible unity
It will be the visible unity that will bring the world to 'believe that you sent me' (17:21) and 'that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me' (17:23). How can one say that the world will come to believe because by the very definition of the world in the narrative, it is opposed to Jesus? Brown (1966:778) argues that 'these statements do not mean that the world will accept Jesus; rather the Christian believers will offer to the world the same type of challenge that Jesus offered — a challenge to recognise God in Jesus....How does Christian unity present such a challenge? Jesus presented a challenge because he claimed to be one with the Father; now the Christians are part of this unity ('that they may be [one] in us') and so present the same challenge.'

The unity of which the narrator is speaking presupposes a community (one is not simply talking about some type of spiritual union). The allegory of the vine and the branches implied a unity of believers with Jesus. It is not simply to be understood as a personal union with Jesus, a one on one relationship, but it is a
union with one another in relationship with Jesus.

3.4.3 The prayer for a visible unity implies something about the background
The situation out of which this prayer emerges presupposes that the unity of the community has either been placed under enormous stress or it has been disrupted. Not only is the world opposed to the 'Johannine Christians,' but part of that world includes those Christians who are in opposition to the 'Johannine Christianity' to which I John later testifies. The fact that the narrative stresses the importance of unity so much illustrates that the historical situation must be one where the unity is either broken or threatened with disruption. This further examination of the historical situation of the break in unity is something which historical criticism would investigate, which is somewhat beyond the scope of this article which is interested in the narrative criticism of the text. I have treated this historical context out of which the Gospel arose in a previous article (Hartin 1985:37-49).

3.4.4 The ethical consequences of this unity
The love of God is to shine in them: 'that the love with which you loved me may be in them...' (17:26). They are to experience the love of God in their lives, and in turn this love should become the foundation for all their actions. In the final analysis the response to which the disciples of Jesus of all generations are called is that of a unity of life in imitation of the response that Jesus demonstrates through his relationship with the Father.

It is only when the loving unity of the disciples is evident and is a witness to the world, that the world in its turn can come to a realisation that the Father has sent the Son (17:23) and the love of the Son is in the believers. 'Where this loving unity of disciples is found, there too will be found the company of Jesus (v24), the divine presence (v24), the power of the divine name, and the living love of both Father and Son (v26)' (Flanagan 1989:1008). In the final analysis the response to which the disciples of Jesus of all generations are called is that of a unity of love in imitation of the response that Jesus demonstrates through his relationship with the Father.

6 It is important to draw a distinction between narrative criticism and historical criticism. The immediate aim of narrative criticism is to examine and understand the narrative itself. On the other hand historical criticism treats the text as a means to an end, namely the reconstruction of the background of the text. The distinction between the two approaches has been compared to the metaphors of a window and a mirror. 'Historical criticism regards the text as a window through which the critic hopes to learn something about another time and place. The text, then, stands between the reader and the insight that is sought and may provide the means through which that insight can be obtained. Literary criticism, in contrast, regards the text as a mirror; the critic determines to look at the text, not through it, and whatever insight is obtained will be found in the encounter of the reader with the text itself (Powell 1990:8).
4 CONCLUSION

A number of important conclusions emerge from this consideration. In the first place, this path through the farewell discourses has indicated how the ethical dimension is at the very heart of the narrative. The foundation for the whole ethical direction remains the death of Jesus. I have argued that ultimately it is this death which remains the basis for the ethical life of believers. This self-sacrificing gift of Jesus in love establishes the bond between himself and his followers. The footwashing is an acted out parable which enables believers to understand that they too are called upon to exercise a similar self-sacrificing gift of themselves. The ethical life of the Christian always remains a response to what Jesus has done on their behalf.

Secondly, when Jesus speaks of a ‘new’ commandment of love which is to give direction to all their ethical action, the newness must rest in taking Jesus as the model. In this way they imitate the self-sacrificing love of Jesus and it is this self-sacrifice which gives content to the love that is required. As has been argued, it is the virtue of love which gives rise to the whole ethics of discipleship. The life of the Christian is a life that is at its very heart a life of imitation, a life of emulating the life of the Master. The response that Jesus gave to his Father becomes the paradigm for similar responses to which the follower of Jesus is called. It becomes the following of a person, Jesus, who is ‘the way, the truth and the life.’ His mission incorporated the communication of the fullness of life to humanity. This communication takes place through the relationship that one upholds with Jesus and with one another. All who come to Jesus participate in this life.

Thirdly, I have illustrated here what was argued at the outset, namely that the way the Bible functions in ethical decisions is to present a paradigm of how the believer is to act in the world. By way of analogy the farewell discourses show that the believer is called to live a life of relationship-response to Jesus and to fellow believers. The relationship-response to which every believer is called is one that is permeated by the quality of love. Love of the community (in imitation of the love of Jesus) leads ultimately to love of Jesus and to the reciprocal love of the Father and the Son for the believer. This relationship with Jesus remains at the very heart of all ethical action. By being united with him (as in the image of the vine and the branches), one is ultimately able to bear fruit. United with Jesus the believer is called to lead a specific way of life. A disciple is in a love relationship with Jesus and this relationship flowers forth into love for others.

The response which Jesus has made to the Father, by which he has kept the Father’s commandments and remains in his love, becomes the paradigm for the way in which believers of all ages are called to keep Jesus’ commands and remain in his love. Just as Jesus experienced hostility, so too believers will experience a similar opposition because of their relationship to Jesus.
The finest mirror for the relationship of Jesus to the Father, to believers and to the world, is provided in his final prayer (chapter 17). Love is the cornerstone for this relationship. Just as Jesus was dedicated totally to the service of the Father, so too believers of all ages are called to service. The call and choice that has been given to believers is one that results not in salvation, but in love and in bearing fruit.

Finally, without doubt what has emerged so forcefully from this examination is that the ethical model which the farewell discourses emphasise is one of relationship-response. It is not an ethics of laws or ends, but an ethics that has a person as its very centre which at the same time respects the distance between the world of the Bible and the world of today. This person, Jesus, responded to the mission of his Father and dedicated his life to fostering this relationship of love and communicating this relationship to his followers. In a similar way disciples of all ages are called upon to emulate this relationality-response. Above all believers are called to remain united with Jesus and to lead a life dominated by the relationship of love: a love which involves a reciprocal love of Jesus and the Father, as well as a love of the brethren.

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