1

INTRODUCTION

> L'âme . . . habite certes dans ce qui n'est pas elle, mais c'est par cette habitation dans l'"autre" (et non pas logiquement, par opposition à l'autre) que l'âme acquiert son identité.[1]

Throughout his letters, Paul paints vivid, scintillating portraits of his God's decisive action in Jesus the messiah. 'God', he climactically announces, 'did not spare his son but gave him for us all' (Rom 8.31–32). Amongst the diverse Pauline retellings of this message, one recurring form depicts this event as the epitomised demonstration of divine love. 'God puts his love on display for us in that, while we were still sinners, the messiah died for us' (Rom 5.8). This paradigmatic divine act is recast elsewhere as the loving act of Jesus himself. In one of his most memorable statements, Paul identifies Jesus as 'the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal 2.20).

Paul's letters are also riddled with exhortations of mutual love. 'Love one another with brotherly affection' (Rom 12.10), he urges his readers. 'Become enslaved to one another through love' (Gal 5.13). The famous personification in 1 Corinthians 13 elucidates love as 'patient and kind', 'not rejoicing at wrongdoing', and 'rejoicing with the truth' (1 Cor 13.4, 6). So much depends upon love that Paul hyperbolically claims that it constitutes not only his sole possession but also his very existence. If he loses love, he would not only *have* nothing but also he would *be* nothing (οὐθέν εἰμι; 13.2).

These two elements of Paul's letters – the announcement of God and the messiah's love and the ethical injunctions for believers to love – have been catalogued under several different headings: grace and obedience, gift and obligation, divine action and human response, gospel and ethics. That it is possible and appropriate to identify some kind of distinction between these two aspects of Paul's

[1] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini: Essai sur l'extériorité* (Paris: Kluwer Academic, 2003), 119.

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letters should go undisputed. The more difficult task, however, is to fit these two together, to give an account of how gift entails obligation, gospel determines ethics, and (to bring love back into focus) how the creative event of God's love in the messiah dictates the shape of believers' mutual love.[2] What exactly does Paul mean when he says that God and Jesus 'loved', what kind of behaviour flows from and characterises this love, and how, if at all, does this love determine or inform the content of Paul's ethics of love?[3]

Scholarly discourse on love in early Christianity was deeply affected by Anders Nygren's answers to these questions in his multi-volume work on the subject in Swedish, originally entitled *Den kristna kärlekstanken genom tiderna: Eros och Agape* but known more popularly by its English title *Agape and Eros*. While the first volume appeared in 1930 and the second in 1936, English translations appeared in various parts in the 1930s, and a full single-volume edition was published in 1953.[4] Nygren's claims were anything but understated: Christianity invented 'an entirely new ... fundamental motif of religion and ethics' by introducing the 'Agape motif'.[5] This 'distinctive and original' Christian idea provided an 'unselfish' and entirely 'sacrificial' definition of love which stood in sharp opposition to the idea of 'Eros'. Eros, according to Nygren, is the structuring motif of all Greco-Roman ethics and represents an 'acquisitive' and 'egocentric' desire to obtain and seize that which the individual lacks.[6] Nygren defined Eros as entirely self-directed and selfish but Agape as entirely outwardly directed and selfless.

[2] As Thomas Söding put it, we need to investigate 'how love of God is connected to neighbour-love and what actually deserves to be called love' (Thomas Söding, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus: Die Mahnung zur Agape im Rahmen der paulinischen Ethik*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 26 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1995), 2).

[3] I will treat the terms 'morality' and 'ethics' as more or less equivalent, although some have suggested that we distinguish between them (Wayne Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 4; David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics*, 2nd ed., T&T Clark Cornerstones (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 104–07).

[4] I will quote from and cite the text of the more recent edition and published as Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[5] Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 53. According to Nygren, 'Agape' has four primary characteristics: it is (1) 'spontaneous and "unmotivated"', (2) 'indifferent to value', (3) 'creative', and the (4) 'initiator of fellowship with God' (Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 75–80).

[6] Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 61, 209–210, 180; cf. 175–77, 205.

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'Eros is essentially and in principle self-love', but Agape 'excludes all self-love'.[7]

While *Agape and Eros* has long exerted an often tacit influence upon historical and theological treatments of love (as we will see further), it incited a plethora of critical responses. Amongst the various objections, nearly every critique of Nygren seeks to problematise the unqualified portrayal of early Christian views of love as purely other-regarding self-sacrifice and Greco-Roman views as essentially egocentric, selfish desire.[8] Such criticisms bring key questions to the fore. Did the early Christians think that love is totally *selfless*, in the sense that the self does not participate in some kind of positive end towards which acts of love are oriented? Is it possible that love for another can simultaneously intend to gain some kind of benefit for the self while not being purely self-interested? Asking these questions, of course, would incite objections from certain modern philosophers who follow Immanuel Kant's insistence that performing beneficent acts with any view towards self-benefit results in instrumentalising others for personal gain. For Kant, as well as for Nygren's work which is downstream of him, either one treats others as ends with selfless disregard for one's own benefit, or one treats others as a means with only selfish interests in mind. By contending for this binary mode of morally classifying all actions, Kant rightly recognised that he starkly deviated from the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition. But is it the

[7] Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 216–17.

[8] Those who point out that the antithesis between Christian and Greco-Roman views of love simply does not align with the extant evidence include e.g. C. Osborne, *Eros Unveiled: Plato and the God of Love* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); T. Irwin, 'Conceptions of Love, Greek and Christian', in *Love and Christian Ethics: Tradition, Theory, and Society*, ed. F.V. Simmons and B.C. Sorrells (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016), 36–50. Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) as well as John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938) argued that Augustine held a more nuanced view than what Nygren outlines in his book. Gene Outka also critiqued Nygren's negative view of self-love from a more theological position (Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 55–74; cf. D.F. Weaver, *Self-Love and Christian Ethics*, New Studies in Christian Ethics 23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)). Without responding to Nygren directly, some feminist critics claim that a heavy emphasis on self-sacrifice might stem from a form of inverse patriarchal discourse. As Daphne Hampson argues, 'that it [*kenosis* – and we could add 'self-sacrifice' here as well] should have featured prominently in Christian thought is perhaps an indication of the fact that men have understood what the male problem, in thinking of terms of hierarchy and domination, has been' (Daphne Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, Signposts in Theology (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 155).

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case, as Nygren argues, that Paul's theology was such an unparalleled phenomenon that he was one of the only thinkers in the Roman world who considered benevolence to have no end beyond itself? We ought to be deeply suspicious of such claims of exceptionalism. At least we should contend that, if this binary way of morally evaluating behaviour does not align with any known views in Paul's world, then interpreters of Paul should not be too quick to agree with Nygren's construal of things. Thus, while it is the case that Paul can contrast self-interest with other-regard in certain statements (e.g., 1 Cor 13.5), we may rightly ask: Does claiming that love necessarily operates negatively towards the interests of the self and positively towards the interests of others provide a *sufficient* account of Paul's depiction of Jesus' love and of his ethics of love?

This book provides an account of love in Paul beyond the dichotomy between self-interest and other-regard by investigating the christological and ethical material in Paul's letter to the Galatians in light of Greco-Roman philosophical ethics. In order to orient the reader to the content herein, I hope to do three things in this introduction: to provide a rationale for the present study in light of previous scholarship on Paul's letters, to explain the methods which will govern my investigation, and to provide an outline of the ensuing argument.

Polarising Self and Other in Pauline Scholarship

Nygren's antithesis between self-interest and other-regard represents an ongoing trend in Pauline scholarship in which scholars proffer the rejection of self-interest as the primary or even sole definition for love. In order to demonstrate the impetus for the present work, I suggest here that interpreters of Paul who (knowingly or unknowingly) broadly align with Nygren's view have silenced, ignored, or distorted a number of Pauline texts. The following review is meant to provide neither an exhaustive presentation of scholarship on love in Paul, nor even a representative account of what most Pauline scholars think; its purpose is simply to point out *that* this kind of self-other polarisation has been articulated in some interpretations of Paul within the last century, and that these interpretations call for a response.

In his 1951 work *Agape: Die Liebe als Grundmotiv der neutestamentlichen Theologie*, Viktor Warnach, following the lead of Nygren, thematises the distinction between Eros and Agape in describing early

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Christian texts.[9] So, he writes, 'It is always the "other" love, that comes from God, that redeems people through sacrifice and brings them together into into holy fellowship, which encounters us in the New Testament as "Agape", and which is fundamentally different from the "Eros" of extra-biblical literature'.[10] While Warnach differs from Nygren in concluding that Eros is not entirely egoistic, he argues that Eros is 'impersonal (unpersönlich)' in the sense that it cares only for the instrumental utility or value of a person rather than the other per se.[11] By contrast, Agape – which describes Paul's position on love – is 'personal (persönlich)': 'Rather, Agape, as truly personal love, as love that stems from the God-like foundation of a person's being, is free from selfish intentions – "it does not seek its own" [1 Cor 13.5] – and can therefore unreservedly affirm the other. It seeks nothing other than the flourishing of the beloved.'[12] Though Warnach derives this view from engaging with Paul's text (here 1 Cor 13.5), his stark contrast between Agape and self-interest throughout his book leaves unclear what kinds of actions flow from 'selfish intentions (egoistische Absichten)' and what kinds of actions promote 'the flourishing of the beloved (die Förderung des Geliebten)'. For example, is it self-seeking when Paul says to the Corinthians, 'I do not want your things, but you (οὐ γὰρ ζητῶ τὰ ὑμῶν ἀλλ᾽ ὑμᾶς)' (2 Cor 12.14)? Here Paul does not make a distinction between 'egoism' and seeking the prospering of the other, but rather between desiring things from others and desiring the other *per se*. Is it 'egoistic', moreover, for Paul to ask Philemon, 'let me benefit from you (ἐγώ σου ὀναίμην)' (Philem 1.20)? Earlier in the letter, Paul even says that he makes this request for benefit 'on the basis of love (διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην)' (1.3). Warnach's

[9] Viktor Warnach, *Agape* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1951).

[10] Warnach, *Agape*, 175: 'Immer ist es die "andere", aus Gott stammende, die Menschen im Opfer erlösende und zu heiliger Gemeinschaft vereinigende Liebe, die uns im NT als "Agape" begegnet, und die sich wesentlich vom "Eros" der außerbiblischen Literatur unterscheidet'.

[11] As he puts it, 'The impersonal character is even an essential feature of erotic love, for which the "you" as such is fairly insignificant, because it is less concerned with the person than with the values attached to them' (Warnach, *Agape*, 24: 'Der unpersönlich Charakter ist sogar ein Wesensmerkmal der erotischen Liebe, für die das "Du" als solches ziemlich belanglos ist, weil es ihr weniger um die Person als um die ihr anhaftenden Werte geht').

[12] Warnach, *Agape*, 299 (emphasis mine): 'Vielmehr ist die Agape als echt personale Liebe, als Liebe, die aus dem gotthaften Seinsgrund der Person stammt, *frei von egoistischen Absichten* – "sie sucht nicht das Ihrige" – und kann eben darum den anderen rückhaltlos bejahen. *Sie sucht nichts anderes als die Förderung des Geliebten*' (cf. 293–302).

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definition of love as seeking 'the flourishing of the beloved' as opposed to 'egoistic intentions' does not sufficiently account for those instances in which Paul correlates love with seeking his own interests, whether wanting the Corinthians per se or wanting some benefit from Philemon. Taking the phrase 'love does not seek its own' from 1 Corinthians 13.5 as the primary or sole definition of love will not be able to capture the diverse dynamics of what Paul says about love.

In 1959, Ceslaus Spicq published a volume focusing on love in the letters of Paul (the second volume of his three-part work *Agapè dans le Nouveau Testament*).[13] Unlike Nygren and Warnach, Spicq says more about mutual love between believers in Paul's letters.[14] At the same time, he still contends, like Nygren, that for Paul, love must entirely be disinterested: 'In fraternal relations, each person should think of the other and not of himself; love will move him to sacrifice himself to further the other's good. As soon as a neighbor becomes another self, charity necessarily becomes disinterested.'[15] This 'disinterested' love must be entirely self-sacrificial: '[*Agape*'s] authenticity reveals itself in its total renouncement, its complete gift of self in service of neighbor';[16] 'Agape is an heroic virtue which implies complete sacrifice of the self for the sake of others'.[17] Spicq is so committed to this formulation of a disinterested ἀγάπη that it leads him to insist that, when Paul asks Philemon to do something good for Paul 'on the basis of love (διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην)' (Philem 9), it could not possibly be an appeal to Philemon's love for Paul – presumably that would be selfish of Paul to do so – and must rather be an appeal either 'to the virtue which

[13] Ceslaus Spicq, *Agapè dans le Nouveau Testament: Analyse des Textes II* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1959). English translation: Ceslaus Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament, Volume 2: Agape in the Epistles of St. Paul, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St James. St. Peter, and St. Jude*, trans. Marie Aquinas McNamara and Mary Honoria Richter (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

[14] Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, 331–38; Spicq, *Agapè dans le Nouveau Testament*, 295–302.

[15] Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, 156; Spicq, *Agapè dans le Nouveau Testament*, 86: 'Il faut entendre que dans les relations fraternelles, on pense à l'autre plus qu'à soi-même, l'amour porte à se sacrifier soi-même pour favoriser le bien du prochain. Dès là que celui-ci est considéré comme un autre soi-même, la charité est nécessairement désintéressée'.

[16] Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, 340; Spicq, *Agapè dans le Nouveau Testament*, 304: '[S]on authenticité se révèle dans ses manifestations, à sa puissance d'expression et de don, et d'abord dans un renoncement total, ou mieux un don plénier de soi au service du prochain.'

[17] Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, 113; Spicq, *Agapè dans le Nouveau Testament*, 20: 'A vrai dire, il s'agit d'une vertu héroïque, impliquant le sacrifice de soi le plus total en faveur des autres'.

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characterizes believers' or (more likely in Spicq's mind) 'the divine charity communicated by the Holy Spirit which governs the entire Christian life'.[18] This emphasis on self-sacrifice seems to be overly influenced by an attempt to posit Paul's conception of love as utterly unique. This is evident in Spicq's rather outrageous claim that '*agape* is only found within Christianity'.[19] If Spicq bases this conclusion on the premise that the meaning of *agape* is precisely aggregate meaning of every use of ἀγαπ-words in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, then in a sense the statement may be considered true. But it would also be a complete tautology: if we define *agape* as the sum total of all of its particular uses in the New Testament, then one could say that *agape*, understood and articulated this way, is only found in the New Testament. But such a claim is neither interesting nor helpful, and it serves only as an artificial and ad hoc conclusion to force the New Testament to bear witness to an absolutely unique idea of love. But more importantly, though Spicq's work is helpful in his emphasis on mutuality, the invocation of the concepts of self-renunciation, self-sacrifice, and disinterestedness as programmatic for love lead his account to be imbalanced. This at least becomes clear when he is forced to avoid the obvious fact that in texts like Philemon, Paul simply asks Philemon to do something beneficial for Paul.

Thematising contrast between self-interest and other-regard even more explicitly, in 1970, Heinz-Dietrich Wendland claimed that, in contrast to Greek philosophical ideas, neighbour-love in Paul must be set in antithesis to all forms of self-love:

> [T]he clear contrast of agape against any form of self-willing and self-serving is obvious. Nowhere does Paul make self-love the standard for love of neighbour, as later Christian ethicists did in a misguided interpretation of the words 'as yourself', uncritically adopting a Greek-philosophical understanding of the self and the person. If, as in Paul, the love of Christ is the highest norm, it naturally becomes impossible to use self-love as such a standard. It is likely

[18] Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, 305; Spicq, *Agapè dans le Nouveau Testament*, 269: 'Il ne s'agit ni de l'amour de Paul (Bengel), ni de celui dont Philémon a donné tant de preuves (Dibelius, Huby), mais de la vertu caractéristique des croyants (Vincent), ou mieux de cette charité divine, communiquée par le Saint-Esprit et qui commande toute la vie chrétienne'.

[19] Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, 340; Spicq, *Agapè dans le Nouveau Testament*, 305: 'l'*agapè* ne se situe qu'au sein du christianisme.'

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> that Paul would have regarded the idea of a right to self-love as fleshly thinking; in any case, he never reflects on it.[20]

When referring to the later Christian ethicists who rely on Greek conceptions of the self, Wendland is probably referring to the fact that in some Greco-Roman sources, the extension of self-love to others was based upon considering another to be unified with the self in some way (I will treat this topic in Chapter 2). Wendland pits self-interest against other-regard on christological grounds, and he takes this christological grounding of love as prima facie evidence that self-love must be excluded as a 'highest norm'. What is crucial to notice is that he is forced to set these two principles (self-love and the love of Jesus) in competition because he is using the superlative category of 'highest norm'. But is it possible that Paul thinks both that self-love can be a valid way of measuring how to treat others (as is suggested by the command 'love your neighbour as yourself' in Gal 5.14) and that believers should imitate the love of the messiah? If there is an antithesis between all forms of self-love and imitating the love of the messiah, this conclusion must be drawn from the evidence of Paul's letters itself. But Wendland posits a priori that they cannot coexist, such that to make the love of the messiah the standard of action is to reject all self-love (and thus, as Wendland says, to reject the ethics of the Greek philosophical tradition). Instead of coming to the text with the assumption that Paul could not have allowed both self-love and imitation of the messiah to coexist, we should leave this open as a possibility unless his texts indicate otherwise.

In 2001, Michael Gorman expressed a similar thesis. He defines love in Paul as follows:

> Love, then, has for Paul an essential two-dimensional character, as summarized in 1 Corinthians 13:5 and 1 Corinthians

[20] Heinz-Dietrich Wendland, *Ethik des Neuen Testaments: Eine Einführung*, Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 62: 'Deutlich ist aber der klare Gegensatz der Agape gegen jede Art von Sich-selbst-Wollen und -Dienen. Nirgends macht Paulus die Selbstliebe zum Maßstab für die Nächstenliebe, wie dies spätere, christliche Ethiker in einer abwegigen Exegese der Worte "wie dich selbst" taten, indem sie ein griechisch-philosophisches Verständnis des Selbst, der Person unkritisch zugrunde legten. Ist – wie bei Paulus – die Liebe Christi die höchste Norm, so wird es naturgemäß ganz unmöglich, ausgerechnet die Selbstliebe als solchen Maßstab zu benutzen. Wahrscheinlich wäre Paulus der Gedanke des Rechtes der Selbstliebe als fleischliches Denken erschienen; jedenfalls reflektiert er nirdgends über sie.'

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> 8:1. *Negatively*, it does not seek its own advantage or edification. It is characterized by status- and rights-renunciation. *Positively*, it seeks the good, the advantage, the edification of others. It is characterized by regard for them. Love, according to the apostle, is the dynamic, creative endeavor of finding ways to purse the welfare of others rather than one's own interest. It is not self-centered but others-oriented.[21]

Gorman further insists that self-interest and other-regard are necessarily completely antithetical in Paul, and he appeals to a christological basis to support this: '[I]t is clear that for Paul there is a radical opposition between looking out for self and concern for others. These two opposites could not more be complementary than could Christ's self-emptying and his self-serving utilization of equality with God [referring to Phil 2.6–8].'[22] While this conclusion does, in one sense, flow from Paul's contrastive statements in (for example) 1 Corinthians 10.24 ('Let no one seek their own advantage, but that of the other'), this unqualified and absolute antithesis between self-interest and love results in Gorman ignoring crucial elements of other Pauline statements. For example, when Gorman interprets Paul's claim that '[t]o each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the (common) good (τὸ συμφέρον)' (1 Cor 12.7), he paraphrases this as meaning that 'one's own spiritual gift is not meant for self-aggrandizement or even self-edification, but rather for the good of *others*'.[23] In the context of 1 Corinthians, however, this 'advantage (τὸ συμφέρον)' is not the property of 'others' but rather of the body, which includes both the interests of self and of others, since all share in the prospering and suffering of each part of the body (1 Cor 12.26).[24] Even though Gorman utilises the translation 'common good' for τὸ συμφέρον, he interprets the corporate sense of τὸ συμφέρον here to refer to the advantage of everyone *except the self*. In other words, Gorman's antithesis between self-interest and other-regard leads him to distort Paul's claim about achieving the common benefit – the simultaneous benefit of the self *as well as* others – into a claim about benefitting others *instead of* the self.

[21] Michael Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 160 (emphasis original); cf. 215, 223.
[22] Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 257.
[23] Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 235–36 (emphasis mine).
[24] See further Chapter 2.

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In her 2015 book *Liebe als Agape*,[25] Oda Wischmeyer also appeals to 1 Corinthians 13.5 (οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς) as indicating an 'antinomy of self-love and love for neighbor', and, similarly, she claims that in Philippians 2.4 (μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστος σκοποῦντες ἀλλὰ [καὶ] τὰ ἑτέρων ἕκαστοι) this configuration of love comes to expression 'explicitly in the sense of altruism'.[26] This notion of love is coordinated with Paul's depiction of Jesus 'as the model of the renunciation of self-preservation and self-assertion'.[27] Such a disregard for the self in Paul's configuration of love, she claims, starkly contrasts with the emphasis on self-care in Hellenistic ethics. Wischmeyer then inquires how this relates to the command to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Lev 19.18). Unlike the Pauline 'opposition between self-love and love for neighbor', the neighbour-love command of Leviticus 19.18 'formulates a parallel and not an antinomy' between self-love and other-love, making 'self-love just the standard for love of neighbour' and limiting the scope of love only to the community of Israel rather than the foreigner.[28] By contrast, Paul participates in an early Christian trope wherein 'the synthesis of self-love and love for neighbor c[a]me to be called into question and [was] replaced by the antithetical pairing of love for neighbor versus self-love', which enables the scope of love to extend to outsiders beyond the community: '[T]he renunciation of self-love leads away from the commandment of love for neighbor and its logic materially.'[29]

[25] Oda Wischmeyer, *Liebe als Agape: Das frühchristliche Konzept und der modern Diskurs* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); English translation in Oda Wischmeyer, *Love as Agape: The Early Christian Concept and Modern Discourse*, trans. Wayne Coppins, Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021).

[26] Wischmeyer, *Love as Agape*, 176; Wischmeyer, *Liebe als Agape*, 170: 'Die Antinomie von Selbstliebe und Nächstenliebe'; 'explizit im Sinne des Altruismus'.

[27] Wischmeyer, *Love as Agape*, 176; Wischmeyer, *Liebe als Agape*, 170: als das Vorbild des Verzichts auf Selbstbewahrung und Selbstdurchsetzung'.

[28] Wischmeyer, *Love as Agape*, 176; Wischmeyer, *Liebe als Agape*, 170: 'Der Gegensatz zwischen Selbst- und Nächstenliebe'; 'formuliert gerade eine Parallele, keine Antinomie'; 'die Selbstliebe gerade der Maßtab der Liebe zum Nächsten'.

[29] Wischmeyer, *Love as Agape*, 177; Wischmeyer, *Liebe als Agape*, 171: 'Wie ist es zu der Infragestellung der Synthese von Selbst- und Nächstenliebe und zu ihrer Substituierung durch das antithetische Paar von Nächstenliebe *versus* Selbstliebe gekommen? … Der Verzicht auf die Selbstliebe führt damit sachlich vom Gebot der Nächstenliebe und seiner Logik fort.' This interpretative trope goes at least back to F.C. Baur, who argued that Judaism was a nationalist and particularistic religion and was, therefore, egoistic (F.C. Baur, *Lectures on New Testament Theology*, ed. P.C. Hodgson, trans. R.F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 106, 191, 214, 311, 363). This, for Baur, contrasted with the 'absolute' character of Christianity (Baur, *Lectures*, 245; cf. 236). Nygren also argued the same point: 'In Judaism love

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Some of these claims are difficult to accept. Given that Paul himself positively quotes Leviticus 19.18 (Gal 5.14; Rom 13.9), how likely is it that, whereas Leviticus 19.18 creates a parallel between self-love and other-love, Paul opposes this self-love/other-love coordination by holding strictly to an antithesis between self-love and other-love? When Paul quotes the command 'Love your neighbour as yourself', does he mean 'Love your neighbour and *not* yourself'? It is difficult to make Wischmeyer's statements cohere with this, and Paul nowhere indicates any criticism of Leviticus 19.18. Wischmeyer feels pressured (at least in part) to set up a contrast between Leviticus 19.18 and Paul due to her reading of his contrastive statements about self-regard and other-regard in 1 Corinthians 13.5 and Philippians 2.4 (which I will treat in the next chapter), which she takes to indicate Paul's endorsement of 'altruism' and a complete renunciation of self-love. Instead of arguing that Paul undermines the meaning of Leviticus 19.18 – which he appears to endorse without qualification – we should rather question the notions that these Pauline texts censure all self-love and that they directly map onto the modern ethical ideal of 'altruism' in contrast to 'egoism'.

Edmund Santurri appeals to the Pauline literature to establish that love (or, in his terminology, 'agape') 'is essentially *self-sacrifice*' and consists in 'an agent's disposition to sacrifice the interests of the self for the good of the neighbour'.[30] Santurri is insistent that self-sacrifice is not just a *possible* actualisation of love but is essential and inherent to it: there is no such thing as loving another without subtracting something from the self. Santurri appeals to Philippians 2.3–4, in which he sees Paul encourage his readers 'to abandon egocentric or prideful preoccupation; and more, to adopt an altruistic attitude utterly unqualified by self-concern'; this is then given christological warrant in Philippians 2.6, which depicts self-emptying, 'as a metaphor that captures vividly the moral and spiritual attitudes of humility and self-renunciation reflected in that

is exclusive and particularistic: it is directed to one's "neighbour" in the original and more restricted sense of the word, and it is directed to "neighbours only"' (Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 63).

[30] E.N. Santurri, 'Agape as Self-Sacrifice: The Internalist View', in *Love and Christian Ethics: Tradition, Theory, and Society*, ed. F.V. Simmons and B.C. Sorrells (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016), 171–89, at 171 (emphasis original).

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incarnation'. In his own words, '[i]ncarnational kenosis is then in Pauline theology a prototype of love as self-sacrifice for the good of the neighbor.'[31] This contrast between self and other becomes even sharper when he writes, 'kenotic love for Paul is altruistic all the way down. It is the other rather than the self that is ever in love's view'.[32] In relation to the self, then, love is strictly defined in negative terms: Santurri gives an account of love with what we could call 'self-subtraction-language' – phrases that take the word 'self' and attach a negative word or morpheme to it (which would include language such as 'self-renunciation', 'self-sacrifice', and 'selfless').

As regards 'incarnational kenosis' (as he puts it), we may question whether it is the case that Jesus becomes incarnate with no view whatsoever to his own self. In the passage he cites, God responds to Jesus' act of obedience by exalting him (Phil 2.9–11). In other instances in which Paul discusses the incarnation, Jesus' action leads to believers' obedience to God: in Romans, God sends the son 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' so that believers 'fulfill the just requirement of the Torah' (Rom 8.3–4); in Galatians, the son becomes human in order to give believers the spirit (4.4–6) by which they satisfy the demands of the law (5.16; 6.2) and thus 'live to God' (2.19). These texts suggest that the incarnation is a loving act which also enables believers to reciprocate that act. That being the case, it might not be entirely accurate to say that, in loving another, one is concerned *only* with the other and not the self.

There is a key exception to this trend which is worth noting. Troels Engberg-Pedersen's *Paul and the Stoics* helpfully situates Paul's pro-social ethics within the context of and in dialogue with stoicism.[33] He constructs a model for understanding how Paul and the stoics may think about how humans may be transformed into ideal ethical agents. According to this model, the 'I-stage' is the person prior to encountering God's action in Jesus (for Paul) or reason (for the Stoics). After this encounter, however, one moves to the 'S-stage'. He explains:

> At the I-stage the individual person (i) perceives him- or herself as an embodied individual, the one who may say

[31] Santurri, 'Agape as Self-Sacrifice', 175.
[32] Santurri, 'Agape as Self-Sacrifice', 178.
[33] Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

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> 'I' of him- or herself, and (ii) is merely concerned about fulfilling the desires of that individual. Then a shift may occur, which leads the person to the S-stage. Here the individual person (i) still perceives him- or herself as an embodied individual, but now also as one of the others so that the person may now include him- or herself in a social 'We'. Correspondingly, (ii) the person will now be concerned about fulfilling the desires of that 'We'.[34]

Engberg-Pedersen's model is helpful, particularly because it holds out the possibility that a person can orientate their actions to the benefit of a *group*. In this respect, the model offers a way to rise above the all-to-common reductionism whereby all actions are analysed on a fixed continuum between self-interest and other-regard. This is a key insight that I will draw upon throughout this book. At the same time, this important insight is partially undermined by his appeal to 'altruism':

> It builds the basic distinction between inside and outside on the contrast between egoism and altruism, between a form of valuation which is based on and constantly refers back to the desires of the individual him- or herself and only gives secondary thought to those of others – and another form which sees the individual him- or herself as no more than one among the others and for that reason gives primary thought to the desires of all those involved.[35]

'Altruism' refers to beneficial actions whose motivations entirely exclude any view to self-benefit. That being the case, these two quotes from Engberg-Pedersen present a bit of a tension: if Engberg-Pedersen is correct to assert that in what he calls the 'S-stage', 'the person will now be concerned about fulfilling the desires of that "We"', then this *deconstructs* 'the contrast between egoism and altruism' and requires entirely different concepts entirely to analyse correctly. That is, if Paul were concerned with cultivating 'altruism' among his readers, then it cannot be said that believers' behaviour is orientated towards a 'We', since such a 'We' would *include* the benefit of the self and therefore *not* be altruistic. Engberg-Pedersen therefore only somewhat falls into the unhelpful binary

[34] Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 34.
[35] Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 37–38.

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between self-love and other-regard, but he also provides us with some key resources to think outside of this simple binary.

The studies discussed here that insist that Paul encourages the rejection of all forms of self-love and self-interest call for a reading of love in Paul which pays closer attention to the complex relationship between the self and other in his letters. The default position of many, it seems, is that love is defined as the sacrifice of the self or the rejection of self-interest. This book questions this paradigm. For Paul, do loving actions require the absolute exclusion of any and all self-interest or self-love? Does love require the 'sacrifice' or 'renunciation' of the self? And if so, in what sense? Does love have any kind of *telos* that includes self-benefit? To put it more precisely: What kinds of actions (of both the messiah and believers) are characterised as *prosocial*, and how do these prosocial actions intersect with the relationship between self and other in Paul?

Methodology

To approach these questions, I will use Galatians as a test case. For a number of reasons Galatians is particularly suitable for looking at these questions about love and the self. Paul characterises the messiah as the one who 'loved me and gave himself for me' (2.20), a phrase that is taken as a classic proof text used by scholars for defining love as self-sacrifice. He explains what this 'love' consists of by outlining in further detail Jesus' prosocial action towards believers (3.13–14; 4.4–6); Paul also correlates the love of the messiah and the action of believers (4.6, 19; 6.2), describes what prosocial behaviour looks like for them (4.12–6.6), and invokes the command to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (5.14). The references to the self and the correlation between the messiah's love and believers' love make Paul's letter to the Galatians a fertile site for considering the content of loving behaviour and its relationship to the self.

To treat love as an object of study requires defining this term in such a way that delimits the scope of this investigation. But before offering my own, I should point out two mistakes that characterise studies of love in Paul and the New Testament more broadly. First, many have argued and continue to argue that Paul deviated from the standard language patterns of his day by using the words ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν. Sometimes this stark deviation is attributed to the Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible, which utilise this same

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vocabulary. Second, and relatedly, some have contended and continue to contend that ἀγαπ-words came to have a technical meaning in Pauline theology that referred to a distinctive and new 'idea' of love that contrasted with other Greco-Roman ideas. These two points often appear in tandem in the literature. So Spicq claimed that early Christianity 'attached itself to a very specific idea of love' and that 'if it deliberately chose the term ἀγάπη (agape), it is because it considered it the most suitable term to express an authentically divine love'.[36] Norman Snaith asserted the Septuagint 'invented' the word ἀγάπη to represent the unique idea of love contained in the Hebrew Bible, and that the use of ἀγάπη in the New Testament therefore shows that its authors were referring to a special kind of love.[37] William Barclay asked 'why Christian language abandoned the other Greek words for love [φιλεῖν, στέργειν, ἐρᾶν] and concentrated on these [ἀγάπη/ἀγαπᾶν]' and answered that 'the great reason why Christian thought fastened on *agapē* is that *agapē* demands the exercise of the whole man'.[38] Such fantastical claims continue to appear today. After noting the Septuagint's preference for ἀγαπ-words, Patrick Mitchel recently writes:

> This brings us back to why *agapē* became Paul's (and the other NT authors') default word for love. While it cannot be proven, and therefore caution is required, it may be that Paul's reconfigured understanding of love led to the use of an effectively new term with which he was familiar from the LXX – *agapē*. In this account, perhaps Paul and [the] first Christians deliberately chose a new noun, obviously associated with *agapaō* but relatively free to be filled with specific meaning: a love seen in elective love of God for Jews and Gentiles, particularly in the death of Jesus; in believers'

[36] Ceslaus Spicq, *Agapè: Prolégomènes à une étude de théologie néo-testamentaire*, Studia Hellenistica 10 (Leuven: E. Nauwelaerts, 1955), 2: 'la religion nouvelle s'est attachée à une notion très déterminée de l'amour … [S]i elle a choisi délibérément le terme d'ἀγάπη, c'est qu'elle le considérait comme le plus propre à exprimer un amour authentiquement divin' (cf. *Agapè*, 32).

[37] Norman Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Epworth, 1944), 173. For a more nuanced account of the LXX's use of ἀγάπη, see Oda Wischmeyer, 'Vorkommen und Bedeutung von Agape in der außerchristlichen Antike', *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 69 (1978): 212–38.

[38] W. Barclay, *New Testament Words* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 20.

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> response of love to God's prior love; and in communities called to love one another as they had been loved by God.[39]

These arguments make two key mistakes. First, they tend to suppose that ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν have a technical theological meaning in the Septuagint or the New Testament and refer to a special, ideal kind of love.[40] But a few examples can easily undermine this: Luke's Jesus critiques the Pharisees for loving (ἀγαπᾶν) their special seats of honour (Luke 11.43) and speaks of those who love (ἀγαπᾶν) discriminately (6.32); loving (ἀγαπᾶν) can be the reason for not believing in Jesus (John 3.19); in 2 Samuel, ἀγάπη is even said to be the impetus for Amnon raping Tamar (2 Sam 13.1, 4, 14–15 LXX).[41] This last example quite easily demonstrates that ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν did not refer to any uniquely ideal kind of love.

Second, and perhaps more crucially, they claim that the use of ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν reflects an aberration from standard Greek. But it just is not the case that by using ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν the Septuagint or the New Testament authors deviated from the normal ways of speaking about love in their time. It is a pervasive trope to claim that ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν were rare words in the first century. But it is false. In fact, it was demonstrated to be false in Robert Joly's short but dense study in 1968.[42] Joly set out to evaluate the thesis that ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν were not used by non-Christian authors around the turn of the era, and he concluded that a linguistic shift towards ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν *was already happening in the first century*. It is hard to

[39] Patrick Mitchel, 'Love', in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Scot McKnight, Lynn H. Cohick, and Nijay K. Gupta (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2023), 663–70, at 664. This is not just a theory that cannot be proven. It is straightforwardly incorrect. If Paul is 'familiar' with ἀγαπ-words from the Septuagint (which he surely was), then there is no sense in which this is 'an effectively new term' that was 'relatively free to be filled with specific meaning'.

[40] In addition to the aforementioned claims, this move is made by Spicq as well; see e.g. Ceslaus Spicq, 'L'ἀγάπη de I Cor., XIII: un exemple de contribution de la semantique a l'exégèse neo-testamentaire', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 31 (1955): 357–70, esp. 357.

[41] For further studies arguing against the notion that ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν have a technical theological sense, see James Barr, 'Words for Love in Biblical Greek', in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, ed. Lincoln D. Hurst and N.T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 3–18 and S.P. Swinn, 'Ἀγαπᾶν in the Septuagint', in *Melbourne Symposium on Septuagint Lexicography*, ed. T. Muraoka, SBLSCS 28 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), 49–81.

[42] Robert Joly, *Le vocabulaire chrétien de l'amour est-il original? Φιλεῖν et Ἀγαπᾶν dans le grec antique* (Brussels: Presses Universitaires de Bruxelles, 1968).

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overstate this point, since this continues to go ignored by many today. As Joly argues, the impression that the New Testament vocabulary for love differs from other Greek writings is based on invalid comparisons between the New Testament and much older authors like Plato, whose Greek cannot be taken representative of the dialect of Greek speakers and Greek writers in the first century. Investigating material closer to the time of the New Testament shows that ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν were becoming more popular amongst Greek speakers and had begun to replace words like φιλεῖν in the first century. As he puts it, 'What has been understood as a cause was, in fact, only a consequence: the Christian vocabulary [for love] . . . is what it is because the pagan vocabulary was already such beforehand'.[43] Thus, to offer a more accurate answer to William Barclay's question: Why did the authors of the New Testament abandon other Greek words for love? Because the authors of the New Testament wrote in standard first-century Greek. In this respect, Paul's use of ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν is entirely expected and therefore wholly unremarkable; there is nothing distinctive about Paul's use of ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν, and in themselves these words tell us little about his theology.

Interpreting Paul's depiction of Jesus' love and his love ethic necessitates a method that does not myopically focus on lexemes. In other words, this book is not a word study, and does not seek to provide a monothetic definition of the words ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν. My method here will be to investigate Paul's notion of love by looking at what kinds of concrete *behaviours* are depicted as loving. Thus, while I will certainly not ignore instances of ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶν in Paul, I will use the word 'love' to refer to anything that falls within the purview of what social psychologists call 'prosocial behaviour', which includes any interpersonal action 'defined by society as behavior generally beneficial to other people and to the ongoing political system', such as helping, cooperation, financial support, emotional care, conflict reduction, and other positive actions towards others.[44] At least for my purposes, I will be looking not at what 'society' defines as beneficial but what particular authors

[43] Joly, *Le Vocabulaire chrétien*, 48: 'Ce qu'on a pris pour une cause n'était en réalité qu'une conséquence: le vocabulaire chrétien . . . est tel parce que tel était déjà auparavant le vocabulaire païen'; cf. C.C. Tarelli, 'ΑΓΑΠΗ', *Journal of Theological Studies* 1 (1950): 64–67.

[44] Jane Allyn Piliavin et al., *Emergency Intervention* (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 4.

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(especially Paul) portray as such. The emic nature of this definition is important, as it intends to encompass not what readers but what an *author* considers to be beneficial. It is moreover crucial to note that this definition excludes the question of motivation and thus does not presuppose that prosocial behaviour is equivalent to 'altruism', a term which specifically indicates that the intention of an action excludes self-interest.[45] As will become clear in the ensuing chapters, utilising the concept of 'altruism' to describe Pauline ethics is especially misleading and wrongheaded.

The material from Galatians will not be treated in isolation but will be contextualised in two ways. First, before looking at Galatians, I will investigate at how some Greek and Roman philosophers thought about the relationship between self-interest and prosocial action. The material in this corpus will sensitise us to reading Paul's letters outside the dichotomy between self-interest and other-regard. Looking at these Greco-Roman texts will provide us with different categories and concepts to work with when interpreting Galatians. Second, throughout my treatment of Galatians, I will discuss elements of other Pauline letters in order to establish corroborating evidence for my reading of Galatians, to deal with potential objections, or to explore how Galatians might inform our understanding of his other letters. In moving across various letters, I do not assume that the theological content of each of Paul's letters must conceptually cohere with each other.[46] However, I venture into other letters in instances where they are illuminating for Galatians or where Galatians is helpful for understanding Pauline theology more broadly.

The Proposals in This Study

Stated succinctly, my thesis is that loving behaviour for Paul (1) is based on and oriented towards sharing the self with others, and (2)

[45] J.A. Dovidio et al. define altruism as 'a helpful act that is carried out in the absence of obvious and tangible rewards for the helper' (John Dovidio et al., *The Social Psychology of Prosocial Behavior* (London: Psychology Press, 2012), 26); they distinguish this from the more generic category of prosocial behaviour (Dovidio et al., *Social Psychology*, 24–27).

[46] I do not necessarily presume that the differences between Paul's letters are merely formal – i.e. that across his letters the concepts cohere but are only expressed differently depending on the circumstance; my position therefore contrasts with J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 13–19.

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this requires the sacrifice of the *competitive* self in order to support a non-competitive, mutually beneficial relationship with others. This is not meant to encompass an exhaustive account of prosocial and loving behaviour in Paul, but I will simply argue that these two points are key aspects of what Paul articulates as loving and prosocial behaviour. By the 'competitive self', I mean attitudes or behaviours that bring the self to benefit at the expense of the benefit of others. The Pauline alternative to competitive attitudes and behaviours is not, as others have argued, the denial of any and all self-interest or some kind of 'altruism', but rather the desire to exist *with* the other in such a way that the self and other both benefit by their participation in shared selfhood. In this sense, love requires 'sacrificing' not the entirety of the self but one possible way of actualising the self; at the same time, love, for Paul, can and does have a *telos*: to unite the self and other in an irreducibly mutually beneficial relationship of shared selves.

The content of the primary chapters of this book are as follows: Chapter 2 discusses four ancient ethicists and argues that, in the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition, ideal moral acts were oriented towards creating and reinforcing relationships which cannot be interpreted in terms of isolated interests (whether self or other). The goal of prosocial behaviour was to establish and to contribute to a relationship in which all benefit, and this kind of relationship was considered to be an end in itself. I then look at a few aspects of Paul's letters that raise the possibility that he does, in fact, stand in agreement with these Greco-Roman philosophers. Lastly, I argue that the tendency to interpret Paul according to the antithesis between self-interest and other-regard is a result of certain developments in modern ethics that constructed 'altruism' as a moral ideal. Given that Paul exhibits more continuity with the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition than with modern ethics, this chapter functions as a way of calling for a reading of Paul's ethics outside of the antithesis between self-interest and other-regard.

Chapters 3–5 turn to reading Galatians. Chapter 3 focuses on the language of self-giving in Galatians 1.4 and 2.20. This short phrase is given such a detailed treatment for two reasons: first, the phrase 'gave himself' is explicitly correlated with the love of the son of God in Galatians 2.20 (the only text in Galatians which says that Jesus 'loved'); second, this phrase has been used as a proof text for defining love only in terms of self-sacrifice, selflessness, or other forms of self-subtraction language. My proposal in that chapter

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challenges this common assumption and argues that, if we interpret this language as including a reference to self-*gifting*, then it radically alters our understanding of what this text means: the phrase 'gave himself', I will argue, signals not that Jesus gives himself *away* in death, but that through his death he gives himself *into* relationship.

Chapter 4 investigates the details of the messiah's self-gift by looking at the material in Galatians that specifically describes his action and its effects on humans. In Galatians 3.10–14 and 4.1–7, the messiah positively takes up the condition of humans (particularly Jewish humans) by sharing in their corporeality and experience. If we can understand the various descriptions of Jesus' prosocial activity through the category of *incarnation*, we can interpret his loving action not in terms of self-subtraction but in terms of self-transformation, as an act of positive solidarity with others. Furthermore, by sharing in the condition of humans, Jesus gives to these believers all that belongs to him, including his spirit, which enables them to reciprocate this act and to enter into a mutual fellowship with God as an end in itself.

Chapter 5 investigates whether and how this way of reading Paul's depiction of the messiah's loving action informs his moral injunctions and descriptions of moral behaviour. By understanding loving behaviour as patterned after the messiah's participatory action, we can reinterpret how Paul's injunctions correspond to Jesus' love. More specifically, we can see that Paul encourages believers to share positively in the experiences of others and to share what they have with others, in the same way that the messiah shared with believers all that belongs to him and shared in the condition of others. Read this way, we will be able to see more clearly that Paul does not contrast self-interest with other-regard in an absolute sense but rather contrasts the self that stands in competition with others and the self that stands in solidarity with others.

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