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Chapter One:

Background to the Study and Theoretical Framework

1.1 Background to the Study

Sacred books can be used in Christian-Muslim relations to highlight commonalities between the two religious traditions, as happens in the interfaith initiative entitled *A Common Word between We and You* (ACW). This initiative has been signed by leading Islamic figures, including the grand muftis of a number of Muslim countries (Egypt, Syria, Jordan and others), as an ‘Open Letter’ to the leaders of Christian denominations.¹ The title of this document is inspired by, and offers a literal translation of, a verse from the *Qurʾān* (Q. 3:64) which uses the phrase ‘the People of the Book’ as a shared designation between Christians and Muslims. The sacred ‘Books’ of both Christianity and Islam are cited in order to emphasize certain affinities between the two traditions, such as the love of God (Q. 6:162-164; 3:31; Mk 12:32-33; Mt. 22:34-40) and the love of neighbours (Q. 2:177; Mk 12:31; Mt. 22:38-40).

In her evaluation of the use of the Christian scriptures in *A Common Word*, Clare Amos rightly notes that the document refers positively to the Bible in its canonical form, which appreciates the Christian view about their own Scripture.² On the other hand, Amos also notes that the use of Scripture in *A Common Word* to establish shared concepts such as loving God and neighbours does not fully do justice to these concepts as attested in Jesus’ teaching in the gospel accounts, for it only quotes Mark (12:28-34) and Matthew (22:34-40) and neglects the references to the notion of love in the Gospels of Luke and John.³ According to Amos, the Fourth Gospel in particular is of special significance for the Christian notion of love, certainly insofar as there are 39 Johannine

¹ ‘The ACW Letter,’ *A Common Word Between Us and You*, 2007, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.acommonword.com/the-acw-document/>.

² Clare Amos, ‘The Use of Christian Scripture in *A Common Word*,’ in *The Future of Interfaith Dialogue: Muslim-Christian Encounters through A Common Word*, eds. Yazid Said and Lejla Demiri (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 204-16, here 206-7.

³ Amos, ‘The Use of Christian Scripture in *A Common Word*,’ 206.

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references to 'love' in comparison with 36 Synoptic references altogether.⁴ In the same vein, Vebjørn L. Horsfjord draws attention to John's reference to God's gift of 'the Son' as a sign of his love for humankind (3:16).⁵ Both Amos and Horsfjord stress that these scriptural passages, which are absent from *A Common Word*, may have been deliberately avoided by the signatories because their christological implications could undermine the aim of the *ACW*, that is, to identify commonalities between Muslims and Christians.⁶

In addition to these texts that promote the notion of love in the Christian Bible, there is another set of texts that could relativize the notion of love which are also absent from *The Common Word*. For example, Jesus asks children to love him more than their parents (Mt. 10:37), while in the Lukan version they are asked to hate their parents for the sake of following Jesus (14:26). These passages, moreover, have counterparts in the *Qur'ān*, where children are called upon to love God and the Prophet of Islam more than they love parents and all other kins (Q. 8:24; 58:22). These texts could have been also absent from *The Common Word*, probably for their potential ramifications on the interfaith discourse about commonalities.

Such 'hard sayings' are also virtually absent from the wider practice of Christian-Muslim dialogue. In her study, *Muslims, Christians, and the Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue*, Jane Smith notes that many participants in Christian-Muslim dialogue in the US tend to focus on commonalities such as shared values, while controversial themes and texts relating to questions of morality are often deliberately

⁴ Amos, 'The Use of Christian Scripture in *A Common Word*,' 210.

⁵ Vebjørn L. Horsfjord, *Common Words in Muslim-Christian Dialogue: A Study of Texts from the Common Word Dialogue Process* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 34.

⁶ Amos, 'The Use of Christian Scripture in *A Common Word*,' 211; Horsfjord, *Common Words in Muslim-Christian Dialogue*, 34.

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avoided.⁷ A similar remark is marked by Martin Accad regarding the practice of Christian-Muslim dialogue in the Middle East.⁸

Such quests for commonalities are also mirrored in academic research. Sebastian Günther notes, for example, that the Decalogue is shared by both Islam and Christianity.⁹ In his discussion of the Fifth Commandment, 'Honour your father and your mother' (Exod. 20:12), Günther refers to the occurrence of this commandment in both the *Qurʾān* (Q. 17:23) and the New Testament (Mk 10:19; Mt. 19:17-19), but he makes no reference to Luke's so-called 'hate commandment' nor to the relativization of filial piety as recorded in the *Qurʾān*.¹⁰

The absence of such 'hard sayings' from interreligious dialogue as well as some academic research does not mean that they have not had any effect on Christian-Muslim relations. Indeed, these 'hard sayings' feature in moral critiques of the sacred books and in polemical discourses in the public sphere against the Scripture of 'others'. Oddbjørn Leirvik notes that different critiques have been directed at the sacred books themselves, such as in Immanuel Kant's critique of the story of Abraham's attempt to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22), which is also recorded in the *Qurʾān* (Q. 37:102-113).¹¹ Another kind of critique regarding the moral message and function of sacred books is directed towards the interpretative communities that cite these books but whose activities are regarded as 'misuses' of the sacred books. This applies to the work of Khaled Abū El-Faḍl, who criticises as misinterpretations of the *Qurʾān* (8:24; 58:22)

⁷ Jane I. Smith, *Muslims, Christians, and the Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 67-68.

⁸ Martin Accad, *Sacred Misinterpretation: Reaching Across the Christian-Muslim Divide* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2019), 98.

⁹ Sebastian Günther, 'O People of the Scripture! Come to a Word Common to You and Us (Q. 3:64): The Ten Commandments and the Qur'an', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2007):28-58, <https://www.eupublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/jqs.2007.9.1.28>.

¹⁰ Günther, 'O People of the Scripture! Come to a Word Common to You and Us,' 28-32.

¹¹ Oddbjørn Leirvik, 'Interreligious Hermeneutics and the Ethical Critique of the Scriptures,' in *Interreligious Hermeneutics in Pluralistic Europe*, eds. David Cheetham, Ulrich Winkler, Oddbjørn Leirvik, and Judith Gruber (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 333-352, here 340.

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those radical discourses within the Islamic tradition that promote authoritarian structures, gender inequality, and the intolerance of other faiths.¹²

John Chesworth rightly notes that such critiques of the moral messages contained in sacred books are used, in the public sphere, by polemicists from each tradition to serve their own agenda.¹³ In Egypt, for example, there have been polemical attacks against the *Qurʾān* and the Bible by Father Zakaria Botros and Abū Islām, respectively. One such example of Botros' polemical stance is his treatise *The Two Faces of Islam*, in which he claims that the *Qurʾān* contains internal contradictions: it calls for peace and love, on the one hand (Q. 2:256; 10:73), but, on the other, also calls for violence (Q. 2:191).¹⁴ Quoting Pakistani and Sudanese writers (Abū Al-Aʿlā Al-Mawdūdī and Al-Turābī, respectively), Botros generalizes that the notion of peace in the *Qurʾān* is stressed by Muslim interpretative communities when they do not themselves have the power to exert violence. Otherwise, Botros, claims, Muslims would justify their violence by quoting the *Qurʾān*.¹⁵ In response to Botros, Abū Islam has published an edition of the Christian Bible that includes an introduction in which he claims that the biblical text contains internal contradictions, including a tension between love and hate commandments (cf. Mt. 5:43-48; 10:34).¹⁶ Abū Islam also claims that the Christian Church always prefers to use the scriptural commandments about hatred in its rivalry with Muslims.

Therefore, while the 'hard sayings' noted above are more or less avoided when it comes to interfaith initiatives and interreligious dialogue, in other forms of Christian-Muslim interaction these sayings become the centre point of moral critiques of the

¹² Leirvik, 'Interreligious Hermeneutics and the Ethical Critique of the Scriptures,' 344; Khaled Abu Al-Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women* (Oxford: One world Publications, 2001); *The Place of Tolerance in Islam* (Boston: Beacon Press 2002).

¹³ John Chesworth, 'Polemical Revival: Attacking the Other's Texts,' in *Interreligious Hermeneutics in Pluralistic Europe*, eds. David Cheetham, Ulrich Winkler, Oddbjørn Leirvik, and Judith Gruber (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 355-77.

¹⁴ Zakaria Botros, 'The Two Faces of Islam: Hidden and Manifest,' 3-4, accessed January 20, 2023, <https://www.fatherzakaria.net/books/islam/pdf/01.zip>.

¹⁵ Botros, 'The Two Faces of Islam,' 9.

¹⁶ *Al-Kitāb Al-Muqaddas [The Holy Bible]* (Cairo: Dār Al-Tanwīr Al-Islāmī, 2010); Aḥmad Abū Islām, 'Zakariyyah Botros Ziko Huwa man Ḥaffazani [Zakaria Botros is the Reason of my Actions],' YouTube, March 19, 2013, accessed January 19, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgza6Hs_ExY.

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sacred books themselves or of their interpretative communities. This is also echoed in the practice of polemicists who bring such critiques (either of the text itself or of the interpretative communities) directly into the public sphere.

Scholars in each tradition have their own exegetical approaches to the tension between scriptural passages that promote and those that relativize ethical concepts or teaching, and this is undertaken from the perspective of both the ‘horizon of the text’ and the ‘horizon of interpreters’. In philosophical hermeneutics, the horizon of the text refers to the meaning of the text in its original setting, whereas the horizon of interpreters refers to the interpretation or reception of the text in later contexts.¹⁷ One prominent example of the application of both horizons is the Ulrich Luz’s commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. This is a NT text that contains ‘hard sayings’, such as Jesus’ statement that he has come with the sword and that his mission is to position children against their parents (Mt. 10:34-35). In his commentary on these verses, Luz concludes that the original meaning of this text does not necessarily convey hostility; rather, they serve as a counter-response to the persecution faced by the emerging Christian community, both within a first-century social context and in relation to the biological families of community members.¹⁸ Luz also remarks that later Christian interpretations of these verses also do not exhibit or promote hostility; rather, some communities regard the radical sayings as referring to the spiritual battles caused by the new faith.¹⁹

Luz’s commentary does not offer a comparative analysis of the Christian Bible and the *Qurʾān*, but rather focuses on offering an exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew. However, in agreement with Matthew Black, Luz argues that Jesus’ teaching about the sword and about setting children against their parents (Mt. 10:34-35) could be interpreted as possessing hostile connotations that are more appropriately associated

¹⁷ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Eric Donald Hirsch, ‘Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted,’ *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984): 202–25.

¹⁸ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 111.

¹⁹ Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 109–110.

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with the *Qurʾān* than the canonical Gospels.²⁰ This observation serves as an example of what Hugh Goddard calls ‘the double standard’ approach towards the tradition of ‘the other’,²¹ that is, when someone addresses each tradition with the aid of different criteria.²² If one were to apply Luz’s exegetical approach (regarding the horizon of the text and the horizon of interpreters) to the *Qurʾān*, it would result in a conclusion that could be similar to his interpretation of Matthew. **From the perspective of the world within the text**, Muhammad Draz notes that tension within the *Qurʾān* between its statements about peace and love can be understood as a response to persecution against the **first** Muslim community.²³ Draz also refers to later interpretations of the term *jihād* in the *Qurʾān* to mean ‘to exert efforts’ rather than, as widely and popularly understood, to launch a war.²⁴ **So, both Luz and Draz have similar approaches to address such textual tensions in their relevant Scriptures, through relating such hard sayings to the original context of the Scripture and by stressing that later interpretative communities are not necessarily enforcing what could be seen as a negative meaning of these texts. However, this approach may not be applied by the same exegete to the Scripture of ‘the others’.**

1.2 Finding Solutions to the Problems Addressed by this Study

In light of the above discussion, the problem that this study seeks to address is twofold: first, there is a lack of effective interfaith dialogue regarding the textual tensions within ethical material as recorded in the sacred books of Islam and Christianity; secondly, there is a lack of comparative exegesis that applies the same criteria (of interpreting the horizon of the text and of its reception) when seeking to address examples of textual tension within each respective tradition.

²⁰ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 109; Matthew Black, ‘Uncomfortable Words: III. The Violent Word,’ *The Expository Times* 81 (1970): 115-118, here 115, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001452467008100405>.

²¹ Hugh Goddard, *Christians and Muslims: From Double Standards to Mutual Understanding* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 2.

²² Goddard, *Christians and Muslims*, 2-3.

²³ Mohammed A. Draz, *MadKhal ila Al-Qurʾān*, trans. Muhammad Ali (Kuwait: Dār Al-Qalam, 1984), 52-57.

²⁴ Draz, *MadKhal ila Al-Qurʾān*, 60-62

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The first aspect (the lack of effective dialogue) may result from a number of two factors. In addition to their tendency to avoid discussing the 'hard' notions in each tradition that are highlighted above, the praxis of interfaith dialogue can make occasional references to, or include citations from, passages drawn from the sacred texts of Islam and Christianity, they are not, largely speaking, the main focus of dialogue itself.²⁵

One particular practice of inter-religious dialogue that has the potential to solve, at least in part, the strategy of avoiding the kind of dialogue that brings scriptural tensions explicitly to the 'interfaith table' is Scriptural Reasoning (SR) for the following reasons in terms of its focus on the Scriptures, the potential backgrounds of its participants and the structure of its practice.

Firstly, unlike the other forms of interreligious dialogue, SR is a text-based form of interreligious dialogue that involves the 'study and discussion of Tanakh, Bible and *Qurʾān* together, usually by Jews, Christians and Muslims', and which enables interpreters from different religious communities to read texts together and to do so inter-religiously.²⁶ The practice of Scriptural Reasoning is flexible, in that it can be restricted to the Scriptures of two Abrahamic traditions, such as Islam and Judaism,²⁷ or it can include other religious traditions, such as Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism.²⁸ Because of SR's focus on texts and that it can be restricted to two

²⁵ See especially Marianne Moyaert, 'Scriptural Reasoning as Inter-Religious Dialogue,' in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 64-86, here 64. The same conclusion is drawn by Paul Weller, who has reviewed a number of contemporary Christian-Muslim interfaith initiatives and dialogue practices, most of which are not textually based. See Paul Weller, 'Christian-Muslim and Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Initiatives, Movements and Organisations,' in *Routledge Handbook on Christian-Muslim Relations*, ed. David Thomas (London: Routledge, 2018), 423-33.

²⁶ David F. Ford, 'Scriptural Reasoning: Its Anglican Origins, its Development, Practice and Significance,' *Journal of Anglican Studies* 11, no. 2 (2013): 147-65, here 147, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740355313000132>; Peter Ochs, *Religion without Violence: The Practice and Philosophy of Scriptural Reasoning* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2019), 1; Nicholas Adams, 'Scriptural Reasoning and Interfaith Hermeneutics,' in *Interreligious Hermeneutics in Pluralistic Europe*, eds. David Cheetham, Ulrich Winkler, Oddbjørn Leirvik, and Judith Gruber (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 59-78, here 72.

²⁷ See, for example, Susanne van Esdonk and Gerard Wiegers, 'Scriptural Reasoning Among Jews and Muslims in London: Dynamics of an Inter-Religious Practice,' *Entangled Religions* 8 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.13154/er.8.2019.8342>.

²⁸ Li Huawei, Miikka Ruokanen and David Ford, 'Scriptural Reasoning as a Method of Interreligious Dialogue in China,' *International Review of Mission* (2019): 415-29. See also Steven Kepnes, 'A Handbook for Scriptural Reasoning,' *Modern Theology* 22, no. 3 (2006): 367-383, here 378, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0025.2006.00323.x>.

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traditions, SR then could be used as a potential platform for discussing the sacred books of Islam and Christianity.

Furthermore, participants in SR, especially when it is undertaken in the academic context of universities, are potentially trained to explore both the horizon of the text and the horizon of the interpreters given their academic backgrounds, as noted by Peter Ochs and Marianne Moyaert, which can include, but is not limited to, biblical ethics, moral theology, Islamic studies and Islamic ethics.²⁹ Biblical ethics, which represents a subdiscipline of biblical studies, uses historical and literary approaches to examine the ethical motifs found in the writings of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.³⁰ Thus, the *main* subject matter of New Testament ethics is ‘the question of how life was lived in the earliest Christian communities: what were the foundations, the support for, and the criteria and principles for this way of acting and living’.³¹ Accordingly, SR participants who are trained in biblical ethics will be able to explore the meanings of the discussed texts from the perspective of the world within the text.³²

On the other hand, SR participants who are trained in moral theology or Christian ethics would be able to comment on the meaning of the discussed texts from the perspective of the world in front of the text as moral theology ‘is commonly defined as that part of theology which studies the guidelines a person must follow to attain his or her final goal in the light of Christian faith and of reason’.³³ The Bible is a significant source for moral theology, and greater use of it in the Catholic Church has been encouraged particularly following the call, during Vatican II, that Christian ethics has

²⁹ Ochs, *Religion without Violence*, 5; Moyaert, ‘Scriptural Reasoning as Inter-Religious Dialogue,’ 64.

³⁰ Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 1-2; Daniel J. Harrington and James F. Keenan, *Jesus and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology* (Lanham, Maryland: Sheed & Ward, 2002), 17-18.

³¹ Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 1988), 1.

³² The *main* focus of biblical ethics is the interpretation of a biblical text from the perspective of the text’s horizon, as applies, for example, to Wolfgang Schrage’s *The Ethics of the New Testament* and Jack T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 2012).

³³ Karl-Heinz Peschke, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in Light of Vatican II. General Moral Theology* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 1:3.

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to be ‘thoroughly nourished’ by the Scripture.³⁴ Thus, in response to Vatican II, Bretzke reviews two stages of methodological reflection on the use of the Bible in moral theology and calls for a third stage of ‘concrete application to [the] particularities of Christian ethics’.³⁵ Similar attention to the use of the Bible in evangelical moral theology can be found in David Clyde Jones’ *Biblical Christian Ethics*³⁶, and, for Orthodox moral theology, in Vigen Guroian’s essay, ‘Bible and Ethics: An Ecclesial and Liturgical Interpretation’.³⁷ This increasing interest in the use of the Scripture in moral theology among all these Christian denominations could have an impact on the SR participants who are trained in moral theology, in either of these denominations, to draw reflections on the meaning of the scriptural texts from the perspective of the world of the text.

Likewise, SR participants who are trained in Islamic studies and Islamic ethics could be able to address the original meaning of the Islamic texts from the world within and in front of the text given that the discipline of Islamic studies provides similar approaches to biblical ethics and moral theology with regard to the interpretation of the ethical message(s) of the Islamic scriptures. For example, Toshihiko Izutsu uses a literary approach to analyse the ethical meaning of the *Qurʾān* in its original setting, particularly in comparison with the ethics of early Arabs.³⁸ Also, Muslim ethicists use the Islamic scriptures to set the guidelines for a Muslim’s proper conduct of positive

³⁴ Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans: 2007), 8. Cf. Pope Paul VI, ‘Decree on Priestly Training, Optatum Totius,’ Vatican.va, October 28, 1965, accessed March 20, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatum-totius_en.html; Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Document of Vatican II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 452.

³⁵ Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 8; James T. Bretzke, ‘Scripture: The “Soul” of Moral Theology?: The Second Stage,’ *Irish Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (1994): 259-271, here 270, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002114009406000402>.

³⁶ C. Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 12.

³⁷ Vigen Guroian, ‘Bible and Ethics: An Ecclesial and Liturgical Interpretation,’ *Journal of Religious Ethics* 18, no. 1 (1990): 129-157, here 146-49.

³⁸ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾan* (Montreal: McGill Queen’s University Press, 2012).

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action and virtue,³⁹ as in the case of the writings of Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyyah.⁴⁰

It is not only the potential varied backgrounds of SR practitioners that sets the probability for them to discuss the texts of the sacred books from the perspective of both the world within and in front of the text. Further, the structure of SR practice paves the way for such an opportunity as Peter Ochs and David Ford stress that the best SR practice is when both the original meaning of the text, which they call the ‘plain sense’, and later interpretations are both discussed together. David Ford applies this principle as a maxim for SR: ‘Seek first the plain sense of scripture in all its literal and metaphorical richness and also be alert for other senses. Let us read for plain sense, open to other senses’.⁴¹ Ochs states that such an approach to discussing both the plain sense of the text and its later interpretations provides rich discussions that enable SR participants ‘to move comfortably back and forth between academic and scripturally based ways of reading and reasoning’.⁴²

One further advantage of the practice of SR regarding the textual tensions in the sacred books is its openness to discuss the hard sayings (which are usually absent in the other forms of interreligious dialogue) as well as the texts that promote ethical concepts in these Scriptures (which are usually absent in the polemical discourses). One example in this regard is the SR sessions that was held at Cambridge in 2009 to discuss family ties in the Bible and the Quran. The participants in this SR sessions, as observed by Mike Higton and Rachel Muers, were discussing the texts that promote

³⁹ For this definition of Islamic ethics, see for example Tarik Ramadan, ‘Islamic Ethics: Sources, Methodology and Application,’ in *Islamic Bioethics: Current Issues and Challenges*, eds. Alireza Bagheri and Khalid Alali (Singapore: World Scientific Europe, 2017), 1-21, here 3.

⁴⁰ Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm Al-Dīn [The Revival of the Religious Sciences]* (Jeddah: Dār Al-Minhāj, 2011); Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *Makārim Al-Akhlāq fī Al-Islām [Virtues in Islam]* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kitāb Al-‘Arabī, 2014). The reception of the Islamic scriptures in such writings has been analysed by Justin Parrott, ‘Al-Ghazali and the Golden Rule: Ethics of Reciprocity in the Works of a Muslim Sage,’ *Journal of Religious & Theological Information* 16, no. 2 (2017): 1-11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10477845.2017.1281067>; see also Sophia Vasalou, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theological Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁴¹ David Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 84.

⁴² Ochs, *Religion without Violence*, 27.

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family relations (such as the Fifth Commandment) that is confirmed by both the New Testament and the Qurʾān, on the one hand, and the texts that could relativize this notion such as Jesus' denial of one of his disciples to bury his father (Lk 9:59-60) and the *Qurʾānic* declaration that the son of Noah was not of his *true* family (Q. 11:146), on the other.⁴³

The aim of discussing these texts in SR sessions, as noted by Moyaert and Adams, is clear: SR is not above consensus and agreement among the participants but to promote and deepen mutual understanding.⁴⁴ Other aims can be sought or fulfilled through the practice of SR, such as building friendship and peace building,⁴⁵ though, as rightly noted by Michael Barnes, all these fruits must first be subject to mutual understanding.⁴⁶

In fact, 'mutual understanding' is one of the buzzwords in the discourse of interfaith dialogue.⁴⁷ In her DPhil thesis, Jennifer Fields reviews many interfaith dialogue initiatives where 'mutual understanding' is stated as the aim of such events, and yet with no clarification offered of what that might signify.⁴⁸ On the other hand, Hugh Goddard's *Christians and Muslims: From Double Standards to Mutual Understanding* is a significant attempt at theorizing 'mutual understanding' within Christian-Muslim relations.⁴⁹ Goddard rightly defines mutual understanding as the opposite to mutual ignorance, which is the outcome of knowing others through stereotypes, non-reliable sources of knowledge, and flawed analogies.⁵⁰ This mutual

⁴³ Mike Higon and Rachel Muers, *The Text in Play*, 136-140.

⁴⁴ Moyaert, 'Scriptural Reasoning as Inter-Religious Dialogue,' 72; Adams, 'Scriptural Reasoning and Interfaith Hermeneutics,' 63.

⁴⁵ Moyaert, 'Scriptural Reasoning as Inter-Religious Dialogue,' 72; Ochs, *Religion without Violence*, 42; Adams, 'Scriptural Reasoning and Interfaith Hermeneutics,' 63.

⁴⁶ Michael Barnes, 'Reading Other Religious Texts Intratextuality, and the Logic of Scripture,' *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 46, no. 3 (2011): 389-410, here 402.

⁴⁷ Jennifer Ruth Fields, 'Questioning the Promotion of Friendship in Interfaith Dialogue: Interfaith Friendship in Light of the Emphasis on Particularity in Scriptural Reasoning' (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2019), 11, 43, <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.51377>.

⁴⁸ Fields, 'Questioning the Promotion of Friendship in Interfaith Dialogue,' 50-52.

⁴⁹ Hugh Goddard, *Christians and Muslims: From Double Standards to Mutual Understanding* (London: Curzon Press, 1995).

⁵⁰ Goddard, *Christians and Muslims: From Double Standards to Mutual Understanding*, 1-2.

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ignorance, Goddard stresses, could be an outcome of the application of a double-standard approach to the two traditions.⁵¹

Despite its potential value for interreligious engagement, particularly with reference to questions about textual tension, the current forms and processes of SR do nevertheless have certain limitations in terms of the lack of a systemized approach which ensures that the same criteria are applied to the two traditions for the sake of promoting mutual understanding. This lack of systematic approach marks the practice of SR at both its preparatory task as well as its actual practice of reasoning.

At the level its preparation, SR offers no defined criteria for selecting passages and themes for discussion, and this process of selection is usually left to the SR organisers, though sometimes with the aid of study packs recommended by the Castle Foundation and Cambridge Interfaith Programme.⁵² Since the establishment of SR, its organisers have regarded and presented the Christian Bible and the *Qurʾān* as parallel scriptures. While this is true in part, it is a practice that neglects the *Ḥadīth*, despite its important role as another part of Islamic scriptures.⁵³ The proposed study packs are therefore devoid of any *ḥadīth* material.⁵⁴ Clare Amos notes that she has been organizing SR sessions for many years and that the authority of *ḥadīth* (and the Talmud) has been raised only accidentally by some participants.⁵⁵ Furthermore, in ‘A Handbook for Scriptural Reasoning’, Kepnes notes that *ḥadīth* can be part of the discussion in some SR sessions, not as a scripture but as an interpretative tradition similar to the writings of the Church Fathers.⁵⁶ One exceptional example is Anne Grung, whose SR sessions about Gender and Justice in Islam and Christianity defines Islamic scripture

⁵¹ Goddard, *Christians and Muslims: From Double Standards to Mutual Understanding*, 2.

⁵² Moyaert, ‘Scriptural Reasoning as Inter-Religious Dialogue,’ 67; Adams, ‘Scriptural Reasoning and Interfaith Hermeneutics,’ 60-62

⁵³ See for example, Aisha Y. Musa, *Hadith as Scripture: Discussions on the Authority of Prophetic Traditions in Islam* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1; Jonathan Brown, ‘Scripture in the Modern Muslim World: the Quran and Hadith,’ in *Islam in the Modern World*, eds. Jeffrey T. Kenney and Ebrahim Moosa (London: Routledge, 2013), 13-34, here 14-15.

⁵⁴ ‘Scriptural Reasoning Text Packs,’ Scriptural Reasoning Rose Castle Foundation, accessed February 20, 2020, <http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/text-packs.html>.

⁵⁵ Amos, ‘The Use of Christian Scripture in *A Common Word*,’ 205.

⁵⁶ Kepnes, ‘A Handbook for Scriptural Reasoning,’ 370.

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from the beginning as including both the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth*, and this as a counterpart to the Christian Bible.⁵⁷

At this level of its actual praxis, SR, as noted above, has the strengths of the potential diverse backgrounds that relate to the interpretation of the relevant texts about the textual tensions in the two traditions from the perspectives of both the world within and in front of the text. However, SR lacks an unifying approach to ensure that the same criteria are applied to interpreting the textual tension in the two traditions from the perspective of the world within and in front of the text.

Solutions to such challenge may come to light through a comparative study of ‘sacred books’, through another form or expression of ‘academic dialogue’,⁵⁸ that is not only undertaken in a university context but draws on interpretative skills and the approaches developed within that context. Of particular significance **to preparation task of SR** is the hermeneutics of comparison as formulated with reference to ancient texts. As far as this comparative task is concerned, John Barclay and Benjamin White - following the lead of Jonathan Z. Smith - rightly state that a comparativist has to take *hermeneutical* decisions that comprise of five steps (or challenges) of comparison: 1) choosing what to compare; 2) selecting items for the purpose of comparison; 3) categorizing the items that are being compared; 4) determining the purpose of the task of comparison; 5) and measuring the degrees of similarity and/or difference between the compared items.⁵⁹ Comparativists of ancient texts, as rightly noted by Smith, have been shown to be efficient in developing methods for the four steps in the task of comparison (that is, other than identifying the purpose of comparison). However, they

⁵⁷ Anne Hege Grung, *Gender Justice in Muslim-Christian Readings: Christian and Muslim Women in Norway Making Meaning of Texts from the Bible, the Koran, and the Hadith* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 101-9.

⁵⁸ See Michael H. Mitias, *The Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 16.

⁵⁹ John M. G. Barclay and B. G. White, ‘Introduction: Posing the Questions,’ in *The New Testament in Comparison: Validity, Method and Purpose in Comparing Traditions*, eds. John M. G. Barclay and B. G. White (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 1-8, here 1-5; Jonathan Z. Smith, ‘Prologue: In Comparison a Magic Dwells,’ in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, eds. Kimberley Patton and Benjamin Ray (Oakland: The University of California Press, 2000), 23-46, here 40.

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usually fail to argue for or demonstrate the legitimacy of their dialogue (why compare?).⁶⁰

Determining the purpose (of comparison) is not a challenge in SR as it has a clear aim that is to promote mutual understanding, as noted above. So, Jonathan Smith's hermeneutical approach to the task of comparing ancient texts (HCAT) can help to address the first challenge faced by SR **during the task of its preparation**: the lack of overt selection criteria in terms of defining what to compare, selecting the texts for comparison, categorizing the texts for comparison and measuring the similarities and differences of the compared texts.

This is clarified **in the preparation task of SR** if one opts for the criteria of *genealogy* or *analogy*. Genealogy is a method whereby the selection of two texts is underpinned by their origins, that is, one text derives from the other.⁶¹ *Genealogical* passages can resemble a child-parent-grandparent relationship, or even a sibling-cousin relationship.⁶² For example, the *parent* of Jesus' use of the Fifth Commandment in Matthew (19:19) is the Gospel of Mark (10:19), whereas its *grandparent* is the Book of Deuteronomy (5:15). Furthermore, Luke's version of Jesus' use of the Fifth Commandment (Lk. 18:20) is a *sibling* of its Matthean counterpart (19:19).

In the case of *analogy*, the basis of the comparison are parallel ancient texts which have no claims to an organic relationship with each other.⁶³ In this type of comparison, each worldview must be investigated on its own premises, without any bias of interest in one or the other of the compared traditions.⁶⁴ **This *analogical* perspective is what fits the practice of SR, because SR as a form of Christian-Muslim**

⁶⁰ Smith, 'In Comparison,' 40-41

⁶¹ Barclay and White, 'Introduction: Posing the Questions,' 3.

⁶² Simon Gathercole, 'Resemblance and Relation: Comparing the Gospels of Mark, John and Thomas,' in *The New Testament in Comparison: Validity, Method and Purpose in Comparing Traditions*, eds. John M. G. Barclay and B. G. White (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 173-192, here 175.

⁶³ Barclay and White, 'Introduction: Posing the Questions,' 3.

⁶⁴ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, 'The Past Is a Foreign Country: On the Shape and Purposes of Comparison in New Testament Scholarship,' in *The New Testament in Comparison: Validity, Method and Purpose in Comparing Traditions*, eds. John M. G. Barclay and B. G. White (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 41-62, here 56.

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encounter, considers these two traditions, and their relevant Scriptures, as parallels, with no claims about the *genealogy* of one tradition from the other.⁶⁵ Accordingly, to ensure that the same selection of criteria are applied to the two traditions, which is one condition of mutual understanding, SR organizers should make sure that their selected texts in each tradition are *analogous* to the other.

There are three aspects of the HCAT that could be helpful the preparation task of SR i.e., those relate to the questions about what to compare, how to select the texts of comparison and how to categorize such texts for comparison. In this thesis, I will explain in detail how these three elements could be achieved in a comparative study of the Christian and Islamic Scriptures (Section 1.3) and how this could help to theorize the preparation task of SR (Section 7.1).

As for the fourth element of the HCAT, which is about setting the same criteria for measuring the similarities and differences in the compared texts, it relates to the second level of comparative ethics and SR which is its actual practice of interpreting and comparing the selected texts. This aspect is challenging in the discipline of comparative exegesis, however in a lesser degree than the practice of SR, due to the different methods applied to each level of interpretation (within and in front of the text) in the two traditions (Christianity and Islam).⁶⁶ Interdisciplinary academic studies attempt to bridge the gap between academic fields that focus either *on the horizon of the text*, as in the case of biblical ethics, or on the *horizon of interpreters*, such as moral theology,⁶⁷ but this has not been developed to address the question of the comparative exegesis.

Some comparative exegeses of the Christian and Muslim scriptures can be noted in academic disciplines about comparing the ancient texts, but they lack the required

⁶⁵ Kepnes, 'A Handbook for Scriptural Reasoning,' 372-73.

⁶⁶ Catherine Cornille, 'Introduction: Interreligious Hermeneutics,' in *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, eds. Catherine Cornille and Christopher Conway (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010), Kindle loc. 116 out of 5331.

⁶⁷ See Daniel Harrington and James Keenan, *Jesus and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology* (London: Sheed & Ward, 2005).

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depth to address textual tensions. For example, a recent attempt has been made by Gabriel Reynold to provide a commentary on the *Qurʾān* in conversation with the Bible, but the outcome of his work is superficial due to its attempt to cover the whole of the *Qurʾān* and the relevant biblical passages.⁶⁸ Thus, in his commentary on *Qurʾān* 58:22, Reymond comments that this verse can be compared to Matthew 10:34–37 because the two passages discuss divisions within a family, but he offers no further exploration of the meaning of the texts in question.⁶⁹ Further, attention to the horizon of interpreters is all absent from Reymond’s comparative exegesis. **Therefore, such work by Reymond could be an example of what Smith mentioned above about the challenge of defining a clear purpose for the comparative studies of the ancient texts. While Reynold could have successfully located the parallel texts of the Quran and the Bible together, the relevance of this work to the question about why this should be important, is lacking, particularly for its impact on Christian-Muslim relations.**

Consequently, one is operating with the practical field of inter-religious dialogue, that is SR, which has the clear purpose of promoting mutual understanding but lacks an approach that ensures the achievement of such purpose through applying the same criteria to both the preparation of SR and its actual praxis. On the other hand, interdisciplinary and interreligious studies have developed *more* clearly defined tools and methods than interfaith dialogue, to set criteria for defining its preparatory task (in terms of what to compare ... etc) and in a *lesser* degree to develop an unifying exegetical and comparative approach of the compared texts, probably due to the vagueness of the purpose of comparison. Therefore, the challenges posed by these two ‘fields’ can be addressed if they are brought into mutual collaboration, as rightly noted by Sumner Twiss and Bruce Grelle:

On the one hand, we have an area of scholarly inquiry—comparative religious ethics—which, despite its sophisticated tools and methods, appears to lack a unifying rationale and purpose convincing to those within and outside the field. On the other hand, we have a community of

⁶⁸ Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur'an and the Bible: Text and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

⁶⁹ Reynolds, *The Qur'an and the Bible*, 817.

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interreligious dialogue with an enormously persuasive rationale and mission that nonetheless tends to founder in its ability to mount convincing and nonparochial positions and arguments...Interreligious dialogue offers to comparative religious ethics a more persuasive rationale, agenda of issues, and practical orientation than hitherto has been the case. By the same token, comparative religious ethics offers to interreligious dialogue a number of critical tools and methods that could enhance the sophistication and effectiveness of its practical work.⁷⁰

Bringing together the two fields of SR and comparative exegesis (of the ethical messages of the sacred books), through a 'hermeneutical dialogical approach', can open the door, both hermeneutically and methodologically, to enable interpreters to undertake a rigorous examination of 'textual tension' in the sacred books of Islam and Christianity. The term 'hermeneutical' in this regard refers to the application of the hermeneutics of comparison to ancient texts; this, as already noted, is a well-defined process that involves identifying what to compare, how to categorize the texts, and how to measure the similarities and differences between them. What it lacks, however, is a justification for the comparison (why) which can be addressed through the 'dialogical' notion within Scriptural Reasoning that helps to identify the purpose of comparison (mutual understanding). The outcome of this comparative study in terms of selecting texts for comparison, categorizing them and applying a methodology of comparison, can provide an important interpretative platform for the practice of SR, which can be illustrated as follows:

⁷⁰ Sumner B. Twiss and Bruce Grelle, 'Introduction: A New Venue for Comparative Religious Ethics,' in *Explorations in Global Ethics: Comparative Religious Ethics and Interreligious Dialogue*, eds. Sumner B. Twiss and Bruce Grelle (Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), 1-7, here 2-3.

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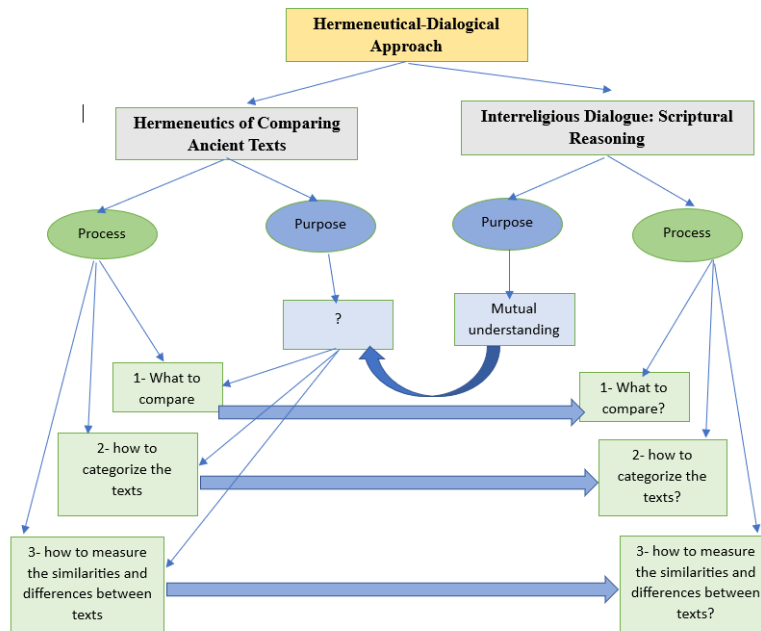


Diagram 1: Hermeneutical-Dialogical Approach

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study

Given the rise of religious polemics in contemporary Christian-Muslim relations, which stems in part from misrepresentations of the scriptural texts in question (both at the horizon of the text and the horizon of interpreters), and because of the absence of an effective practice of interfaith dialogue and comparative exegesis to address this state of affairs, this particular study has two overarching aims.

First, it seeks to undertake a comparative exegesis of a particular example of textual tension between Christian and Islamic scriptures,⁷¹ and this for the purpose of promoting a mutual understanding of both the horizon of the text and that of its interpreters. Such mutual understanding requires that the two scriptures, Islamic and

⁷¹ The parameters for this scope will be set in Section 1.4 below about the Scope of the Study.

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Christian, are approached with the aid of the same criteria, and this requires that the following objectives are achieved:

- a) To use a unifying approach towards the definition of what to compare, i.e., the parallel texts about each theme or figure in the sacred books of each tradition, and this through the use of the same criteria of inclusion (and exclusion). This can be achieved by applying the hermeneutics of comparison to ancient texts, as will be discussed in Section 1.4 below.
- b) To develop a methodology that uses the same criteria for interpreting the sacred books of both Islam and Christianity. This will be the subject of Chapter 2 of this thesis.
- c) To provide a comparative exegesis of selected passages in each tradition by using the proposed methodological framework. This will be set out and examined in Chapters 3-6 of this dissertation.

The second overarching aim of this study is to explore the implications of a comparative exegesis of this kind for developing a new approach to the practice of Scriptural Reasoning, one that focuses specifically on the issue of textual tension rather than on the shared visions and values of different religious traditions. This will be explored particularly in Chapter 7.

1.4 The Scope of this Study

It is necessary to establish some precise parameters in order to be able to fulfil the aims and objectives that have been outlined above, primarily because it is indeed beyond the scope of this study to analyse and compare the Christian and Islamic scriptures in their entirety. Drawing on the work of Jonathan Smith and others, and using the hermeneutics of comparison as a framework for setting the parameters of the thesis, I will adopt the following approach: 1) define what to compare (Section 1.4.1); 2) select specific texts for comparison (Section 1.4.2); 3) categorize the selected texts (Section

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1.4.3); 4) and define the scope of the reception of the texts to be discussed in this thesis (Section 1.4.4).

1.4.1 What to Compare: Filial Relations in the Teachings of Jesus and Muhammad

Of the ethical themes attested in both the Christian and Islamic scriptures, I will limit my study to filial relations because this theme reflects what can be regarded as textual tension within the moral teachings of the sacred books of both Islam and Christianity. According to the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), Jesus quotes the Fifth Commandment, ‘Honour your father and your mother’ (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16), on a number of occasions (see Mk 7:10; 10:19; Mt. 15:4; 19:19; Lk. 18:20). However, Jesus is also depicted as denying discipleship to anyone who loves their parents more than him (Mt. 10:37) or who does not hate parents for his sake (Lk. 14:26). The Fourth Gospel also shares this notion of apparent tension: while Jesus entrusts the care of his mother after his death to the Beloved Disciple (Jn 19:26-27), he speaks to his mother, early in the narrative, in language that could be considered disrespectful (2:4).

Similarly, the commandment to honour parents is stressed in many verses of the *Qurʾān* (Q. 2:83; 4:36; 5:151; 46:15). Yet, in other instances, filial relations are relativised with reference to ‘the fictive family’ (Q. 9:24; 58:22). The tension is also shared in the *Ḥadīth* literature: while children are ordered to honour parents (Al-Bukhārī: 5970; Muslim: 58), filial duty is said to be subordinate to higher objectives (Al-Bukhārī: 15; Muslim: 44).⁷²

To provide an exegesis of such passages from the perspective of *the horizon of the text* can help to promote a better understanding of textual tension within the original setting of each scriptural tradition. Furthermore, analysing *the reception of this*

⁷² Al-Bukhārī and Muslim are two authors of *ḥadīth* collections which are generally considered to be authentically attributed to the Prophet of Islam according to mainstream Sunni-Islamic thought. See, for example, Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of Al-Bukhari and Muslim* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

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particular theme by later interpretative communities can assist in promoting a better understanding of the ways in which later interpreters view such textual tension, as established by early communities, as relevant to their contemporary communities. I will explain how this can be achieved in Chapter 2.

Furthermore, I will use the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad as a parameter for my analysis of filial relations in the Christian and Islamic scriptures, and this due to the ethical significance of both Jesus and Muhammad as role models in their relevant traditions. Thus, their teaching about filial relations, according to each tradition and as acknowledged by later interpreters, is to be emulated by others.

As for Christian interpreters, the idea of imitating (especially *imitatio Christi*) Jesus' words and deeds has been central to theological discourse since the reflections of Thomas à Kempis, particularly through the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Peter Adam, and Maximilian von Habsburg.⁷³ During the 1990s and early 2000s, moreover, the term WWJD ('What Would Jesus Do') became a popular slogan among Evangelical Christians to show their desire to behave like Jesus and thus to imitate him.⁷⁴

At the horizon of the text, the application of the concept of *imitating* Jesus has been less common in biblical studies, with the majority of works focusing on ethical 'imitation' with reference to the letters of Paul.⁷⁵ More recently, however, academic interest has shifted towards the function of 'imitating Jesus' as the pivotal ethical paradigm for the study of New Testament ethics, of which the most important investigations are those by David Capes, Richard Burridge, Cornelis Bennema and Sookgoo Shin.⁷⁶ Similarly, Muslim scholars regard Muhammad as a role model to be

⁷³ Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Jesus* (London: Penguin Classics, 2005), 638–47; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Nachfolge* (München: Kaiser, 1958); Peter James Hedderwick Adam, 'The Practice of the Imitation of Christ with Special Reference to the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer' (PhD diss., Durham University, 1981); Maximilian von Habsburg, *Catholic and Protestant Translations of the Imitatio Christi, 1425–1650 From Late Medieval Classic to Early Modern Bestseller* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).

⁷⁴ Cornelis Bennema, *Mimesis in the Johannine Literature A Study in Johannine Ethics* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 1–2.

⁷⁵ Bennema, *Mimesis in the Johannine Literature*; Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 17–20.

⁷⁶ David Capes, 'Imitatio Christi and the Gospel Genre,' *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13, no. 1 (2003):1–19, <https://doi.org/10.2307/26422777>; Bennema, *Mimesis in the Johannine Literature*; Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*; Sookgoo Shin, *Ethics in the Gospel of John: Discipleship as Moral Progress* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

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followed and whose teachings in the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth* constitute the first major and undisputed sources for Islamic legislation and ethics.⁷⁷ The concept of *imitating Muhammad* is clearly stated in the *Qurʾān* (3:31, 53; 59:7).

The notion of ‘imitation’ in both scriptural traditions about Jesus and Muhammad has an impact on the process of selecting examples of their ethical teachings that is to include their conduct as well as their sayings. Role models teach through their words as well as their actions. The Graeco-Roman *bios* or biographies, which is the macro genre of the gospel narratives, were written to motivate the imitation of their protagonist, including his sayings and deeds.⁷⁸ In Islam, the *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet of Islam includes his sayings, his actions, his tacit approvals and also the traits of his character that are to be subjected to imitation.⁷⁹

In addition to the significance attached to the ethical teaching of Jesus and Muhammad in each tradition, the different criteria used for the sake of comparison of their teachings reflect the ‘double standard’ approach in Christian-Muslim relations, as highlighted by Goddard above. This approach is found in both the comparative studies that aim to highlight commonalities between the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad as well as the comparative exercises conducted by polemicists. One example of a comparative study that looks for commonalities is Daniel Humme’s *Jesus and Muhammad: Commonalities of Two Great Religions*.⁸⁰ He states that he selects the canonical teachings of the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, which are, according to him, the Four Gospels for former and the *Qurʾān* for the latter. This choice by Humme of his compared texts shares the same limitation of SR practices that are discussed above: he uses the *Qurʾān* as a scriptural parallel to the New Testament, which is

⁷⁷ See Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Cambridge Islamic Texts Society, 1991); M. A. Draz, *Dustūr Al-Akhlāq fī Al-Qurʾān*, trans. Abdel Sabbour Shahin (Beirut: Resālah, 1973); M. A. Draz, *The Moral World of the Quran*, trans. Danielle Robinson and Rebecca Masterton (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Mutaz Al-Khatib, ed., *Ḥadīth and Ethics through the Lens of Interdisciplinarity* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

⁷⁸ Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, kindle loc. 3601 out of 7956.

⁷⁹ See Abū Muhammad ‘Abd Allah Abū Al-Shaykh, *Akhlāq Al-Nabiyy wā ‘Ādābuh* (Riyād: Dār Al-Muslim, 1998); Muhammad b. ‘Īsah Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Shamā’il Al-Muḥammadiyyah* (Mecca: Al-Maṭba‘ah Al-Tijāriyyah, 1993).

⁸⁰ Daniel Humme, *Jesus and Muhammad: Commonalities of Two Great Religions* (Clifton: Tughra Books, 2017).

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partially right (as the *Qurʾān* is the locus of the Islamic scripture), but he neglects the *Ḥadīth* material altogether.

A more polemically centred approach can be found in Mark Gabriel's *Jesus and Muhammad: Profound Differences and Surprising Similarities*, who compares the morality of Jesus and Muhammad and concludes that the latter presents a negative role model.⁸¹ In his choice of comparanda, Gabriel uses the 'canonical' teaching of Jesus in the Four Gospels.⁸² As for Muhammad, he discusses his 'historical' teaching as found in the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth* as well as historical sources such as the Ibn Ishāq's *Al-Sīrah Al-Nabawīyyah*, and Ibn Kathīr's *Al-Bidāyah Wa Al-Nihāyah*.⁸³ While Ibn Kathir is a later historian (d. 1373 CE), Gabriel considers his work to be authoritative simply because it is used as part of the Al-Azhar University's curriculum.⁸⁴ This assessment, however, contradicts Al-Azhar's approach, which is to verify the historicity of such sources by using historical-critical methods, which are applied also to Ibn Ishāq's *Al-Sīrah Al-Nabawīyyah* and the other *Sīrah* sources. More strict criteria are applied to the content of the *ḥadīth* collections.

What I am arguing here aligns with the conclusion drawn by Goddard and Grung that, for the sake of mutual understanding, we have to apply the same criteria to both traditions. We either apply historical-critical approaches to both of them or we focus on their *canonical* teachings.⁸⁵ Therefore, I will now discuss which approach will be adopted in this thesis in order to reconstruct the teaching of Jesus and Muhammad as the starting-point for the comparative-exegetical task.

⁸¹ Mark A. Gabriel, *Jesus and Muhammad: Profound Differences and Surprising Similarities* (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2004).

⁸² Gabriel, *Jesus and Muhammad*, 227.

⁸³ Gabriel, *Jesus and Muhammad*, 219-224.

⁸⁴ Gabriel, *Jesus and Muhammad*, 224.

⁸⁵ Goddard, *Christians and Muslims*, 8-10; Grung, *Gender Justice in Muslim-Christian Readings*.

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1.4.2 Selecting Relevant Texts for Comparison

What is important, as argued in this thesis, is that one compares ‘like with like’, and in order to do so, it must be determined whether the study will focus on the ‘historical’ or ‘canonized’ teachings of Jesus and Muhammad.⁸⁶

a) The Teachings of Jesus?

In New Testament studies, which focuses primarily on the horizon of the text, there are two major approaches to reconstructing the teachings (and life) of Jesus. These are the interpretative paradigm for the ‘historical Jesus’ and the quest for ‘the memory of Jesus’.

There have, to date, been four quests to reconstruct the ‘historical Jesus’, and whose purposes, methodologies and outcomes are considerably different from each other.⁸⁷ The central aim of these quests is to reconstruct the authentic teachings of Jesus using authenticity criteria such as source criticism, which involves viewing ‘differences in style, vocabulary and themes, as well as repetition and editorial “seams”, as evidence for sources’.⁸⁸ These four quests have been subjected to criticism on various grounds, the strongest being the argument that any reconstruction of the ‘historical’ Jesus results in a contemporary construct of ‘Jesus’ as it necessarily reflects the ideology and methodological choices of the modern interpreter.⁸⁹ At the end of ‘the descriptive task’ of his *Moral Vision*, Richard Hays thus provides an excursus on the ‘historical Jesus’, stressing that it cannot be the starting-point for New Testament ethics due to the challenges pertaining to the reconstruction of the historical Jesus.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ From now on, I will use the word ‘teachings’ to refer to the statements or commandments given by either Jesus and Muhammad regarding a specific theme or situation, and I will use the word ‘teaching’ to refer to one statement or a commandment among their teachings.

⁸⁷ Helen Bond, *The Historical Jesus: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 7.

⁸⁸ Janice Capel Anderson, ‘Source, Form, Redaction and Literary Criticism of the Bible,’ in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible, Volume 4: From 1750 to the Present*, ed. John Riches (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 149-159.

⁸⁹ Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 158-68.

⁹⁰ Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 158-60.

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In recent years, nevertheless, there has been a paradigm shift towards the use of social memory theory in Jesus studies.⁹¹ Due to the difficulties inherent in any attempt at reclaiming the ‘historical Jesus’, Ruben Zimmermann stresses that the four canonical gospels have to be the starting-point of Jesus research, given that they are the oldest possible sources for his life. He remarks:

The point of departure remains the canonical [Gospels]...However, these texts do not have to be regarded as the works of one single author; they can be perceived as different written artifacts of a memory process. The Gospel narratives preserve memories of both people and events from Jesus’ field of influence as well as of the linguistic forms *in which his influence was expressed or more precisely, first made possible*.⁹²

The concept of Jesus memories is established on the basis that the gospel narratives are media for the collective memory of their authors and communities. This is why James Dunn describes the Jesus reconstructed from such memories as ‘the remembered Jesus’.⁹³ In order to apply the notion of a ‘remembered Jesus’ to Jesus’ teachings about filial relations, Hermut Löhr states that his use of the Fifth Commandment in the Synoptic Gospels belongs to the early Christian communities’ remembrance of Jesus.⁹⁴ In a similar vein, Peter Balla uses the concept of ‘memory’ to state that Jesus, as a Jew, would have acknowledged the validity of the Decalogue and thus he could have cited the Ten Commandments in his teaching.⁹⁵

Unlike the ‘historical Jesus’, the ‘remembered Jesus’ constitutes common ground between research in biblical ethics and moral theology in terms of the selection

⁹¹ See Tuomas Havukainen, *The Quest for the Memory of Jesus: A Viable Path or a Dead End?* (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 128-142; Ruben Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables of Jesus: Methods and Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2015), 76-103.

⁹² Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, 87-88. Emphasis is mine.

⁹³ James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2003).

⁹⁴ Hermut Löhr, ‘Jesus and the Ten Words,’ in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, eds. Holmén and S. E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 3135-54, here 54.

⁹⁵ See Peter Balla, *The Child-Parent Relationship in the New Testament and Its Environment* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 118.

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of texts for comparative analysis. The quest for the remembered Jesus takes the Four Gospels in their (final) literary form as a starting-point of that quest. Similarly, moral theologians use the Four Gospels in their final form as part of the Christian *canon*.

Given the difficulty of reconstructing the words and deeds of the historical Jesus and the possibility of using the quest for the remembered Jesus to study his teachings in the Four Gospels (which aligns with the Christian canon), this thesis will use the paradigm of the remembered Jesus to select and interpret his teachings about filial relations. This evidently raises the issue of comparatively selecting Muhammad's teachings about filial relations that are parallel to those of the 'remembered/canonical Jesus'.

b) The Teachings of Muhammad?

In Western scholarship, the *Qurʾān* is *generally* traced back to the 'historical Mohammed'.⁹⁶ This aligns with Islamic scholarship but with one difference, namely that the whole *Qurʾān* is regarded as the word of God, revealed literally through the Angel Jibrīl (Jibrael) to Muhammad who delivered it to humankind.⁹⁷ The *Qurʾān* can thus form part of the teachings of Muhammad in the sense that he is delivering it to people as well as using it to offer them guidance. Generally speaking, there is agreement about the possibility of using the *Qurʾān* as a source for the teachings of the historical Muhammad in both Western and Islamic scholarship.

This is not the case with the *Ḥadīth*, the second branch of Islamic scripture, as it includes implicit revelation by God to the Prophet of Islam as manifested in his sayings, actions, tacit approvals and character traits.⁹⁸ With regard to the use of the *Ḥadīth* as a source to reconstruct the 'historical Muhammad', there are differences between Western and Islamic scholarly approaches in this regard. In Islamic scholarship, the

⁹⁶ Herbert Berg, 'Islamic Origins and the Quran,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, eds. Mustafa Shah and Muhammad Abdel Haleem (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 51–63, here 51–52.

⁹⁷ Berg, 'Islamic Origins and the Quran,' 51.

⁹⁸ Musa, *Ḥadīth as Scripture*, 1; Brown, 'Scripture in the Modern Muslim World: the Quran and Hadith,' 14–15.

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acceptance that *ḥadīth* reports are to be traced to the ‘historical Muhammad’ is generally based on the chain of transmission of each *ḥadīth*, which is called the *isnād*. The *isnād* (chain of transmitters) of every single *ḥadīth* report must fulfil five conditions: 1) each report is to be transmitted through a connected chain of narrators (*isnād*) back to Muhammad; 2) each narrator in this chain has been proved credible in terms of his/her character; 3) they must have accurate memory to receive and deliver the *ḥadīth* (in oral transmission) and accurate documentation (in written transmission); 4) this chain of transmission should have no discrepancies among qualified narrators; 5) and there should not be any hidden defect in the chain of transmission, such as replacing a chain of narrators from one *ḥadīth* to another.⁹⁹ The major collections of *ḥadīth* that, in Sunni Islam, include most of the canonical *ḥadīth* are called the Six Books of *Ḥadīth*, which are authored by Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Al-Tirmidhī, Al-Nasāʾī and Ibn Mājah.

The use of *isnād* as a method for reconstructing the teachings of ‘the historical Muhammad’ has been recognized in Western *ḥadīth* studies, that is, until Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht argued for a ‘paradigm shift’.¹⁰⁰ Schacht in particular applies source criticism to the *Ḥadīth* and concludes that its traditions generally date later than the time of Muhammad. He bases his discussion on the source-critical method of ‘the common link theory’: when the chains of transmission of one *ḥadīth* spread from a narrator ‘link’, he/she is necessarily the fabricator of this particular *ḥadīth*, such as ‘Amr b. Abī ‘Amr, as now illustrated.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Ibn Al-Ṣalāḥ Al-Shahrazūrī, *An Introduction to the Science of Hadith: Kitāb Marʿifat Anwaʾ Ilm Al-Hadith*, trans. Eirik Dickinson (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2006), 5.

¹⁰⁰ See Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies II*, trans. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971); Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950).

¹⁰¹ Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 172.

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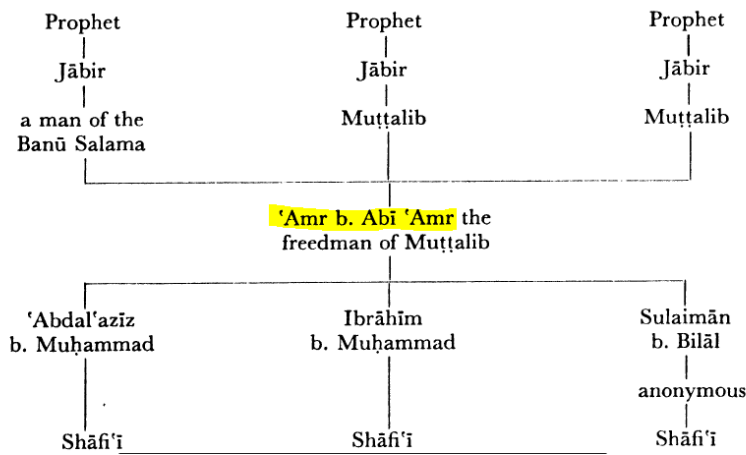


Diagram 2: The common link theory according to Schacht

Gautier Juynboll's *Encyclopaedia of Canonical Ḥadīth* applies Schacht's common link theory to selected material from the Six Books of *Ḥadīth*.¹⁰² The material is associated with the concept of 'canonization' because the content of the Six Books is generally considered to be 'sound' in Islamic scholarship.¹⁰³ Like Schacht, Juynboll claims that the material in question belongs to late *ḥadīth* narrators (the common links), and thus is not historically traceable back to the 'historical Muḥammad'. For example, there is a *ḥadīth* attributed to Muḥammad in which he prohibits someone from joining *jihād* and commands him to stay with his parents and take care of them (Al-Bukhārī 3004). Based on his analysis of the *isnāds* of this report in the Six Books of *Ḥadīth*, Juynboll concludes that this *ḥadīth* can only be traced back to Shuʿbah b. Al-Hajjāj (d. 776 C.E) as he is the common link of the *ḥadīth*.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² G. H. A. Juynboll, *Encyclopaedia of Canonical Hadith* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

¹⁰³ Juynboll, *Encyclopaedia of Canonical Hadith*, xxiv.

¹⁰⁴ Juynboll, *Encyclopaedia of Canonical Hadith*, 526-27.

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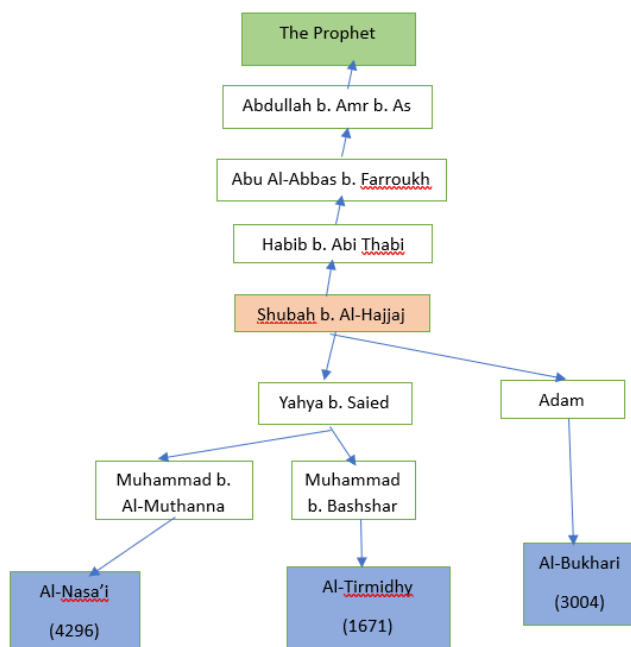


Diagram 3: The common link according to Juynboll

Similar to its application to the New Testament gospels, source criticism fails to provide a perfect paradigm for reconstructing the life and teaching of the ‘historical Muhammad’. The validity of using the common link theory as a historical-critical method for studying *ḥadīth* material has been disputed by both Western and Muslim scholars (such as Harald Motzki, Johnathan Brown and Muhammed Al-Azami) because the conclusions drawn by Schacht and Juynboll are based on limited use of specific sources for the chains of transmission.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Harald Motzki, review of *Encyclopaedia of Canonical Ḥadīth*, by G. H. A. Juynboll, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 36 (2009): 539-49; Jonathan A. C. Brown, review of *Encyclopaedia of Canonical Ḥadīth*, by G. H. A. Juynboll, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 3 (2008): 391-97. For more information about the Islamic criticism of ‘common link theory’, see Muhammed Al-Azami, *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1996).

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Thus, Juynboll's assumption of tracing the *ḥadīth* about filial relations, as discussed above, to Shu'bah b. Al-Ḥajjāj is not wholly accurate as he neglects an *isnād* for this particular *ḥadīth* in *Musnad Aḥmad*.¹⁰⁶ If this isnād is included in the analysis, the common link of this *ḥadīth* would be Abdullah b. Amr, who is a companion of Muhammad and an eyewitness of this report:

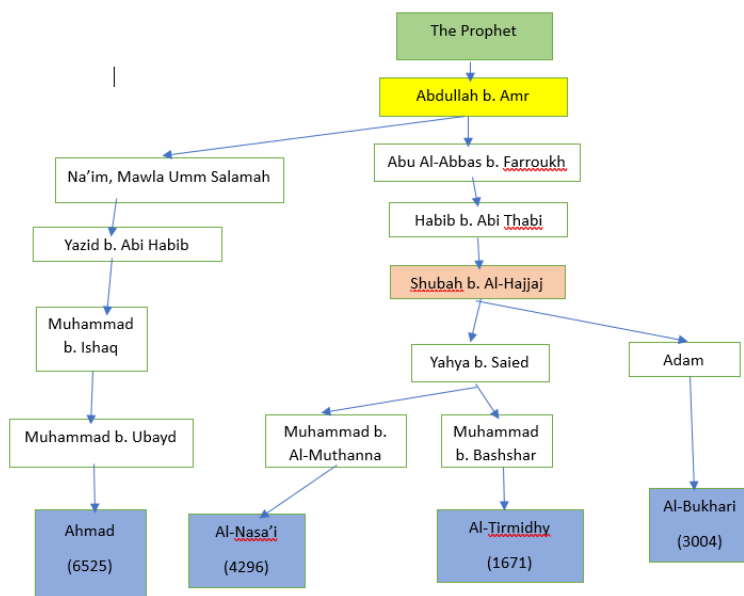


Diagram 4: ‘Abdullah b. ‘Amr as a common link of the *ḥadīth*

As a result, the use of authenticity criteria such as source criticism cannot provide a full paradigm for reconstructing the ‘historical’ Jesus and the ‘historical’ Muhammad, and this because of the shortcomings of such an approach. The notion of the remembered Jesus can therefore be used instead of the authenticity criteria as a paradigm for selecting Jesus’ teaching from the Four Gospels. Similarly, the *Qurʾān* and *Ḥadīth* can be used as media for reconstructing the teaching of (what I will from

¹⁰⁶ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad* (Beirut: Resalah, 2001), 11:78 (6525).

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now on call) the ‘remembered Muhammad’, given the significant role played by social memory played in the delivery and reception of the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth*.

In addition to individual attempts at writing down parts of the *Qurʾān* on parchments, the collective memories of early Muslim communities were the main media for the *Qurʾān*’s oral transmission during the lifetime of the Prophet of Islam. Later, according to Islamic tradition, the *Qurʾān* was officially documented during the caliphate of Abū Bakr and Uthmān, both of whom were eyewitnesses to the life of Muhammad.¹⁰⁷ As for the *Ḥadīth*, ‘memory’ was used as a medium, **in addition to the written documentation, to receive and to deliver the *ḥadīth* reports.**¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the narrators in the isnād of each *ḥadīth* report had to be shown to have retentive memory (oral transmission) and good literacy (written transmission) as a requirement for the ‘canonization’ of *ḥadīth* material in the Six Books of *Ḥadīth*.¹⁰⁹

The teaching of ‘the remembered Muhammad’ in the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth* can therefore be used as the starting-point for reconstructing his teachings, which, for the sake of comparison, is parallel to the use of the teachings of ‘the remembered Jesus’ in the Four Gospels. This derives from the nature of the sources as media for transmitting the life and teaching of Muhammad and Jesus; it also aligns with the canonization of their teaching in Islam and Christianity, respectively. I now proceed to explain how the teachings of the remembered Jesus and the remembered Muhammad can be categorized for the purpose of comparison.

¹⁰⁷ François Déroche, ‘The Manuscript and Archaeological Traditions: Physical Evidence,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Qurʾanic Studies*, eds. Mustafa Shah and Muhammad Abdel Haleem (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 167-181, here 167-69.

¹⁰⁸ Muhammad Mustafa Al-Azami, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1978), 34-74.

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Al-Ṣalāḥ, *An Introduction to the Science of Hadith*, 5.

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1.4.3 Categorizing the Texts for Comparison

As noted above, textual tension is one problematic area in Christian-Muslim relations. The texts that promote ethical teaching (such the Decalogue) are usually used in the context of interfaith initiatives to promote mutual understanding. However, such selectivity, and the tacit avoidance of ‘hard sayings’, can undermine the overarching aim of such initiatives.

This study attempts to provide a comparative exegesis of the two textual strands regarding filial relations in an attempt to promote better understanding of the scriptures and their reception. I will therefore categorize the teachings of the remembered Jesus and the remembered Muhammad into two sets of traditions: 1) those that promote filial piety, and 2) those that relativize filial relations, in order to explore what could have been ignored or given less attention in Christian-Muslim interaction.

Such categorization can help also to identify (and even to fill) the gaps in those works attempting to provide an exegesis of the original text or those examining later interpretations. This is because some sets of tradition can receive more attention than others, depending on the aims of the exegete. In New Testament studies, which focuses *mainly* on the text itself, there is a greater focus on passages that relativize filial relations. In the most extensive study on filial relations in New Testament writings,¹¹⁰ Stephen Barton provides a detailed analysis of all the Markan and Matthean passages that subordinate ‘earthly’ family relations to the motif of discipleship.¹¹¹ He rightly argues that Mark and Matthew relativize biological family relations to the new fictive family, but that the lack of hostility towards family relations is consistent with the relevant Jewish and Graco-Roman traditions.¹¹²

Barton’s work does have certain limitations as far as the focus of this dissertation is concerned. First, due to its scope, the study does not provide a comprehensive

¹¹⁰ Stephen C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Halvor Moxnes, review of *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew*, by Stephen Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* 5, no. 2 (1997): 212-14, here 212.

¹¹¹ John Barclay, review of *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew*, by Stephen Barton, *Studies in Christian Ethics* 9, no. 1 (1996): 47-50, here 47-48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095394689600900105>.

¹¹² Moxnes, review of *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 212-13.

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presentation of Jesus' teaching on filial relations, since it excludes the relevant material in the Gospels of Luke and John. Secondly, while Barton offers a detailed analysis of all the relevant passages in Mark and Matthew that subordinate 'earthly' family relations, he virtually overlooks those in which Jesus *promotes* filial relations: Jesus' use of the Fifth Commandment in his controversy with the Pharisees (Mk 7:10 par.); the account about the Rich Man (Mk 10:19 par.);¹¹³ Jesus' request to the Beloved Disciple to take care of his mother after his death (Jn 19:25-27).

On the other hand, the reception of the Bible by moral theologians demonstrates that they focus more on those passages that promote filial relations. For example, Pope Shenouda III published a book series on the Decalogue that contains one volume on the Fifth Commandment,¹¹⁴ but it offers no discussion of the relativizing passages of filial relations in the canonical gospels. Consequently, the traditions that relativize filial relations receive more attention in biblical studies, while those that promote filial piety are the main focus in moral theology whose interest lies in the horizon of interpreters.

These findings are echoed in the exegesis of the teaching of Muhammad about filial relations. For example, Al-Shamma, in his attempt to interpret the ethics of the *Qur'ān* in its original setting, examines the ethics of sonship, parenthood and filial relations in chronological sequence, that is, in the Meccan and then the Medinan verses.¹¹⁵ However, his study does not encompass all the *Qur'ānic* verses about filial relations, and it also neglects the *ḥadīth* material on the same theme.¹¹⁶

In Islamic ethics, the most comprehensive work to date on the teachings of Muhammad is *Naḍrat Al-Na'im fī Makārim Akhlāq Al-Rasūl Al-Karīm*.¹¹⁷ This is an encyclopaedia that utilises *Qur'ānic* verses and *ḥadīth* material in order to promote virtues and to warn against vices, adding short linguistic comments where relevant. As

¹¹³ There are only passing references to Jesus' two citations of the Fifth Commandment; see Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 13, 82, 104n, 149, 169, 211, 217 and 205. See also Barclay, review of *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 49.

¹¹⁴ Pope Shenouda III, *Al-Waṣāyā' Al-'Ashr II: Akrim Abāka wa Akrim Ummaka* (Cairo: n.d., 1980).

¹¹⁵ Salih Hadi Al-Shamma, 'Ethical System Underlying the Qur'ān: A Study of Negative and Positive Notions' (PhD diss., The University of Edinburgh, 1959), 40-56, 182-93, <http://hdl.handle.net/1842/17233>.

¹¹⁶ Al-Shamma, 'The Ethical System Underlying the Qur'ān,' 182-83.

¹¹⁷ Sāliḥ b. Ḥumayd, ed., *Naḍrat An-Na'im fī Makārim Akhlāq Al-Rasūl Al-Karīm* (Jeddah: Dār Al-Wasīlah, n.d.).

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far as the subject of this thesis is concerned, the encyclopaedia provides a comprehensive account of the traditions that promote filial piety in both the *Qurʾān* and the *Hadīth*, but makes no reference to the notion of relativizing filial relations.

Given this gap in the scholarly literature on how to interpret textual tension in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, I will proceed to offer an exegesis of the passages in question (i.e., both the promoting and relativizing passages) in each tradition from the perspective of the horizon of the text, and I do so in order to promote a mutual understanding of the meaning of the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad in their original context. This approach responds to the lack of interest in interfaith dialogue to the texts that relativize filial relations, and also to the absence of any discussion in inter-religious polemics of the texts that promote filial relations. The methodological framework that forms the basis of my comparative exegesis will be outlined in Chapter 2 (Methodology of the Study).

As for the horizon of interpreters, it is difficult to analyse the interpretation of the *two* sets of traditions about filial relations and this because less attention is given to the texts that relativize filial relations in Islamic ethics. How one addresses this challenge will be considered in the next section.

1.4.4 Selecting the Scope of the Interpreters

Since this study cannot analyse all the ways in which the texts under discussion have been interpreted (their reception), I will limit my analysis to an influential exegete in each tradition who can be regarded as representing their interpretative communities. The exegetes in question are Mattā Al-Miskīn (1919-2006) and Muhammad Mutwallī Al-Shaʿrāwī (1911-98), who are central Egyptian figures in the Coptic Orthodox and Sunni communities respectively. Mattā Al-Miskīn, also known as Matthew the Poor, was an influential Orthodox priest in the Coptic Church and was twice nominated for the patriarchal office. Furthermore, he represented the patriarch in the *Majlis al-Millī*

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(Community Council) and administered the Sunday Schools.¹¹⁸ Muhammad Al-Shaʿrāwī's interpretation of the teachings of Muhammad provides a case study that is analogous to that of Al-Miskīn. He was a recognized Islamic scholar in modern Egypt who secured leading positions at Al-Azhar University and served as the Egyptian Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs (1976-78).¹¹⁹

The Egyptian society, to which Al-Miskīn and Al-Shaʿrāwī belong, has witnessed interfaith initiatives, such as 'The Egyptian Family House', that align with *A Common Word* to stress the role of scripture in promoting commonalities and mutual understanding between Muslims and Christian in Egypt.¹²⁰ There have also been tensions in the Egyptian public sphere due to polemical attacks, by Botros and Abū Islām among others, on the sacred books of other religious communities. This thesis will therefore attempt to provide a comparative analysis of the interpretations offered by Al-Miskīn and Al-Shaʿrāwī in light of the controversial issue of textual tension about filial relations in Christian-Muslim relations.

From an exegetical point of view, both Al-Miskīn and Al-Shaʿrāwī offer valuable case studies for analysing the reception of texts promoting and relativizing filial relations in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad. While Al-Miskīn has written commentaries on the Four Gospels and on the letter to the Ephesians,¹²¹ Al-Shaʿrāwī has produced an extended commentary on the *Qurʾān* that also includes many references to the *Ḥadīth*.¹²² These commentaries will provide the basis for the analysis of their interpretations of both sets of traditions under discussion in this thesis.

¹¹⁸ Maged S. A. Mikhail, 'Matta Al-Miskīn,' in *The Orthodox Christian World*, ed. Augustine Casiday (London: Routledge, 2012), 359-61.

¹¹⁹ See Muhammad Ragab Al-Bayyūmī, *Muhammad Mutwallī Al-Shaʿrāwī: Gawlah fī Fikrihi Al-Fasīh* (Cairo: Maktabat Al-Turāth Al-Islāmī, 1999).

¹²⁰ 'The Egyptian Family House Conference,' *State Information Service*, November 8, 2021. <https://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/159944/The-Egyptian-Family-House-Conference?lang=en-us>

¹²¹ Mattā Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Injīl Mattā [Commentary on Matthew]* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 1999); *Tafsīr Injīl Murqus [Commentary on Mark]* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 1996), *Tafsīr Injīl Lūqā [Commentary on Luke]* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 1998); *Tafsīr Injīl Yuhannā [Commentary on John]* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 2008); *Tafsīr Risālat Pūlus Al-Rasūl Ilā Ephesus [Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to Ephesians]* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 1994).

¹²² Muhammad Mutwallī Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr Al-Shaʿrāwī: Khawāṭir Faḍilat Al-Shaykh Muhammad Mutwallī Al-Shaʿrāwī ḥawla al-Qurʾān Al-karīm* (Cairo: Akhbār Al-Yawm, 1991).

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1.5 Conclusion

The role of sacred books is significant for Christian-Muslim relations. While some aspects of the scriptures are used in interfaith initiatives to highlight commonalities between the two traditions and to promote mutual understanding, other aspects are used in the context of moral critique and for the purpose of inter-religious polemical discourse. The negative responses are directed either at the original meaning of the text or at one or more of its later interpretations, focusing on claims of internal textual contradictions or misinterpretations. Some exegetical studies offer thorough analyses of textual tension in one tradition from the perspective of both the horizon of the text and of interpreters, but they do not apply the same approach to the other tradition. This has resulted in a two-pronged problem in Christian-Muslim relations: there is a lack of effective dialogue between the two traditions in order to promote a better mutual understanding of their respective scriptures, as well as a double-standard approach in which the exegesis of one tradition uses different criteria from those applied to the other.

The solution to these two problems could be achieved when merging the strengths of the textual-based form of interreligious that is Scriptural Reasoning and those of the hermeneutics of comparing ancient texts (HCAT) to avoid the shortcoming of these two disciplines. SR has the strength of its clear purpose to promote mutual understanding of the two traditions which would require that the same standard approach should be applied to the two traditions at both the preparation task of SR as well as its praxis. This systemized approach, at least at the level of the preparation level for comparing ancient texts is an area of strength in the HCAT which has defined criteria to identify what to compare, to select the relevant texts for comparison, and to categorize the selected texts for the purposes of comparison. However, determining such purpose of comparison is one challenge of the HCAT, such as in the work of Raymond's comparison of the texts of the Quran and the Bible, without providing a answer to the questions: why and so what?

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This thesis thus is providing a comparative exegesis of one of the textual tensions in the Christian and Muslim Scriptures from both the world within and in front of the text that aims at promoting mutual understanding of the two traditions through applying the same criteria (of selection and interpretation) on the one hand. And will suggest using this systemized approach to the practice of SR (in terms of its preparation and praxis), on the other.

Using three elements of the HCAT, this chapter has set the parameters for the comparative exegesis that will be provided in this thesis in terms of: 1) what to compare; 2) selecting the texts for comparison; 3) categorizing the selected texts for comparison. In terms of what to compare, this study limits itself to an investigation of filial relations in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, both of whom function as exemplars to their immediate or later followers. Among their teachings this study will investigate their teachings about filial relations as a case study for the textual tension in the two traditions.

To select the relevant texts to this theme in each tradition. I use the paradigm of the remembered Jesus and the remembered Muhammad, as it facilitates the exegetical comparison of the texts in their original contexts (in biblical and Islamic ethics) and analysis of their reception (in moral theology and Islamic ethics). Such a paradigm makes the scriptures in their final form the starting-point of exegesis, since that they are the media for the social memory of their respective early communities. This paradigm is also consistent with the concept of the canon that uses the Scriptures in their final form in each tradition.

I categorize the remembered/canonized teachings of Jesus and Muhammad into two sets of traditions (one promoting filial piety, the other relativizing filial piety) so that one set of traditions is not overlooked. Among the different receptions of Jesus' teachings, in moral theology, and of Muhammad, in Islamic ethics, I will limit my analysis to Al-Miskīn and Al-Sha'rāwī's interpretations of the teachings in question. In addition to their status as central figures in their religious communities, the exegetical

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output of both scholars examines both the scriptural texts that promote filial piety and those that relativize filial relations.

In addition to setting ‘mutual understanding’ as a purpose of the comparative exegesis (which is virtually borrowed from SR), the HCAT three elements that are discussed above (what to compare, selecting the texts and categorizing them) are all relate to the preparation task of the comparative exegesis provided in this study, as summarized in Table 1 below.

	The HCAT	Comparative exegesis
1- Preparation task	1- The purpose of comparison	An area of challenge: to borrow ‘mutual understanding’ from SR
	2- What to compare	Filial relations in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad
	3- Selecting the texts for comparison	The canonized teachings of the ‘remembered’ Jesus and Muhammad
	4- Categorizing the texts for comparison	The texts that promote and relativize filial relations
	5- Selecting the scope of interpreters	Al-Miskīn and Al-Sha‘rāwī
2- The actual practice	6- Measuring the similarities and differences	?

Table 1: The preparation task of comparative exegesis

The reaming question of the HCAT (how to measure the similarities and differences of the compared texts) relates to the actual process of interpreting and comparing the selected texts. The next chapter will explain how this could be achieved methodologically.

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Chapter Two:

Methodology of the Study

This study aims at promoting mutual understanding of the textual tension about filial relations in the teachings of Jesus from the perspective of comparative ethics and Scriptural Reasoning. This aim will be addressed by engaging in a comparative exegesis of the texts, in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, that promote and also relativize filial relations; this will be undertaken from the perspective of the world within and in front of the text in order to avoid an overly selective focus on either of these two aspects, particularly in the context of interfaith dialogue and inter-religious polemics. This comparative exercise also seeks to avoid falling into a double standard approach, which could also undermine any attempt at gaining a ‘mutual understanding’.

In additions to setting ‘mutual understanding’ as the purpose this study, Chapter 1 has identified the hermeneutics of comparison of ancient texts (HCAT) as a framework to defining the possible parameters of the four procedures that must precede the process of conducting comparative exegesis of the ethical messages of the two Scriptures. These four procedures can be summarised as follows: a) what to compare (the teachings of the ‘remembered’ Jesus and those of the ‘remembered’ Muhammad); b) selecting the relevant texts for comparison (where textual tension about filial relations is apparent); c) categorizing the texts selected for comparison (centred on the promotion and relativization of filial relations); d) and selecting later interpreters of these teachings (Al-Miskīn and Al-Shaʿrāwī).

This present chapter outlines the final element in our proposed approach, that is, to formulate a method that can, first, be applied for the purpose of comparative exegesis on texts displaying tension on the question of filial relations. To ensure that the same interpretative criteria are applied to both the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, the proposed method has to be analytically suitable for both aspects of the theme under

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discussion (promoting and relativizing filial relations), including from the perspective of the world within and in front of the text. This means that the proposed method must be appropriate for the five analytical tasks as noted above.

	Interpreted Texts in Comparative Ethics and Scriptural Reasoning	The Level of Interpretation
The Teachings of Jesus	Task 1: The teachings of Jesus that promote filial piety	The world within the text
		The world in front of the text (Al-Miskīn)
	Task 2: The teachings of Jesus that relativize filial relations	The world within the text
		The world in front of the text (Al-Miskīn)
The Teachings of Muhammad	Task 3: The teachings of Muhammad that promote filial piety	The world within the text
		The world in front of the text (Al-Shaʿrāwī)
	Task 4: The teachings of Muhammad that promote filial piety	The world within the text
		The world in front of the text (Al-Shaʿrāwī)
Comparative ethics and SR	Task 5: To compare the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad that promote and relativize filial relations	From the perspective of the world within and in front of the text

Table 2: The five-tasks analysis of the practical process of comparative ethics

This multi-layered process of analysis and comparison thus seeks to overcome the challenges posed by the particularity of the terminology and methods that characterize the critical approaches to the interpretation of the world within and that in front of the text in each tradition. This includes, but is not exclusive to, biblical ethics, moral theology and Islamic ethics.

Therefore, this study will adopt Ruben Zimmermann’s approach to ‘implicit ethics’ as a methodological framework for achieving the proposed five-step analysis, and I will do so for two reasons. First, Zimmermann’s approach is text-centred and aims at interpreting New Testament ethics from the perspective of the world within the text, which is one of the central objects of enquiry in comparative exegesis of the ethical messages of the sacred books (and also in Scriptural Reasoning). Secondly, this approach has the interpretative potential to undertake the other levels of analysis

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required for comparative ethics and SR, namely, the reception of NT texts in moral theology and of the interpretation of the teachings of Muhammad.

From the perspective of world *within* the text, Ruben Zimmermann uses the term ‘implicit ethics’ to highlight the fact that the ethical message of New Testament texts are often *implicit* in the presentations of their different writers. Furthermore, due to the diverse literary form(s) of the NT writings, their authors often present their ethical message in fragmentary statements that need to be (re)constructed in order to enable them to form a coherent whole. In addition, according to Zimmermann it is essential to understand the role of implicit (or implied) readers, both within and in front of the text, for interpreting the ethical message of the NT.¹²³

Ruben Zimmermann is therefore critical of methodological approaches that focus only on the world behind the text, such as the ‘historical method’, or the methods that focus only on the world in front of the text, such as the ‘applicative method’.¹²⁴ In the case of the former, the ethical messages of the New Testament texts are read in comparison to ancient Jewish-Hellenistic and Graco-Roman analogues,¹²⁵ whereby the context, but not the text itself, becomes the main focus of enquiry.¹²⁶ In the case of ‘applicative’ approaches, ethical material in the New Testament is read through the lens of the ‘hermeneutical appropriation of the biblical text in contemporary ethical discourse’, but with no focus on the text’s original meaning or its settings.¹²⁷ The advantage of ‘implicit ethics’, according to Zimmermann, is that it addresses the worlds behind and in front of the text, but *the world within the text itself is its central focus*.¹²⁸

¹²³ Ruben Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically: The New Method of “Implicit Ethics” for Analyzing Biblical Ethics,’ in *Key Approaches to Biblical Ethics: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, eds. Volker Rabens, Jacqueline N. Grey and Mariam Kamell Kovalishyn (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 15-49, here 21-22.

¹²⁴ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 15-18.

¹²⁵ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 17-18.

¹²⁶ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 18.

¹²⁷ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 16-17.

¹²⁸ Ruben Zimmermann ‘The “Implicit Ethics” of New Testament Writings: a Draft on a New Methodology for Analyzing New Testament Ethics,’ *Neotestamentica* 43, no. 2 (2009): 399-423, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43048728>. This is consistent with the marked shift in the study of New Testament ethics, that is, from the interest in the world behind to the text to the world within the text. See BurrIDGE, *Imitating Jesus*, 24-25.

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According to Zimmermann, such ‘implicit ethics’ of the world within the New Testament could be ‘explicit’ when it is expressed through a set of terminological markers that are drawn from moral philosophy,¹²⁹ which, I will argue, could be used as well to analyse the ethical messages of the NT texts as received in moral theology, on the one hand, and to interpret the teachings of Muhammad from the perspective of the world within and in front of the text, on the other.

Therefore, in what follows, I will examine Zimmermann’s framework of ‘implicit ethics’, together with the terminology he has developed for the purpose of interpreting ethical material in NT texts (Section 2.1). I will then explain how Zimmermann’s approach can be applied, albeit in modified form, to the ethics embedded in the teachings of Jesus, both from the perspective of the world within and also in front of the text; these are the initial two tasks undertaken in comparative ethics (Section 2.2). The following section will outline how my proposed approach can be used for the purpose of the third and fourth tasks, namely how to interpret the traditions promoting or relativizing filial relations in the teachings of Muhammad, again from the perspective of the world within and also in front of the text (Section 2.3). Finally (in Section 2.4), I will investigate how the fifth, and final, task can be undertaken, with a particular focus on the comparative aspect in comparative ethics. I will postpone my discussion of the potential implication of this approach on the practice of SR to Chapter 7 in this thesis.

2.1 The *Organon* of ‘Implicit Ethics’ (Ruben Zimmermann)

New Testament ‘implicit ethics’, according to Zimmermann, can become *explicit* if identified with the ‘relevant theoretical models’,¹³⁰ particularly with the aid of the well-defined terminology associated with philosophical ethics’.¹³¹ Zimmermann therefore

¹²⁹ Zimmermann ‘The “Implicit Ethics” of New Testament Writings: a Draft,’ 411-412.

¹³⁰ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 21-22.

¹³¹ Zimmermann ‘The “Implicit Ethics” of New Testament Writings: a Draft,’ 411-412.

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frames his approach as the *Organon* ('instrument') of 'implicit ethics', thereby evoking the *Organon* of Aristotle's six works on logic: *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *On Sophistical Refutations*).¹³² Zimmermann's *Organon* comprises of the following eight categories: 1) moral language; 2) ethical norm; 3) the hierarchy of ethical norms; 4) the motivation of ethical norms; 5) moral agent; 6) history of the ethical tradition; 7) the lived ethos; 8) and the application of NT ethical norms in Christian moral theology.¹³³

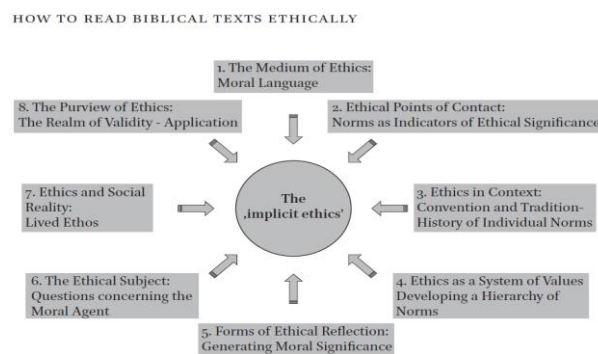


FIGURE 1.1 The *Organon* for analyzing the "implicit ethics" in biblical writings

Diagram 11: the *Organon* of Zimmermann's 'implicit ethics'.¹³⁴

2.1.1 The Medium of Ethics: Moral Language

Because other approaches lack the necessary focus on the *biblical texts themselves* as the medium for ethical statements, Zimmermann pays particular attention to a text's language of the text through a three-pronged investigation. First, he makes use of *intra-textual* analysis, that considers 'which syntactical forms, stylistic features, and structural logic are used [within New Testament texts] in presenting ethical

¹³² Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 22. See See Robin Smith, 'Aristotle's Logic,' March 18, 2000, updated November 22, 2022, accessed January 20, 2023, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-logic/>.

¹³³ Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 22-23.

¹³⁴ Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 23.

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statements'.¹³⁵ At this level of analysis, Zimmermann considers both the imperative and indicative forms of moral language and the 'grammatical logic' of the ethics it conveys.¹³⁶ The imperative form is the statement that tells someone what has to be done, while the indicative is the statement that describes the situation.¹³⁷ Analysing imperative and indicative voices is important for understanding ethical material in the New Testament, as, for example, in the case of the statement for the spouses to 'be subject' to each other (Eph. 5:21). The Greek text of this statement is in indicative voice Ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (submitting yourselves to one another), but in some English translation it is put in the imperative voice 'be subject to one another' (AMPC, CJB, GNT, NABRE, NASB).¹³⁸

Secondly, Zimmermann uses form criticism to examine the genre of the text, whereby 'attention is given to longer passages of text and their intertextual connections rather than individual sentences'.¹³⁹ At this level of analysis, Zimmermann investigates the ethical statements implicitly conveyed by New Testament writers through different genres, such as the parables presented in the canonical gospels as models for correct behaviour.¹⁴⁰ This aligns with Richard Burridge's conclusion that biography (bios) is the macro-literary form of each gospel, which 'implicitly' presents its protagonist as an imitable character.¹⁴¹

Third, due to the limitations of the (imperative-indicative) approach associated primarily with Rudolf Bultmann, Zimmermann stresses - through what he calls the extra-textual element - that a text's indicative voice can convey ethics if the rhetorical purpose of the text is taken into account.¹⁴² For example, an implicit imperative could

¹³⁵ Ruben Zimmermann, 'Ethics in the New Testament and Language: Basic Explorations and Eph 5:21–33 as Test Case,' in *Moral Language in the New Testament: The Interrelatedness of Language and Ethics in Early Christian Writings*, eds. Ruben Zimmermann, Jan G. van der Watt and Susanne Luther (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 19-50, here 28.

¹³⁶ Zimmermann, 'Ethics in the New Testament and Language,' 30-36.

¹³⁷ Ruben Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love: Discovering Paul's "Implicit Ethics" through 1 Corinthians*, trans. Dieter T. Roth (Minneapolis: Fortress Academic, 2018), 34.

¹³⁸ Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 24.

¹³⁹ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 39.

¹⁴⁰ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 41; Zimmermann, 'Ethics in the New Testament and Language,' 38.

¹⁴¹ See Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*.

¹⁴² Zimmermann, 'Ethics in the New Testament and Language,' 40-45.

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be understood in 1 Corinthians 6:16: ‘Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?’ This question is not a real enquiry, but rather a rhetorical question emphasizing that this is what *must not* be done and thereby assumes that the addressees of this question will concur with this position.¹⁴³

2.1.2 The Ethical Norm

Zimmermann defines an ethical norm as ‘a pronouncement within an ethical statement or discourse that justifies the claim to an “ought to” or sets forth an attribution of value in terms of the conduct of an individual or a group’.¹⁴⁴ An ethical norm, then, can take the form of an ethical pronouncement to an individual or a group of people regarding what they ‘ought’ to do or not do. Also, through the wider application of this phrase, an ethical norm can refer to the moral authority that justifies the *normative* aspect of an ethical statement on conduct, such as ‘the law says...’.¹⁴⁵

Zimmermann differentiates between two types of ethical norms: *formal norms* (e.g., principles, maxims) ‘which describe a norm of action based on altruism and reciprocity that does not concretely determine what action should be taken’, and *material norms* (e.g., values, goods), where ‘the precise elements are specified and clearly understood’.¹⁴⁶ For example, in the Sermon on the Mount the Golden Rule, ‘do to others as you would have them do to you’ (Mt. 7:12), could be regarded as a *formal* ethical norm because it delineates a behavioural standard without definitively prescribing a certain course of action.¹⁴⁷ However, *material* ethical norms can be found elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount, in the commandment of precise actions such as giving food and clothing (Mt. 6:25).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 38.

¹⁴⁴ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 43.

¹⁴⁵ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 43.

¹⁴⁶ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 27.

¹⁴⁷ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 27.

¹⁴⁸ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 27.

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2.1.3 Tradition-History of Individual Ethical Norms

Zimmermann stresses the importance of *Religionsgeschichte* (history of religions) for understanding the ethical norms that underpin NT texts, since ‘norms are shaped within a linguistic and cultural community’.¹⁴⁹ There are three areas that form the relevant NT background in this respect: Jewish, Hellenistic-philosophical, and the setting(s) of the early Christian communities.¹⁵⁰

2.1.4 Hierarchy of Ethical Norms

As ethical norms are often presented in relation to each other, it is helpful to differentiate between ‘classificatory’ and ‘comparative’ value concepts.¹⁵¹ A *classificatory* statement of value categorizes objects as either valuable or worthless, such as contrasts between ‘good/bad’ or ‘right/wrong’.¹⁵² A *comparative* statement of value occurs when several norms are compared with each other in order to determine whether one is more valuable than another. Evaluation typically occurs through comparisons, which identify something as ‘better’ or ‘more valuable’, or they are negatively expressed as ‘worse’ or ‘less valuable’, or through statements expressing similarity or equality such as ‘just as good’ or ‘just as bad’.¹⁵³

2.1.5 Forms of Ethical Reflection: Motivation of Ethical Norms

This component of the *Organon* of ‘implicit ethics’ analyses the form of the moral reasoning and ethical argumentation, such as whether the argumentation is

¹⁴⁹ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 48.

¹⁵⁰ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 28-29.

¹⁵¹ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 29.

¹⁵² Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 52.

¹⁵³ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 53.

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deontological or *teleological*.¹⁵⁴ Ethical argumentation is *deontological* when the value of an action is deduced from a prescribed obligation or duty (τὸ δέον) and where an imperative implies that one should do the prescribed good for its own sake. The argumentation is *teleological* or consequential when the value of an action is measured by its goal (τὸ τέλος) or consequences, that is, where an imperative to do an action is designed to achieve a certain goal.¹⁵⁵

These forms of argumentation (*deontology* and *teleology*) are not the only form of moral reasoning attested in New Testament texts. Ethical reflection or the generation of moral significance is also attested in narrative elements such as characters, plot, time, and place.¹⁵⁶ Narratives can implicitly motivate readers to follow or imitate the protagonist, such as in the presentation of Jesus as a mimetic character in the four gospels.

2.1.6 The Ethical Subject: Questions Concerning Moral Agency

In moral theory ethical norms and their justification do not exist independently of an ethical subject who is presented or addressed as a 'moral agent'.¹⁵⁷ This moral agent can be an individual person or a collective community.¹⁵⁸ Among the aspects that constitute moral agency is the internal motivation for moral agents: are they *autonomous* or *heteronomous*? According to moral theory, an *autonomous* moral agent is one who is 'free in its will and in its choice to act'.¹⁵⁹ A *heteronomous* moral agent is subject to 'a law and command ethics'.¹⁶⁰ Based on their responsibility as moral agents, they can be presented as either role models to be followed (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:16;

¹⁵⁴ Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 31.

¹⁵⁵ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 65; idem, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 31-32.

¹⁵⁶ Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 32-34.

¹⁵⁷ Zimmermann, 'The "Implicit Ethics" of New Testament Writings: a Draft,' 413-414; *The Logic of Love*, 73.

¹⁵⁸ Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 36.

¹⁵⁹ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 75.

¹⁶⁰ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 76.

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11:1) or, otherwise, as anti-models, such as the case of the ‘unmerciful servant’ (Mt. 18:23-35) or the couple Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).¹⁶¹

2.1.7 Lived Ethos: Ethics and Social Reality

Zimmermann defines ethos - from the Greek root ἦθος or ἔθος - ‘as moral positions that are deemed to be valid based on custom and tradition’.¹⁶² The notion of a lived ethos centres on conventionalized practices that have validity within a certain society.¹⁶³ Thus, in the case of New Testament ethics, it is ‘focused on the question of the relationship between observations and description in a scriptural text and actual practice’.¹⁶⁴ Examining the ethos and practices of early Christian communities has been a longstanding focus in New Testament scholarship, although Zimmermann focuses more on the *text* of the New Testament rather than the world behind it. He acknowledges the importance of elaborating, as far as possible, on the social reality that lies behind New Testament texts, but these social practices can only be extracted from the New Testament writings themselves.¹⁶⁵

2.1.8 Application

Zimmermann relates biblical ethics to the problem of over-individualization in moral theory.¹⁶⁶ From a historical point of view, Paul’s letters (as well as other NT writings) ‘are situational and contextually limited, which means that their reach and scope is also limited’.¹⁶⁷ The investigation of the application and validity of a NT passage is thus

¹⁶¹ Zimmermann, ‘The "Implicit Ethics" of New Testament Writings: a Draft,’ 414.

¹⁶² Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 1.

¹⁶³ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 82.

¹⁶⁴ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 36.

¹⁶⁵ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 83, 86-87.

¹⁶⁶ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 89.

¹⁶⁷ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 90.

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considered at the level of ‘*production-aesthetics*’, which considers the problems that Paul was addressing in his own time and place, and also those of his addressees.¹⁶⁸

New Testament writings are (now) considered part of the Christian *canon*, and thus their authoritative scope becomes more universal regardless of their original aims.¹⁶⁹ The reception of these writings and their relevance to other contexts, including contemporary ethical debates, is described by Zimmermann as ‘*reception aesthetics*’.¹⁷⁰ Questions about the relevance and validity of NT writings to other contexts beyond their environment ‘have often been posed in theology’.¹⁷¹

To summarize, Zimmermann’s *Organon* primarily considers *the world within the text*, as indicated by categories 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 (moral language, ethical norm, its hierarchy, motivation, and moral agency). He does, nevertheless, also address *the world behind the text* in categories 3 and 7 (history of ethical norms and lived ethos), as well as *the world in front of the text* in category 8 (application).

2.2 *Organon* 3: ‘Implicit Ethics’ in Relation to the Teachings of Jesus

Zimmermann’s formulation of *Organon* as an interpretative tool for the study of NT ethics can be adopted, albeit in modified form, to investigate Jesus’ ethical teaching about filial relations as recorded in the Four Gospels as well as their later reception. Because Volker Rabens has provided a modified form of the *Organon* of Zimmermann’s into what he calls *Organon* 2.0,¹⁷² I call the modified form presented in this study *Organon* 3.

¹⁶⁸ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 90-91.

¹⁶⁹ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 90.

¹⁷⁰ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 91.

¹⁷¹ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 91.

¹⁷² See Volker Rabens, ‘Inspiring Ethics: A Hermeneutical Model for the Dialogue between Biblical Texts and Contemporary Ethics,’ in *Key Approaches to Biblical Ethics*, eds. Volker Rabens, Jacqueline Grey and Mariam Kamell Kovalishyn (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 80-126.

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2.2.1 The World within the Teachings of Jesus

Using the five categories that relate to the ethical content of the New Testament (categories 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 above) for interpreting Jesus' teaching about filial relations is challenging for the following reasons. First, Zimmermann's *Organon* is organized to identify and interpret the ethics embedded in a single-authored text. His opening discussion of language as a separate category can be justified because he focuses on the ethics of an individual text (such as Ephesians 5). However, the Jesus material discussed in this thesis are found in a range of texts (written by different authors) and the focus of our enquiry is a particular *theme* within Jesus' ethical teaching. Therefore, to avoid repetition, the discussion about language (category 1) can be merged with other overlapping categories, such as category 2 about the ethical norms.

Secondly, the expressions used by Zimmermann to articulate the various levels of textual analysis (intra-, inter- and extra-textual) can be confusing because this terminology can be used in different ways in biblical studies. Zimmermann uses intratextuality to refer to grammatical analysis; intertextuality is employed to refer to literary form (micro or macro); extratextuality refers to rhetorical analysis. In biblical studies, however, intratextuality refers to the relationship between passages within the same text.¹⁷³ The term 'intertextuality', moreover, is used by biblical scholars 'in very different and, in some cases, incompatible ways... [and] it is best used as an "umbrella" term for the complex interactions that exist between "texts" (in the broadest sense)'.¹⁷⁴ Extratextuality usually refers to 'aspects of the world beyond the biblical text – of that borderless context known as the ancient Near East for instance'.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, in place

¹⁷³ See John Jarick, 'Intratextuality: Cross-Examining Chronicles: Adventures in the Story-World of a Notionally Historical Narrative,' in *Biblical Interpretation and Method: Essays in Honour of John Barton*, eds. Katharine J. Dell and Paul M. Joyce (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 214–222.

¹⁷⁴ Steve Moyise, 'Intertextuality and Biblical Studies: A Review,' *Verbum et Ecclesia* 23, no. 2 (2002): 418–431, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v23i2.1211>.

¹⁷⁵ Steven Weitzman, 'Text and Context in Biblical Studies: A Brief History of a Troubled Relationship,' in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Ancient Israel*, ed. Susan Niditch (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 67–83, here 69.

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of Zimmermann's application of the terms intra-, inter- and extratextuality, I will refer to grammatical, literary and rhetorical analysis respectively.¹⁷⁶

Third, Zimmermann's use of such terminology to read the ethics of a single-authored text could cause confusion when addressing the ethical teachings of Jesus which are reprehended by different authors such as the definition of the ethical norm as will now be discussed now.

2.2.1.1 Ethical Norms and their Motivations in Jesus' Teachings

Zimmermann defines an ethical norm as the 'ought to' statement as well as its justification. This definition may cause confusion when discussing Jesus' ethics, for the justification of ethical norms in the Four Gospels is more complex than in Paul's letters, which are the primary focus of Zimmermann's work on 'implicit ethics'. In Jesus' teaching the authority of ethical norms can be presented at two levels. On the first level, Jesus is the authority figure because, in his capacity as the protagonist within the gospels (as *bioi*), he is the one who should be imitated.¹⁷⁷ On another level, Jesus can refer to the law as the authority underpinning his statements: 'For Moses says, "Honour your father and mother"' (Mk 7:10). The authority to which Jesus refers can, however, change as the result of another gospel writer's redaction of Mark writer; happens, for example, in the case Matthew who stresses the divine authority of the law: 'For God says, "Honour your father and mother"' (Mt. 15:4).

Zimmermann's definition of ethical norm can certainly be applied to the Fifth Commandment in its capacity as an 'ought to' statement. It applies as well to Jesus, Moses and God as the authorities behind this statement. Here, it will be helpful to limit the application of ethical norm to the first of these options, that is, in the philosophical

¹⁷⁶ Charles Cosgrove attempts to paraphrase Zimmermann's terminology on textuality. See Charles H. Cosgrove, 'Reading Biblical Texts Ethically: A Discussion of Ruben Zimmermann's Method of "Implicit Ethics" from a New Testament Perspective,' in *Key Approaches to Biblical Ethics: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, eds Volker Rabens, Jacqueline N. Grey and Mariam Kamell Kovalishyn (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 65-79, here 66.

¹⁷⁷ Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 25-32.

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sense of ‘convictions guiding conduct’.¹⁷⁸ For the justification of these convictions, the phrase ‘the authority of the ethical norm’ can be used to elaborate their different levels and types.

The mimetic character of Jesus’ words and deeds also overlaps with another two categories identifiable in Zimmermann’s *Organon*: moral motivation and moral agency (categories 5 and 6 respectively). In relation to category 5, Zimmermann states that what motivates ethics in biblical texts is not restricted to the two main philosophical argumentations, *deontology* and *teleology*. Further, the mimetic character of Jesus (or other characters) can act as a motivation for the ethical message contained within New Testament writings.¹⁷⁹

In category 6 of the *Organon*, Zimmermann defines moral agency as either the addressee(s) of ethical norms or those who are presented as role models or anti-models. With reference to the latter, Jesus can certainly be considered a moral agent in the gospels because he is presented as a role model and also has an authoritative role to play in constituting ethical norms. Also, in relation to category 6, Zimmermann discusses the addressees of the ethical norm as either an individual or a group of people, which is closely related to the ethical norm and its scope of implication.

So, there is a connection between the four sub-categories of ethical norm, its addressees, authority, and motivation within Zimmermann’s *Organon*. They are merged together as follows in *Organon* 3:

¹⁷⁸ Wilfried Harle, *Ethik* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 17, quoted in Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 42.

¹⁷⁹ Zimmermann ‘The “Implicit Ethics” of New Testament Writings: a Draft,’ 414.

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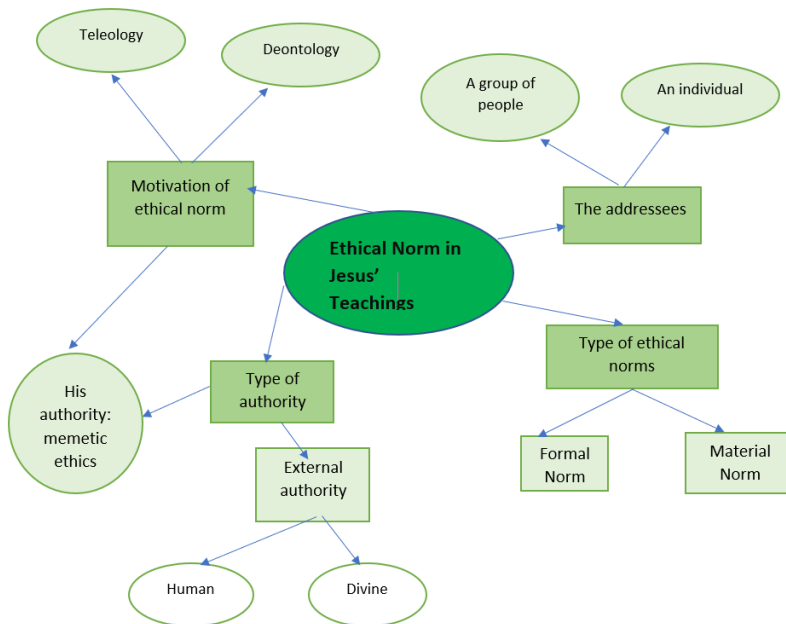


Diagram 12: The ethical norm, its authority and motivation in *Organon 3*.

The merging of these relationally connected categories will make the discussion more concise and practical.¹⁸⁰ For the purpose of this study, the hierarchy of ethical norm requires particular focus since the theme of filial relations has two separate aspects (promoting and relativizing) and thus need to be examined as two separate categories.

¹⁸⁰ Volker Rabens, ““Indicative and Imperative” as the Substructure of Paul’s Theology-and-Ethics in Galatians? A Discussion of Divine and Human Agency in Paul,” in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul’s Letter*, eds. Mark W. Elliott, Scott J. Hafemann, N. T. Wright and John Frederick (GR: Baker Academic, 2014), 285-305, here 297-98, also proposes that ethical norm and its hierarchy should be merged.

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2.2.1.2 The Hierarchy of Ethical Norms

The ‘hierarchy’ aspect of Zimmermann’s *Organon* is of particular significance to this study because it can be used to address the question of the relationship between the two notions of filial relations attested in Jesus’ teaching. In line with this approach, Markus Zehnder stresses the need to modify Zimmermann’s *Organon* when addressing a single theme, such as marital relations, across a range of canonical texts and contexts.¹⁸¹

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the scholarly literature on moral theology tends to focus on the *promotion* of filial piety. This rather selective examination of the hierarchy of ethical norms is attested, for example, in Richard Burridge’s *Imitating Jesus*, even though the study is designed to present a more ‘holistic’ reading of Jesus’ ethical teaching. Burridge stresses that inclusiveness is given priority in Jesus’ teachings.¹⁸² Hays, however, comments that Burridge does not discuss the use of Jesus’ teachings to justify non-inclusive topics such as the just war theory (cf. Mt. 10:34-36).¹⁸³ When bringing these two notions together (i.e., those promoting and those relativizing inclusiveness), ‘the discussion of imitating Jesus becomes both uncomfortable and interesting’.¹⁸⁴

For *Organon* 3, nevertheless, Zimmermann’s category of the *hierarchy* of ethical norms will prove to be a helpful tool for comparatively investigating the two contrasting, and certainly tense, notions of filial relations (promoting or relativizing) attested in Jesus’ teaching.

2.2.1.3 Moral Agency

Moral agency, as defined by Zimmermann, refers, firstly, to the addressee(s) of ethical norms, either individually or collectively, and, secondly, to characters within NT

¹⁸¹ See Markus Zehnder, ‘Reading Biblical Texts Ethically: A Discussion of Ruben Zimmermann’s Method of “Implicit Ethics” from an Old Testament Perspective,’ in *Key Approaches to Biblical Ethics: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, eds. Volker Rabens, Jacqueline N. Grey and Mariam Kamell Kovalishyn (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 50-64, here 61.

¹⁸² Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 406-9.

¹⁸³ Richard B. Hays, ‘Response to Richard Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*,’ *Scottish Journal of Theology* 63, no. 3 (2010): 331 – 335, here 335, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930610000402>.

¹⁸⁴ Hays, ‘Response to Richard Burridge,’ 335.

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narratives in their capacity as role models or anti-models. The category of addressee(s) overlaps with that of ethical norm and thus will be merged with it in *Organon* 3. Thus, the image of the moral agents as either positive or negative role models contributes to the analysis in this category in *Organon* 3.

To summarize, *Organon* 3 will interpret the world *within* Jesus' teaching about filial relations according to three categories: a) the ethical norm, its authority and motivation; b) the hierarchy of ethical norms; c) and the image of moral agency. The definitions and sub-divisions of these categories (as applied in *Organon* 3) are summarised in Diagram 13 below. I will then discuss the relevance of Zimmermann's categories relating to the world *behind* the text for this study's attempt to examine Jesus' teaching ethically.

a) The Ethical Norm	Definition	An ethical pronouncement that tells an individual or a group of people what they 'ought' to do or not do. ¹⁸⁵	
	Implication	It analyses the addressees of the ethical norm as either an individual or a group of people, and it examines the 'production <i>aesthetics</i> ' of ethical norms. ¹⁸⁶	
	Type	Formal	'A norm of action based on altruism and reciprocity that does not concretely determine what action should be taken' (e.g., principles, maxims). ¹⁸⁷
		Material	'The precise elements are specified and clearly understood' (e.g., values, goods). ¹⁸⁸
	Authority	This justifies the <i>normative</i> aspect of ethical statements on conduct, such as 'the law says...'. ¹⁸⁹	
	Motivation	Deontological	To do the prescribed good for its own sake. ¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 43.

¹⁸⁶ The *production-aesthetic* and *reception-aesthetic* are two aspects of the application of the ethical norm. The former relates to the world within the text and the latter relates to the world in front of the text. See Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 90-93.

¹⁸⁷ Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 27.

¹⁸⁸ Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 27.

¹⁸⁹ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 43.

¹⁹⁰ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 65; idem, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 31-32.

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		Teleological	To do an action in order to achieve a certain goal. ¹⁹¹
b) The Hierarchy of Ethical Norms	Classificatory	It categorizes objects as valuable or worthless: 'good/ bad' or 'right/wrong'. ¹⁹²	
	Comparative	This occurs when several ethical norms are compared with each: 'better' or 'more valuable'; 'worse' or 'less valuable'; or 'just as good,' 'just as bad'. ¹⁹³	
c) The Moral Agent	Image	Positive role model	Presented as role models to be followed. ¹⁹⁴
		Anti-model	Presented as a negative model whose character is disgraced. ¹⁹⁵
	Motivation	Autonomous	The one who is 'free in its will and in its choice to act'. ¹⁹⁶
		Heteronomous	The agent who is subject to 'a law and command ethics'. ¹⁹⁷

Diagram 13: *Organon* 3

2.2.2 The World Behind the Text

The world behind the text is discussed by Zimmermann with reference to the history of tradition and lived ethos, that is, the actual practices recorded in the texts in question (categories 3 and 7 respectively). These two categories are not directly relevant to this study, which focuses on Jesus' teaching about filial relations rather than on filial relations as presented in all the New Testament writings and their contexts. I will therefore not discuss these two categories separately but refer to them when they are relevant to the interpretation of the world within the text of Jesus' teaching.

¹⁹¹ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 65; idem, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 31-32.

¹⁹² Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 52.

¹⁹³ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 53.

¹⁹⁴ Zimmermann, 'The "Implicit Ethics" of New Testament Writings: a Draft,' 414

¹⁹⁵ Zimmermann, 'The "Implicit Ethics" of New Testament Writings: a Draft,' 414

¹⁹⁶ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 75.

¹⁹⁷ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 76.

2.2.3 The World in Front of the Text: Analysing Al-Miskīn’s Reception of the Teachings of Jesus

The application of New Testament ethics at a *reception-aesthetic* level considers the extension of ethical norms in contemporary contexts, beyond the text itself. This is the eighth category in Zimmermann’s *Organon*. This mode of enquiry is more likely to feature in moral theology, which assumes or focuses upon the Bible in a canonical sense. Zimmermann and other scholars (such as Hays and Burridge), who extend their interpretation of the New Testament to include its contemporary application, overtly define themselves as *Christian* theologians as well as New Testament scholars. While the writer of this thesis is a committed Egyptian Muslim, for comparative purposes I will use one example of the Christian reception of the NT passages in question to explore how Jesus’ teaching about filial relations is interpreted in modern contexts.

Al-Miskīn’s exegetical outputs have been chosen as a case study for analysing the reception of Jesus’ teaching about filial relations.¹⁹⁸ In his commentary on the relevant texts, Al-Miskīn not only applies their ethical norms to his contemporary context but also considers the hierarchy of those norms, their authority and the image of moral agents. The three perspectives belonging to *Organon* 3 can therefore be used as a methodological framework for analysing Al-Miskīn’s work. Consequently, it becomes possible to compare the likely original meaning of Jesus’ *teaching as well as* their reception by Al-Miskīn, thereby facilitating the task of gaining a better understanding of interpretations both within and in front of the New Testament texts under consideration.

	The world within the text	The world in front of the text (Al-Miskīn’s reception)
	1- The ethical norm, its authority and motivation	

¹⁹⁸ See the scope of the study above (Section 1.4.4).

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Organon 3	2- The hierarchy of ethical norms
	3- The moral agents

Diagram 14: Comparing the interpretation of the worlds within and in front of the teachings of Jesus.

Such approach could be applied to the interpretation of the worlds within and in front of the teachings of Muhammad about filial relations, as will now be discussed.

2.3 *Organon* 3: ‘Implicit Ethics’ in relation to the Teachings of Muhammad

A modified version of *Organon* (3) will, for the purpose of consistency and coherence, also be applied to the interpretation of the worlds *within* and *in front* of the teachings of Muhammad about filial relations. The world *behind* the text will also be discussed where relevant.

2.3.1 The World within the Teachings of Muhammad

Given that the ‘canonical’ teachings of Muhammad as recorded in the Quran and the *Ḥadīth* are significantly different from each other in terms of style, literary form and canonization, each will be discussed separately.

a) The *Qurʾān*

The approach adopted in this study helps to address aspects of the ‘implicit ethics’ found in the Quran according to the following categories: a) the ethical norm, its authority and motivation; b) the hierarchy of ethical norms; c) and moral agency. One significant difference between the authority attributed to the Quran - in comparison with that ascribed to the New Testament and *Ḥadīth* - is its claim to divine origin (Q. 14:1; 15:9). Since the underlying authority of the Quran’s ethical norms is God, it bears

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a certain resemblance to direct statements, such as the Decalogue, attributed to God in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁹⁹

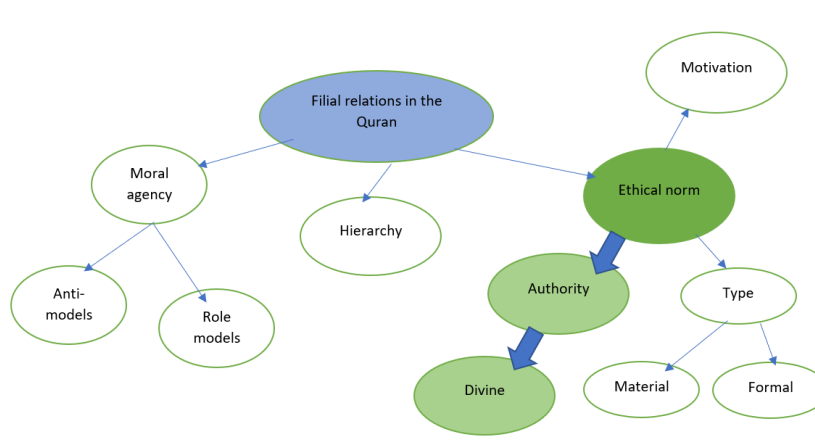


Diagram 15: *Organon 3*: The 'implicit ethics' of the Quran

b) The Ḥadīth

While Quranic studies display some interest in linking together the Quran and moral philosophy, this kind of endeavour is almost completely absent from *ḥadīth* studies, and this is because Western *ḥadīth* scholarship is largely focused on historical-critical questions.²⁰⁰ *Organon 3* may thus serve as a significant step forward in undertaking exegesis of *ḥadīth* with reference to the language of moral philosophy. As far as the authority of ethical norms is concerned, in *ḥadīth* it can be either divine or human.

¹⁹⁹ See Zehnder, 'A Discussion of Zimmermann...Old Testament Perspective,' 56.

²⁰⁰ See Draz, *The Moral World of the Quran*; Joel Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary across a Millennium* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018).

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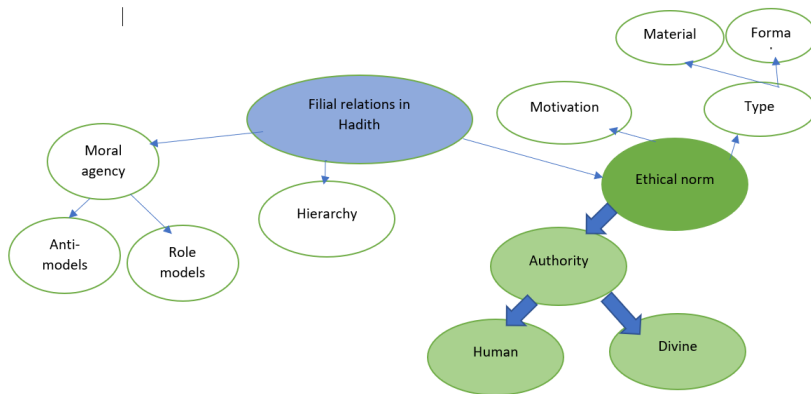


Diagram 16: The ‘implicit ethics’ of Ḥadīth in *Organon* 3.2

Applying *Organon* 3 to both the Quran and ḥadīth can assist in reaching an overall view of attitudes to filial relations in the teachings of Muhammad (as in diagram 17).

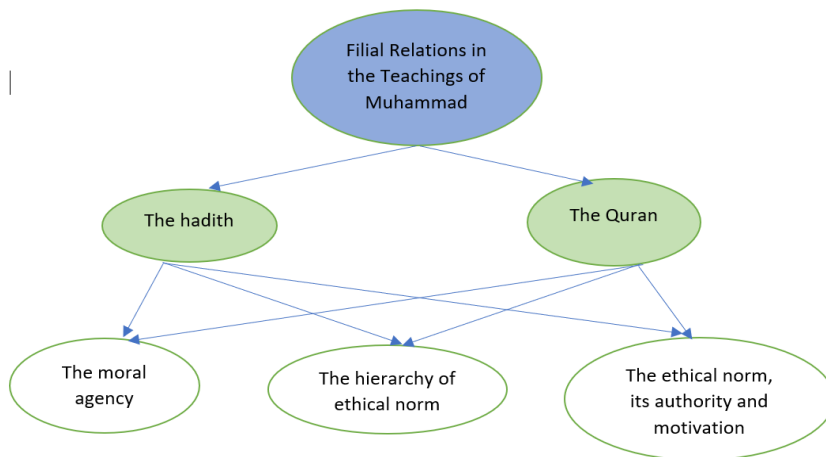


Diagram 17: the world within the teachings of Muhammad in *Organon* 3.

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2.3.2 The World in Front of the Text: Al-Shaʿrāwī's Reception of the Teachings of Muhammad

Al-Shaʿrāwī's reception of the relevant texts has, as noted above, been chosen as a case study for the reception of the teachings of Muhammad about filial relations.²⁰¹ Similar to Al-Miskīn, Al-Shaʿrāwī considers ethical norms, their hierarchy and the moral agency of texts without using *Organon* terminology. I will therefore use the three elements from *Organon* 3 to analyse Al-Shaʿrāwī's interpretations, again for the purpose of comparison and for the sake of gaining a better understanding of the world within and in front of the teachings of Muhammad (Diagram 18).

	The world within the text	The world in front of the text (Al-Shaʿrāwī's reception)
<i>Organon</i> 3.2	a) The ethical norm, its authority and motivation	
	b) The hierarchy of ethical norms	
	c) The moral agents	

Diagram 18: Comparing the interpretation of the worlds within and in front of the teachings of Muhammad.

2.4 *Organon* 3: Comparing the Ethical Teachings of Jesus and Muhammad

Organon 3 will also be used to undertake this study's final task, which is to compare the ethical material on filial relations on three analytical levels. First, I will examine the ethical teaching of Jesus and Muhammad on filial relations, together with the interpretations offered by Al-Miskīn and Al-Shaʿrāwī, through the lens of the first element of *Organon* 3. This pertains to ethical norms, their authority and underlying motivations. Secondly, I will analyse the hierarchy of filial relations as presented by Jesus and Muhammad and how they have been interpretatively received. Thirdly, this study will undertake a comparative analysis of how moral agency is presented in the

²⁰¹ See the scope of the study above (Section 1.4.4).

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teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, along with an examination of their respective receptions.

	Filial Relations in the Teachings of Jesus	Filial Relations in the Teachings of Muhammad	
The world within the text	1- The ethical norms, their authority and motivation	The world in front of the text (in the reception by Al-Miskīn and Al-Shaʿrāwī)	
	2- The Hierarchy of the ethical norms		
	3- The moral agency		

Diagram 19: hermeneutical comparisons in *Organon* 3

2.6 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 3 will analyse Jesus' statements that promote filial piety, together with their reception by Al-Miskīn, in order to recover and demarcate the ethical dimensions embedded within and in front of the scriptural text(s) (task 1). Texts and traditions that relativize filial relations will be investigated in Chapter 4, again with a view to the original text and its later reception (task 2).

Chapter 5 will provide an exegetical analysis of the teachings of Muhammad as well as their reception by Al-Shaʿrāwī (task 3), followed by a similarly structured discussion, in Chapter 6, of the relativizing of filial relations in Muhammad's teachings (task 4).

A concluding comparative analysis of these texts and interpretations will follow in Chapter 7 (task 5), focusing on its potential value for the comparative task and its potential implication on the practice of Spiritual Reasoning (task 5).

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Chapter Three:

Promoting Filial Piety in the Teachings of Jesus

This thesis aims to establish a framework for promoting mutual understanding of the textual tension about filial relations in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad. This mutual understanding is facilitated when the same exegetical criteria are applied to the five-task analysis of interpreting and comparing both the promoting and relativizing texts from the perspective of the world within and that in front of the text to avoid the selective and the superficial interpretations that could mark both the discourses about the commonalities and polemics. In the previous chapter, the hermeneutics of *Organon* 3, representing a modified form of Ruben Zimmermann's 'implicit ethics', has been selected as the exegetical approach to undertake all five tasks.

The first task is to provide an interpretation of the texts *promoting* filial relations in the teachings of Jesus. It fills a significant gap in scholarship because the texts under discussion have been virtually neglected in the study of New Testaments ethics, and this for two reasons. First, explicit references to filial piety in the Four Gospels are scarce. Apart from Jesus' twofold citation of the Fifth Commandment in the Synoptic Gospels (Mk 7:10; 10:19; Mt. 15:4; 19:19; Lk 18:20) and the scene in which he entrusts the care of his mother to the Beloved Disciple (Jn 19:26-27), it is rare to find other passages that overtly support this position. There are other Jesus traditions where the words 'father' and 'son' are used metaphorically to refer to divine family members and the new fictive family.²⁰² However, I will not discuss the ethical connotations of this metaphorical application of positive filial relations, for these passages are designed to strengthen 'spiritual family' bonds at the cost of biological family relations. For example, Jesus presents his disciples as insiders of his fictive family, while keeping Mary and his biological brothers standing outside (Mk 3:31-35; Mt. 12:46-50; Lk. 8-19-21).

²⁰² See especially Stephen Finlan, *The Family Metaphor in Jesus' Teaching* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2013).

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Secondly, limited scholarly focus on the ethical content of these passages is understandable given that it does not represent the central theme of those passages. The focus of the account in which Jesus first makes use of the Fifth Commandment is a debate over purity and food laws (Mk 7:1-23; Mt. 15:1-20), whereas the other related tradition - about the Rich Man - centres on the question of wealth and discipleship (Mk 10:17-31; Mt. 19:16-30; Lk. 18:18-30).²⁰³ Similarly, Jesus' instruction to the Beloved Disciple to take care of his mother occurs in a scene that has generated much theological discussion about Jesus' death and the birth of 'a new family', and, as a result, has superseded any discussion of what it says about filial relations (Jn 19:17-30).²⁰⁴ Thus, this chapter attempts to fill this lacuna by analysing these texts through the lens of *Organon* 3 to uncover their embedded ethical message, namely, *within* the text (Section 3.1). The hermeneutics of 'implicit ethics' will prove to be of distinct value for excavating deeper layers of ethical meaning, particularly by bringing the message conveyed in the Four Gospels to expression through the well-defined terminology of moral philosophy.

Different from New Testament ethics, scholarship about moral theology displays a marked interest in the texts promoting filial relations in Jesus' teaching.²⁰⁵ However, *Christian* interpretations of these texts are less likely to be understood and appreciated by those from other traditions who use different theological language. I will analyse one particular example of the reception of these texts (by Al-Miskīn), that is, as a case study for the world *in front* of the text, through the hermeneutical lens and philosophical terminology of *Organon* 3 (Section 3.2). The chapter's final part will compare both analyses (*within* and *in front* of the texts) to discuss how the analysis that will be provided in this chapter could make up any selective/superficial interpretation

²⁰³ See Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2007), 339-364; 473-484.

²⁰⁴ See Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 400.

²⁰⁵ For moral theology literature, see for example Pope Shenouda III, *Al-Waṣāyah Al-ʿAshr fī Al-Mafhūm Al-Masīhī [The Ten Commandments from the Christian Perspective]* (Cairo: Idārat Majallat Al-Karāzah, 1977), 77-132. For SR practice, see for example the text pack suggested for an SR session about child-parent relationships by Rose Castle Foundation in collaboration with Cambridge Interfaith Programme: 'Parent-Child Relationships,' Scriptural Reasoning Rose Castle Foundation, accessed June 15, 2020, http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/uploads/8/0/7/8/80786736/parent-child_relationships.pdf.

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of the texts under discussion in this chapter in either the commonalties and/or polemical discourses (Section 3.3).

3.1 Promoting Filial Piety in Jesus' Teaching

Three gospel texts promoting filial piety form the centrepiece of this discussion, namely Jesus' citation of the Fifth Commandment in his encounter with the Rich Man (Mk 10:19; par.), his controversy with the Pharisees about purity laws (Mk 7:10; par.), and the Johannine scene in which Jesus entrusts his mother to the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:26-27). This discussion takes the form of an analysis of the Synoptic texts in terms of their similarity in form and content, building on the Two-Document hypothesis that recognizes the Gospel of Mark as a primary source for both Matthew and Luke. While the Synoptic material is more concerned with Jesus' audience-orientated teaching, the Johannine passage focuses more on his personal relationship with his mother.

3.1.1 Filial Relations in Jesus' Encounter with the Rich Man

The three Synoptic accounts record the story of a man who asks Jesus what is required to inherit eternal life. Jesus' response falls into two parts. He first rejects being called 'good' (Mk 10:18; Lk. 18:19) or being asked about what is good (Mt. 19:17), justifying this rejection with his words: 'No one is good but God alone' (Mk 10:18; Mt. 19:17; Lk. 18:19). In the second part of Jesus' reply, regarding the way to eternal life, he quotes the socio-ethical Commandments (the fifth to the ninth) from the Decalogue, including the command to honour one's parents (Mk. 10:19; Mt. 19:18-19; Lk. 18:20). This constitutes the ethical norm of filial piety in this particular account.

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3.1.1.1 The Norm of Filial Piety, its Authority and Motivation

The ethical norm, as defined in *Organon 3*, is a pronouncement that tells an individual or a group of people what they 'ought' to do or not do.²⁰⁶ The Fifth Commandment, as cited by Jesus, meets this definition because, as one of the Decalogue's imperatives, it calls upon all to honour their parents. Such normativity is confirmed by Jesus, although he introduces the selected commandments with an indicative statement: '*You know the commandments...*' (Mk 10:19; Lk. 18:20). This indicative voice conveys imperativeness because it occurs in Jesus' response to the Rich Man's question as to what he needs to do to inherit eternal life. In other words, Jesus declares to him: if you want to inherit eternal life you must fulfil the commandments that you know...honour your father and your mother. The grammatical wording of Matthew's version of this account unequivocally conveys this imperative meaning: 'If you wish to enter into life, *keep the commandments...Honour your father and mother*' (19:17-18).²⁰⁷ In all three Synoptic accounts, the Fifth Commandment is presented as a *formal* ethical norm, which requires to honour parents without indicating specific actions required to be fulfilled.²⁰⁸

What underpins the authority of the Decalogue, and indeed the whole Torah, for the Synoptic authors is that their source is God, who - as emphasized by Jesus - alone is good. In the Hebrew Bible the concept of goodness corresponds directly to God, who praised for being good (טוב) because his steadfast love endures forever (1 Chron. 16:34; 2 Chron. 5:13; 7:3; Jer. 33:11; Ps. 136: 1); God alone, moreover, does great wonders (Ps. 136:4-26).²⁰⁹ God's will, as expressed in the Law, is also good;²¹⁰ hence the prophet

²⁰⁶ See diagram 13 above about the basic definitions in *Organon 3* and Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 43.

²⁰⁷ Grammatical, form and rhetorical analyses are the three linguistic levels of the first category of Zimmermann's *Organon* (on language) which he calls 'intra-, inter and extra-textual'. See Zimmermann, 'Ethics in the New Testament and Language,' 30-36. To avoid repetition, this study discusses such linguistic analyses whenever they overlap with the categories of my modified *Organon 3* (see Section 2.2 above), and here they relate to the identification of the ethical norm.

²⁰⁸ For the difference between *formal* and *material* ethical norms, see Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 27.

²⁰⁹ Jan van der Watt, 'Reflections on Doing What is Good and True in the Gospel of John,' in *Ethische Normen des frühen Christentums*, eds. Friedrich W. Horn and Ruben Zimmermann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 73-92, here 75.

²¹⁰ Van der Watt, 'Reflections on Doing What is Good,' 75.

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Micah states that all of God's commandments are good (טוב) as they derive from him being just or his lovingkindness (6:8). The statutes and commandments of which God speaks on Mount of Sinai are also described as good (טובים) (Neh. 9:13).²¹¹

In addition, the one who mediates the Commandments *may* also be called 'good'. Thus, in one rabbinic tradition, Moses is described as 'good' in his role as the one who receives the 'good' Torah from the 'good' God to deliver it to 'the good ones' (b. *Menachot* 53b). Similarly, a rabbi hears in his dreams: 'Good greeting to the good teacher from the good Lord, who of his goodness does good to his people' (b. *Taanit* 24b).²¹² The Fifth Commandment can, therefore, be described as a 'good' *ethical norm* because it comes from God who is 'good'. Jesus can also be called a 'good teacher', as happens in the story of the Rich Man, precisely in his capacity as the one giving expression to God's commandments. Jesus' rejection of the designation 'good' or of being asked about what is good is an enigma in this respect, raising questions about his role with regard to the Fifth Commandment and the whole Decalogue.

One possible interpretation of this perceived anomaly is that it serves as a sign of Jesus' humility, for the use of the term 'good' in relation to a teacher is rare and could be used for 'insolent flattery' (b. *Taanit* 24b).²¹³ Another possible interpretation is that Jesus wishes to direct the questioner away from himself towards God as the only motivation for fulfilling the Commandment.²¹⁴ This could amount to a case of *mimetic motivation* for fulfilling the socio-ethical Commandments under consideration: follow these Commandments to be good just as your God (alone) is good. This is similar to

²¹¹ The quest for the history of an ethical norm in the Jewish tradition is one of the categories in Zimmermann's eightfold *Organon*. See Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 28-29, and Section 2.1.3 above. Due to the focus of this thesis on Christian-Muslim interpretations of 'scriptures', the Jewish tradition is discussed only whenever it is relevant to the interpretation of the teaching of Jesus. See Section 2.2.2 above. Here, the Jewish tradition relates to the divine authority of filial piety as an ethical norm in Jesus' teaching.

²¹² Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2007), 477.

²¹³ G.H. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus: Considered in the Light of Post-biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 337; Israel Abraham, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), 186; Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 477.

²¹⁴ Michael Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke: Volume II (Luke 9:51-24)*, trans. Christoph Heilig (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2017), 330.

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the scriptural call: ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy’ (Lev. 19:2).²¹⁵ Furthermore, since one particular aspect of God’s goodness is the works he fulfils on his people’s behalf, it can be regarded as an imitation of God’s goodness.²¹⁶

In addition to establishing a possible motivation for imitating God, Jesus uses a *teleological* promise as an incentive to fulfil the Fifth Commandment (and the other socio-ethical Commandments): ‘If you wish to enter into (inherit) life, keep the commandments’ (Mt. 19:17-19; also implied in Mk 10:19; Lk. 18:20). The *teleological* motivation, or external incentive for the addressees of the ethical norm to fulfil it, is ‘inheriting life’.²¹⁷ This motivation reflects biblical and later Jewish traditions. Abraham and his descendants are promised that they will inherit the land of Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:7; Ex. 32:13; Josh. 13:7; cf. *Jub.* 22:27), whereas, in later traditions, this promise is extended to include the whole earth (Sir. 44:21; *Jub.* 22:14; cf. Rom. 4:13).²¹⁸ In late Second Temple Judaism, the inheritance of eternal life is understood in a way that is arguably similar to Jesus’ reference to life in the account of the Rich Man. In *I Enoch* 40:9, the inheritance refers to Phanuel, ‘who presides over repentance, and the hope of those who will inherit eternal life’. Similarly, the *Sibylline Oracles* (3.46–49) state that those who ‘honour the true eternal God inherit life, dwelling in the luxuriant garden of Paradise for the time of eternity, feasting on sweet bread from starry heaven’.²¹⁹ Yarbro Collins notes that the Rich Man’s question about eternal life ‘presupposes expectations of this kind’.²²⁰

²¹⁵ Arseny Ermakov, ‘The Salvific Significance of the Torah in Mark 10.17-22 and 12.28-34,’ in *Torah in the New Testament: Papers Delivered at the Manchester-Lausanne Seminar of June 2008*, eds. Michael Tait and Peter Oakes (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010), 21-31, here 24-25. It is noteworthy that such a call for holiness is followed by commandments from the Decalogue, which include the order to honour parents immediately after the call to emulate God’s holiness (Lev. 19:2-3).

²¹⁶ Ermakov, ‘The Salvific Significance of the Torah in Mark,’ 23.

²¹⁷ For the difference between teleological and *deontological* motivations, see Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 65; ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically’, 31-32 and diagram 13 above about the basic definitions in *Organon* 3.

²¹⁸ Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009), 720.

²¹⁹ Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 476.

²²⁰ Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 476.

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Jesus, however, may be doing more than pronouncing the Commandments. The Rich Man was probably expecting some *interpretation* of the Law from Jesus that was different from the one with which he is familiar; this is implied by two aspects of his responses. First, the Rich Man is not satisfied with Jesus' reply, 'You know the commandments', which seems to serve as a stock response to questions about eternal life (cf. Lk. 10:25-27).²²¹ Still thinking that something is deficient, he asks, 'What do I still lack?' (Mt. 19:20). Mark and Luke do not record this unequivocal question, but its meaning is implied in the response of the Markan Jesus to the man's earlier claim that he has observed the Commandments since his youth: 'You lack one thing...' (Mk. 10:20; Lk. 18:20). Secondly, his expectation of a separate or different interpretation may be implied in the Rich Man's disappointment and withdrawal when Jesus declares: 'Sell what you own and give the money to the poor... then come, follow me' (Mk 10:21-22; Mt. 19:21-22; Lk. 18:22-23).

Such anticipated interpretation from Jesus is consistent with his general *authoritative role* towards the Law, which manifests itself in the Synoptic Gospels in three ways: a) confirmation; b) relaxation (or abrogation); and c) radicalization.²²² In what follows it will be argued that the first two aspects apply specifically to the Decalogue. Jesus' citation of a selected list of Commandments suggests that the cited socio-ethical instructions, particularly the command to honour one's parents, are given precedence in this account. This is clearly asserted in Jesus' attitude toward the Fourth Commandment (about sabbath observance), which is either abrogated or relativized in relation to the (other) cited Commandments.

²²¹ Luke records another question to Jesus about eternal life. The answer also is a reference to the Law (Lk. 10:25-27).

²²² See William Loader, *Jesus' Attitude Towards the Law: A Study of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002).

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3.1.1.2 The Hierarchy of Filial Relationships

The socio-ethical Commandments cited by Jesus in this account can be considered as *classificatory* ethical norms. In other words, they are introduced as ‘good values’ without being compared to other ethical norms. However, such socio-ethical norms (in particular filial piety, as presented in Jesus’ use of the Fifth Commandment) can be **also** considered *comparative* ethical norms, in the sense that they are presented as more valuable than other others (such as Sabbath observance).²²³

This *comparative* perspective can be identified in the redactional activity of the Synoptic authors: both in the omission of the Fourth Commandment about Sabbath observance (though citing the Fifth and other socio-ethical Commandments), and also in the change of sequence so that the Fifth comes last after the second series (second tablet) of Commandments. All three Synoptic accounts quote from the Fifth to the Ninth Commandments: ‘Honour your father and your mother...; You shall not murder; Neither shall you commit adultery; Neither shall you steal; Neither shall you bear false witness’ (Exod. 20:12-17; Deut. 5:16-21). Mark and Luke change the sequence so that the Fifth Commandment comes at the end of the ‘cited’ shortlist after the second series (Mk 10:19; Lk. 18:20). Matthew also follows Mark, though he adds the Love Command at the end of the shortlist (Mt. 19:19). Only Mark inserts the command ‘do not defraud’, which probably replaces the Tenth Commandment, ‘do not covet’, before the Fifth (Mk 10:19).

Joel Marcus suggests that Jesus’ statement, ‘only God is good’, is an allusion to the Shema: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might’ (Deut. 6:4-5).²²⁴ This crystallizes the Decalogue’s first four commandments about the

²²³ For the difference between *classificatory* and *comparative* ethical norms, see Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 53 and diagram 13 above about the basic definitions in *Organon* 3.

²²⁴ Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 724. See also Dale C. Allison, ‘Mark 12:28–31 and the Decalogue,’ in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel*, eds. Craig A. Evans and W. Richard Stegner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 270-78.

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relationship between humans and God.²²⁵ However, identifying an allusion to the Fourth Commandment about Sabbath observance through the Shema is questionable, because it stands against Jesus' overall attitude towards the Sabbath in Synoptic tradition, especially in two consecutive pericopes: Jesus' pronouncement about the Sabbath (Mk 2:23-28; Mt. 12:1-8; Lk. 6:1-5) and the account of the man with a withered hand (Mk 3:1-6; Mt. 12:9-13; Lk. 6:6-11). In the former, Jesus allows his disciples to pluck off heads of grain on the Sabbath, while in the latter he heals a man again on the Sabbath. This violates the Fourth Commandment: 'But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; **you shall not do any work**—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns' (Ex. 20:10; Deut. 5:14). I therefore propose that Jesus' position towards the Sabbath is not to abrogate it, as noted by Hans Hübner,²²⁶ but to relax the interpretation of what constitutes 'work', as noted by James G. Crossley,²²⁷ for the same reason as his citation of the social-ethical commandments: to take care of others.

In the account about plucking grain, the Pharisees criticize Jesus' disciples for acting in this way, which they consider as 'work' and not permissible on the Sabbath. Rabbinic tradition records a similar dispute on the same issue: the sages protest against the men of Jericho for 'they ate the fallen fruit from beneath [trees] on Shabbat' (m. *Pesahim* 4:8). Similar to the encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees, this dispute is over the '*interpretation or expansion of biblical Law*', for there is no reference in the Hebrew Bible or in any text prior to the *Tosefta* (t. *Shab.* 9.17) that prevents the picking up, not to mention the plucking, of grain on the Sabbath.²²⁸

²²⁵ Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 725. These commandments are as follows: a) you shall have no other gods before God; b) you shall not make idols to worship; c) you shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God; d) remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy (Exod. 20:1-11; Deut. 5:1-13).

²²⁶ Hans Hübner, *Das Gesetz in der Synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), quoted in Loader, *Jesus' Attitude Towards the Law*, 9.

²²⁷ James G. Crossley, *The New Testament and Jewish Law: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 34-35.

²²⁸ Crossley, *The New Testament and Jewish Law*, 34-35.

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Similarly, in the pericope about the man with a withered hand, the Pharisees watch to see whether Jesus will heal the man so that they can accuse him of working on the Sabbath, a crime punishable by the death penalty (Mk 3:6; Mt. 12:14). However, according to Luke, Jesus is aware of the Pharisees' intentions (6:8) and therefore asks them about the validity of doing good and saving lives on the Sabbath; he then heals the man (6:9) because to save lives overrides Sabbath prohibitions (cf. 1 Macc. 2:40; 2 Macc. 5:24–27).²²⁹ Furthermore, according to the Mishnah, healing a life-threatening illness is allowed (m. *Yoma* 8:6).²³⁰ Jesus' interpretation of the Law, nevertheless, extends such permissibility to healing chronic diseases that could be postponed for a different day, for he regards such acts as important as saving lives: 'Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?' (Mk 3:4; Mt. 12:12; Lk. 6:9).

It becomes evident, then, that Jesus' attitude towards the Fourth Commandment is not an abrogation but rather a relaxation (relativization) of the Law for the sake of others: feeding the hungry and healing the sick. This is also echoed in the shortlist of Commandments cited by Jesus, all of which centre on interpersonal relations. This notion is further confirmed by Mark and Matthew's additions to the shortlist from outside the Decalogue, which are, again, all about social relations. Mark inserts the command not to defraud (10:19) and Matthew adds the Love Command (19:19). So, the Decalogue's commandments about God's relationship with humans supersede those relating to God alone.²³¹

As well as omitting the Fourth Commandment, the change of sequence in the Decalogue attested in the account about the Rich Man relates to the hierarchy of filial piety as a *comparative* ethical norm. In Exodus (20:12) and Deuteronomy (5:16), the command to honour one's father and mother is situated fifth, which means that it is separate from those (6th to 10th) that appear on the Decalogue's Second Tablet. The

²²⁹ Crossley, *The New Testament and the Jewish Law*, 38.

²³⁰ Crossley, *The New Testament and the Jewish Law*, 38.

²³¹ This meaning may also be confirmed by Jesus' other citation of the Fifth Commandment in his controversy with the Pharisees about purity laws (Mk 7:10; Mt. 15:4), where parents' rights are given precedence over the human tradition and purity laws (as will be discussed below Section 3.1.2).

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change of sequence in the Synoptic accounts, to the end of the Second Tablet (Mk 10:19; Mt. 19:18-19; Lk. 18:20), stresses the importance of the Fifth Commandment in relation to the second set of commandments.²³² Joel Marcus uses the word 'end-stress' to indicate that what is put at the end of a list is intended to be prioritized.²³³ This is also suggested by Matthean redaction, which adds the Love Command to *the end* (the climax) of the 'cited' shortlist (Mt. 19:19).²³⁴ This command is significant for Matthew because it is 'the greatest commandment which interprets and summarizes the Law and the Prophets' (22:36-40), and its position at the end of the cited shortlist is designed, in all likelihood, as a summary of the socio-ethical Commandments.

A further aspect pointing to the significance of the Fifth Commandment in the account concerning the Rich Man is its close connection to the man's question about the way to eternal life;²³⁵ this is the only commandment in the Decalogue that contains a promise 'so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you' (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). The man's desire to know the way to eternal life is so important that it causes Jesus to quote these Commandments and to make the link to eschatological reward. In addition, as I will now argue, the man's claim to fulfil the Commandments, as well as Jesus' reaction to him, contribute towards the promotion of filial relations.

3.1.1.3 The Moral Agent and its Image

The Rich Man is presented as a positive role model up until Jesus' response to his claim to fulfil the Commandments,²³⁶ especially through his display of reverence towards

²³² Stanley E. Porter, 'Composite Citations in Luke-Acts,' in *Composite Citations in Antiquity: Volume 2: New Testament Uses*, eds. Sean A. Adams and Seth M. Ehorn (London: T&T Clark, 2018), 62-93, here 75-76.

²³³ Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 727.

²³⁴ See especially Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 204.

²³⁵ Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 98.

²³⁶ On the definition of moral agency, see Zimmermann, 'The "Implicit Ethics" of New Testament Writings: a Draft,' 413-414; *The Logic of Love*, 73; 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 36. Also, see my modification of this category (to be limited to the image of moral agent as a role model or an anti-model) in Section 2.2 above. This overlooks the role of the moral agent as an addressee of the ethical norm which is discussed in connection with the ethical norm (see Section 2.2).

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Jesus as the beginning of the account. Mark notes his respect for Jesus by drawing attention to him running up, kneeling before Jesus, and calling him ‘good teacher’ (10:17). Matthew and Luke omit these signs of respect, though they are implicit in the man’s address to Jesus as ‘good teacher’ (Lk. 18:18) or in asking him what is good (Mt. 19:16). This respect suggests that the questioner is *autonomously* motivated to learn from Jesus, not to test him as is the case with others (Mt. 22:35; Lk. 10:25; Jn 8:6).²³⁷

The climax to the Markan positive image of the man is Jesus’ reaction to his claim to observe the Fifth Commandment (and other socio-ethical commandments): looking at him, he loved him’ (Mk 10:21, ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ ἠγάπησεν αὐτόν). A perfective ἐμ escalates the meaning of βλέψας to ‘looking *intimately* at’, which suggests that Jesus may have put his arm around the man as a sign of loving affection.²³⁸ Furthermore, Mark’s use of the word ἠγάπησεν (‘loved’) with reference to Jesus is the *only* such example in his responses to others.²³⁹ Jesus thus recognizes this man as a potential disciple, even though there is still something that he lacks.²⁴⁰

When Jesus says to the man, ‘you lack one thing’ (Mk 10:21; Mt. 19:20; Lk. 18:22), the positive image starts to fade. His observance of the Law, even if still valid, is not sufficient, either due to imperfect fulfilment or because of the insufficiency of the Commandments themselves if one does not become a disciple of Jesus. Whichever is the case, the man’s rejection of Jesus’ call to discipleship reverses his positive image to the pronouncement, ‘How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!’ (Mk 10:23; Mt. 19:23; Lk. 18:24). The positive image of the Rich Man at the first part of this account, contrasts with the Pharisees’ violation of the Fifth Commandment as in Jesus’ controversy with them.

²³⁷ Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 725. An *autonomous* motivation means that the moral agent is self-derived to do an action, whereas a *heteronomous* motivation is driven by an external factor. See Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 75-76.

²³⁸ Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 1993), 554; Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 98.

²³⁹ R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2018), 336. The only other occurrences of the verb are to be found in Mark 12:30-33.

²⁴⁰ Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 479.

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3.1.2 The Fifth Commandment and Filial Relations in Jesus' Controversy with the Pharisees

Jesus' other citation of the Fifth Commandment occurs in his conflict with Pharisees on the subject of ritual purity laws (Mk 7:10; Mt. 15:4). The scene has been the subject of wide-ranging debate regarding Jesus' attitude towards ritual purity and the Jewish Law more generally. The following discussion will focus on the relevance of this controversy for understanding Jesus' ethical teaching and, more specifically, his stance on the ethical norm of filial piety.

The controversy starts with the Pharisees and scribes criticizing some of Jesus' disciples for not living 'according to the tradition of the elders'; they use hostile language to describe them eating with 'profane hands' (Mk 7:5 par.). Jesus does not respond directly to their criticism, but rather uses polemical language to highlight their hypocrisy with the aid of a quotation drawn from the prophet Isaiah (29:13): 'this people' honour God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him; they give precedence to teaching human precepts over God's commandments, which renders their worship void (Mk 10:6-7 par.).

3.1.2.1 The Ethical Norm of Filial Piety, its Authority and Motivation

The ethical norm of filial piety in this controversy account contains two parts, both of which take the form of scriptural citations: the first is the positive imperative, 'Honour your father and your mother' (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16), and the second is the negative command, 'Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death' (Exod. 21:17; Lev. 20:9). In both Mark (7:10) and Matthew (15:4), these citations are separated from each other by the connective καί ('and'), which indicates that they are meant to be kept distinct rather than fused into one new commandment.²⁴¹ The separation of these

²⁴¹ See Maarten J. J. Menken, 'Composite Citations in the Gospel of Matthew,' in *Composite Citations in Antiquity: Volume Two: New Testament Uses*, eds. Sean A. Adams and Seth M. Ehorn (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 34-61, here 36; Steve

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citations therefore highlights the Pharisees' violation of *two* commandments (rather than one) through their misuse of *korban* vows.²⁴²

The two imperatives are deemed to be *normative* because their *authoritative* source is the word of God as communicated by Moses in the Torah. Mark introduces these two commands with the phrase 'for Moses said' (7:10), while Matthew offers the modified phrase 'for God said' (15:4). According to Adela Yarbro Collins, Mark's formula places emphasis on the one who communicates God's word,²⁴³ which therefore sets Moses in contrast to, and in opposition with, the Pharisees. Morna Hooker aptly states that 'Moses' here refers to the Torah, which means that Jesus' criticism is directed towards the oral tradition that is supposed to protect rather than violate the Torah.²⁴⁴

The ethical norms of the two scriptural citations differ in terms of type and motivation. The first (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16) offers a *formal norm* for the command to 'honour your father and your mother' but it does not provide details as to what is meant by 'honour'. Also, the motivation behind this citation is *deontological* because the consequence of fulfilling this duty is not stipulated. The second citation, however, is *teleological* as it proscribes a punishment for any bad conduct towards parents (Mk 7:10: 'let him be put to death'²⁴⁵); it also provides a *material norm* because it prohibits *specific* actions against parents (speaking evil, cursing, or insulting).

The two ethical norms - the obligation to honour parents and the prohibition to speak evil to them - are stressed in the list of vices at the end of Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees.²⁴⁶ Jesus explains to the disciples his statement, 'what comes out from a person', by listing certain sins of defilement (Mk 7:20-23). Matthew's list is shorter

Moyse, 'Composite Citations in the Gospel of Mark,' in *Composite Citations in Antiquity. Volume Two: New Testament Uses*, eds. Sean A. Adams and Seth M. Ehorn (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 16-33, here 16.

²⁴² Jon Nelson Bailey, 'Vowing Away the Fifth Commandment: Matthew 15:3-6/Mark 7:9-13,' *Restoration Quarterly* 42 (2000): 193-209, here 200.

²⁴³ Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 351

²⁴⁴ Morna Dorothy Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (London: Continuum, 1991), 173-74.

²⁴⁵ The wording of the second scriptural citation in Mark 7:10, about punishing the person who speaks evil (ὁ κακολογῶν) to his parents, is closer to Exod. 21:16 LXX, 'shall die' (τελευτάτω), than to Lev. 20:9 LXX, 'to be killed' (θανατούσθω). See further Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 351.

²⁴⁶ Zimmermann considers lists of vices as 'an ethical genre' that has been a medium for delivering ethical messages in the Hellenistic-Judaism. See Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 40-41, 119-121.

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(15:18-20), but the sins on both lists amount to violations of the Decalogue's second set of commandments (Second Tablet) regarding social relations.²⁴⁷

Although breaking the Fifth Commandment is not explicitly mentioned in the two lists, there may be an allusion to it in the words βλασφημία and πλεονεξία, for they relate to the Pharisees' act as criticized by Jesus: to misuse the *korban* vow and to prevent their parents from receiving maintenance. Βλασφημία, which appears on both lists, literally means 'speaking badly', particularly towards God, and is thus often translated as 'blasphemy' (in Mk 3:28; 14:64).²⁴⁸ It probably refers to the verbal abuse of others (translated as 'slander' in NRSV and many other translations²⁴⁹), since the other listed vices are social ones.²⁵⁰ Given this connotation of βλασφημία, it may be connected to the Pharisees' abuse of the *korban* vow and recalls the words 'whoever speaks evil',²⁵¹ which is Jesus' second scriptural citation to highlight the Pharisees' violation of God's word (Exod. 21:17; Lev. 20:9). Also, πλεονεξία is in all likelihood connected to their act of illegally taking their parents' maintenance. Yarbro Collins states in this respect:

πλεονεξία in the LXX²⁵² usually has a negative connotation. It signifies a striving for wealth through dishonest, sometimes violent means. Philo's usage is always negative... [sometimes it] means 'covetousness'.²⁵³

The Pharisees, as those accused of breaking the Fifth Commandment, as well as the allusion to their ill deeds in the story's list of vices, are important for interpreting Jesus' ethical teaching in light of the literary form of the Four Gospels, that is, as

²⁴⁷ According to Booth and Luz, Mark's list is composed from Jewish and Hellenistic lists of sins, which is summarized by Matthew to include anti-Decalogue sins; see Roger P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition History and Legal History in Mark 7* (London: Continuum, 1987), 73, 49-50; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 327. Contra Booth, Klawans suggests that the lists of vices in Matthew and Mark correspond to the Pauline lists and could have been influenced by them. However, there is nothing in the Four Gospels' lists that puts Jesus in radical opposition to first-century CE Jewish purity laws (see further Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 149).

²⁴⁸ In translations such as KJ21, BRG, KJV, AKJV and NKJV.

²⁴⁹ AMPC puts it as 'slander (evil speaking, malicious misrepresentation, abusiveness)'.

²⁵⁰ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009), 456

²⁵¹ EXB and NCV (speaking evil of others); YLT (evil speaking).

²⁵² See, for example, Hab. 2:9, Jer. 22:17 and Ezek. 22:27.

²⁵³ Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 358.

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biographies whose plot is concerned with Jesus' death and with the call for Jesus' disciples to follow him in this way.²⁵⁴ Some scholars express reservations at using Jesus' death as a lens for reading New Testament ethics, particularly since patriarchal cultures have sometimes twisted the proclamation of the cross as a justifiable tool for the subjugation of women and the powerless.²⁵⁵ In response to this concern, Richard Hays argues that New Testament writers consistently do the opposite by adopting a Christological perspective that calls upon those with power and privilege to surrender it for the sake of the weak (cf. Mk 10:42-45).²⁵⁶

I would suggest that the account of Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees supports Hays' argument. At the level of the original aims of Jesus' teaching, he does not call on old and weak parents to endure a painful cut in financial support; rather, he challenges those among the religious authorities (scribes and Pharisees) in particular to give adequate support to their parents rather than to the Temple, the locus of political and social power. This raises the question of the hierarchy of filial piety in Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees, particularly in comparison with other ethical norms.

3.1.2.2 The Hierarchy of Filial Piety in Jesus' Controversy with the Pharisees

Filial piety in Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees amounts to a *comparative* ethical norm in that its hierarchy relates to three concepts: ritual handwashing before eating, *korban* vows, and purity laws.²⁵⁷ In a counter-response to the Pharisees' criticism of his disciples, Jesus declares that they adhere to their tradition while violating the word of God ('honour your father and mother'). 'Tradition' here refers to the act of exaggerated ritual handwashing before eating meals (Mk 7:2-4; Mt. 15:2, 6).²⁵⁸ This

²⁵⁴ Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 28-31; Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 197.

²⁵⁵ Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 204-206. For critiques of these interpretations of the theology of cross, Hays refers to Delores S Williams, *Sister in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-talk* (New York: Orbis, 1993); Carter Heyward, *Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality and Liberation* (New York: Pilgrim, 1984); Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroads, 1988).

²⁵⁶ Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 197. Hays refers to another example from Ephesians 5:25; Jesus' example of loving the church, which is used to address the patriarchal partner of marriage, i.e., husbands, to surrender in love to their wives.

²⁵⁷ For the difference between the *classificatory* and *comparative* ethical norms, see Diagram 13 above about the basic definitions in *Organon* 3.

²⁵⁸ Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 345.

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oral tradition, of human origin, is relativized in relation to the Fifth Commandment, which belongs to the written law. The primacy of the written law compared to the oral tradition is, according to Markus Bockmuehl, one of the *main objectives* of Jesus' teaching, because the latter is supposed to serve the former rather than justify its violation.²⁵⁹ The Fifth Commandment is therefore specifically selected by Jesus in order to criticize the Pharisees who do 'many things like this' (Mk 7:13).²⁶⁰

In addition to their strict adherence to oral tradition regarding ritual handwashing, Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for their misuse of *korban* to suspend the Fifth Commandment (Mk 7:9-13 par.). Indeed, *korban* vows, and other oaths, are not part of oral tradition but binding written precepts (Deut. 23:21-23; Lev. 5:14-16; Num. 30:1-2). So, the question of hierarchy turns from one aspect of the law against human traditions to the relative weight of two different parts of the written law: the Fifth Commandment and *korban* vows.²⁶¹

Different interpretations are proposed as explanations of the Pharisaic misuse of the *korban* vows condemned by Jesus. Yarbrow Collins proposes that the *korban* vow in question is a dedicatory vow that ends in a prohibitive vow; the votary dedicates to the Temple only what his parents will use from his property; this will never be fulfilled,²⁶² because 'the consecration takes effect in tandem with its violation'.²⁶³ Such a prohibitive vow is not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible,²⁶⁴ but the votaries twist the dedicatory vow in order to avoid their filial duty.²⁶⁵ It is this act that renders the

²⁵⁹ Markus Bockmuehl, 'Halakhah and Ethics in the Jesus Tradition,' in *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context*, eds John M. G. Barclay and John P.M. Sweet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 264-78, here 266. Bockmuehl calls these principal objectives 'halakic concepts'.

²⁶⁰ Steven D. Fraade, *Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarians and Sages* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 495; 'Moses and the Commandments: Can Hermeneutics, History, and Rhetoric Be Disentangled?', in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, eds. Hindy Najman and Judith Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 399-422, here 417.

²⁶¹ Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 177.

²⁶² Yarbrow Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 352.

²⁶³ Moshe Benovitz, *Kol Nidre: Studies in the Development of Rabbinic Votive Institutions* (Atlanta, Georgia: Brown University, 2020), 13.

²⁶⁴ Benovitz, *Kol Nidre*, 13.

²⁶⁵ Yarbrow Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 352.

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Pharisees as ‘hypocrites’;²⁶⁶ their words point to the worship of God, but their acts are contrary to his word.

The Pharisees’ use of *korban* can thus be no more than ‘legal fiction’, because they do not intend that which is vowed to be immediately delivered to the Temple, but rather to prohibit others from using it.²⁶⁷ Joel Marcus highlights this meaning by comparing the act with an inscription found on the Jebel Hallet et-Turi ossuary near Jerusalem: ‘as the non-ritually clean bones are not conceived to be a gift to God but only treated *as if* it is a gift for God, the Pharisees used this *korban* declaration to prevent giving parents the financial support due to them’.²⁶⁸ Based on this interpretation, the prohibitive vow - like handwashing - is a human tradition that contradicts the divine command to honour one’s parents.²⁶⁹

Another possible interpretation of the *korban* vow in this context is that it could have been a real dedicatory vow. The Pharisees and the scribes did not remove such vows, although they contradict a ‘weightier matter of the law’ which is the commandment to honour parents.²⁷⁰ The Pharisees may have failed to give primacy to the Fifth Commandment and its higher position compared to the *korban* vows, and this due to their rigid commitment to keeping relativized precepts even at the cost of more important ones. As Bockmuehl states:

There is clearly a conflict of commandments here, between the duty to keep one’s vows (Num. 30.2; cf. Deut. 23.21, 23) and that of honouring one’s parents (Exod. 20.12; Deut. 5.16). The tradition of Jesus’ opponents, perhaps holding all *mitzvot* to be of equally binding force (cf. e.g. 4 Macc. 5.20; Josephus *c.Ap.* 2.173), had led them to a legal rigorism which meant that

²⁶⁶ Benovitz, *Kol Nidre*, 23.

²⁶⁷ Bailey, ‘Vowing away the Fifth Commandment,’ 202; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 8-18: Volume 2* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 523.

²⁶⁸ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 1: 445. The ‘likening’ concept is well-attested in rabbinic literature (Sifre *Bemidbar* 153; b. *Nedarim* 14a; j. *Nedarim* 1:4, 37a) and alluded to in the *Mishnah* (m. *Nedarim* 1:3-4) and *Tosefta* (t. *Nedarim* 1:2-3). See also Benovitz, *Kol Nidre*, 13.

²⁶⁹ Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 353.

²⁷⁰ Balla, *The Child-Parent Relationship*, 119.

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the mitigation or suspension of a lesser commandment in favour of a more important one was very difficult to achieve.²⁷¹

The author of *4 Maccabees* stresses that ‘to transgress the law in matters either small or great is of equal seriousness’ (5:20), but this should not lead to fulfilling the less important precepts at the cost of the higher ones.

According to the Mishnah, a vow that contradicts the fulfilment of the Fifth Commandment is to be lifted (cf. m. *Ned.* 3:2; 9:1).²⁷² The reason for the relativization of the *korban* vows may explain why Jesus selects socio-ethical commandments during his encounter with the Rich Man: the Commandments relating to God and human beings are to be given priority over fulfilling vows. Three Mishnaic passages share this notion: a) a son can break his oath for the sake of honouring his parents (m. *Ned.* 9:1); b) a labourer can break his oath by giving the wages to his fellow labourers (4:7); and c) a traveller can break his oath for the benefit of his travel partner (m. *Ned.* 4:8).²⁷³

Korban vows are not the only written laws relativized to the Fifth Commandment in Jesus’ controversy with the Pharisees. Jesus’ logion, ‘there is **nothing** outside a person that by going in can defile, **but** the things that come out are what defile’ (Mk 7:15 par.), provokes a wide-ranging discussion about Jesus’ attitude towards the Levitical purity laws. The formula οὐδέν...ἀλλὰ is understood in its absolute grammatical sense, ‘nothing...but’, which means that the purity laws are to be abrogated. Christine Hayes argues that this logion (and the whole account in Mark 7) does not merely highlight the opposition between human oral traditions and divine law, but it sets up a ‘dichotomy onto the difference between a rational moral law and an irrational ritual law’.²⁷⁴ This is proposed on the basis of Mark’s explanatory note: ‘thus he declared all food clean’ (7:19c). The Markan understanding of Jesus ‘as one

²⁷¹ Bockmuehl, ‘Halakhah and Ethics in the Jesus Tradition,’ 266.

²⁷² Benovitz, *Kol Nidre*, 25; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 524.

²⁷³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 2:524.

²⁷⁴ Christine Hayes, *What's Divine about Divine Law? Early Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 283.

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having authority, and not as the scribes' (1:22) could justify what is implied by this segment, namely that Jesus can abrogate some written parts of the law. Based on this interpretation, purity laws are not only relativized but abrogated in relation to Jesus' ethical teaching.

Nevertheless, the abrogation of the law cannot be regarded as the 'focal image'²⁷⁵ of Jesus' ethical teachings, and this for two reasons. First, on other occasions Mark presents Jesus as observing the purity laws (1:40–44). Secondly, it clearly contradicts Matthew's presentation of Jesus' mission as fulfilling the Law and the Prophets (5:17-19). Indeed, Mark's explanatory note (7:19c) is missing from Matthew's account, which limits the controversy with the Pharisees to questions about the validity of ritual handwashing (Mt. 15:20).²⁷⁶

Accordingly, the οὐδέν...ἀλλὰ formula in Jesus' logion may mean: 'Nothing outside a man defiles him as much as the things coming from him'.²⁷⁷ This interpretation of the formula in a relative sense is consistent with the meaning of Jesus' words: 'I have come to call **not** the righteous **but** sinners' (Mk 2:17; Mt. 9:13; Lk. 5:32). If the οὐδέν...ἀλλὰ formula is interpreted as 'either...or', then the righteous are to be excluded from Jesus' call.²⁷⁸ Jesus is therefore calling on his audience to pay more attention to what comes out of rather than what enters a person (Mk 7:15; Mt. 15:11).²⁷⁹ Interpreting the οὐδέν... ἀλλὰ formula as an emphatic antithetical statement to stress the importance of one thing over another is also used by Hosea to declare that mercy is more important than sacrifice: 'For I desire steadfast love and **not** sacrifice, the knowledge of God **rather than** burnt offerings' (6.6).²⁸⁰

²⁷⁵ On the need for a 'focal image' to provide a coherent reading of New Testament morality, see Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 194-96.

²⁷⁶ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*, 147.

²⁷⁷ Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 216.

²⁷⁸ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*, 147.

²⁷⁹ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*, 147.

²⁸⁰ Yarbrow Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 355. Hooker also refers to Jeremiah 7:22-23: 'For in the day that I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to them or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them, "Obey my voice..."'. Neither Hosea nor Jeremiah abrogates sacrificial offerings, but they stress the primacy of other higher parts of the law (Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 179).

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Furthermore, even if the οὐδὲν...ἀλλὰ formula' is understood in the absolute grammatical sense ('nothing...but'), it does not necessarily signify the abrogation of the first concept. According to Kister, such a shift from ritual purity to morality is a rhetorical device used by Jesus in another controversy with the Pharisees (Mt. 23:23-25). He starts by raising certain *halakhic* issues (such as tithes, straining a gnat from drinks, washing the outside of a cup) to attract the audience's attention. He then shifts to ethical statements in order to criticize the religious priorities of the Pharisees who neglect 'the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith' (Mt. 23:23-25).²⁸¹ Thus, the οὐδὲν...ἀλλὰ formula in an absolute sense ('not...but') would still convey the primacy of moral over ritual purity, rather than the abrogation of ritual purity.²⁸² The logion would then signify that what really matters is not what comes in but 'what comes out from a person' (Mk 7:20; Mt. 15:18).

3.1.2.3 The Moral Agent and its Image in Jesus' Controversy with the Pharisees

The Pharisees function in this Synoptic account as negative moral agents because they break the Fifth Commandment through their abuse of *korban* vows. They are described as 'hypocrites' due to the discrepancy between their words that seem to represent an act of worship to God, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is *Korban*' (Mk 7:11 par.), and their act of violating a decisive commandment in the Decalogue, 'honour your father and your mother'. They are, consequently, *autonomous* negative models which means that they intentionally commit such violations of the Law, because of their claimed justification to adhere to the tradition of the elders.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Menahem Kister, 'Law, Morality, and Rhetoric in Some Sayings of Jesus,' in *Studies in Ancient Midrash*, ed. James L. Kugel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 145-154, here 149-50. Kister indicates that such use is not surprising, as it is found in other examples of Jewish tradition (e.g., m. Hag. 2:10-14).

²⁸² Kister, 'Law, Morality, and Rhetoric in Some Sayings of Jesus,' 153-154. This is different from the relative grammatical sense of the formula ('not only...but rather'), as adopted by Booth and others, but the two grammatical readings of this structure convey the same meaning: the validity of the biblical purity laws and the primacy of morality laws (Kister, 'Law, Morality, and Rhetoric in Some Sayings of Jesus,' 154, n. 31).

²⁸³ For the difference between *autonomous* and *heteronomous* motivations of moral agents, see Diagram 13 above about the basic definitions in *Organon* 3. See also Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 75-76.

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In contrast to the Pharisees' negative images as anti-models, Jesus' disciples are implicitly presented in this account as positive moral agents for filial piety. In response to the Pharisees' criticism of the disciples for eating without observing ritual purity, Jesus criticizes them for breaking the Fifth Commandment. This suggests that Jesus' disciples did fulfil the Fifth Commandment, otherwise Jesus would have criticized them for acting like the Pharisees.

Promoting filial relations is, nevertheless, not restricted to Jesus' teaching in the public space but - as will now be discussed - is also remembered in Jesus' action of entrusting his mother to the Beloved Disciple before his death (Jn 19:26-27).

3.1.3 Jesus' Promotion of Filial Relations in the Johannine Passion Narrative

In addition to Jesus' use of the Fifth Commandment in the Synoptic Gospels, his act of transferring his mother to the care of the Beloved Disciple at the climax of the Johannine crucifixion scene (19:25-27) also contributes to the NT theme of promoting filial relations. This episode is significant for two reasons in this regard. First, while Joseph is mentioned earlier in the narrative (Jn 6:42), Jesus' mother is the primary filial (and biological) relative to appear as a character, and Jesus' attitude towards her relates to his role as a moral agent within the gospel tradition. Secondly, this is the only explicit reference to the notion of Jesus promoting filial relations in John's Gospel, and it contrasts to some degree with the other reference to his mother in the wedding at Cana, where Jesus apparently distances himself from her (Jn 2:4). In what follows, I will explore the ethical message embodied in the words of the Johannine Jesus on the cross and will do so with reference to the three aspects of *Organon* 3). I will postpone discussion of Jesus' attitude elsewhere towards his mother (Jn 2:1-11) to chapter 4 of this study where I discuss those passages where Jesus relativizes filial relations.

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3.1.3.1 The Ethical Norm of Filial Piety as Presented in John's Crucifixion Scene

At the climax of the Johannine passion narrative, Jesus' first words on the cross are his request for his mother and the Beloved Disciple to ἴδε, 'behold', each other (Jn 19:26-27). This request or instruction has been interpreted symbolically by a number of Johannine scholars (such as Rudolf Bultmann, Raymond E. Brown, and Francis Moloney) to signify the inauguration of the new spiritual family formed at the foot of the cross.²⁸⁴ Jesus' words point to a change in the relationship between Mary and the Beloved Disciple, who as her son also becomes Jesus' spiritual brother.²⁸⁵ This new 'family' is created through Jesus' death and resurrection, with the result that members of this family are in effect Jesus' brothers and sisters, a link that outweighs biological relations, as stressed elsewhere by John (1:12-13; 3:3, 5; 9:22-23, 35; 11:52).²⁸⁶

A symbolic reading of this episode relies upon interpreting the double use of ἴδε, 'behold' (19:26-27), as a prophetic revelation.²⁸⁷ This revelatory formula is used by the biblical prophets when they speak authoritatively in God's name: 'Lift up your eyes all around and *see* [behold]²⁸⁸...' (Isa. 49:18; cf. Ezek. 1:4-3:11; 37:7-14; Dan. 2:31-45). By using the term ἴδε, John presents the crucified Jesus as revealing the (future) spiritual relationship between Mary and the Beloved Disciple.²⁸⁹ In this respect, Brown argues for the symbolic interpretation of the episode on the basis that these words cannot be traced to the historical Jesus, who would have entrusted his

²⁸⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *Gospel of St. John: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1971), 673; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 923; Francis J. Moloney, *Johannine Studies 1975-2017* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 261-82.

²⁸⁵ Mary L. Coloe, 'The Mother of Jesus: A Woman Possessed,' in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John*, eds. Steven A. Hunt, D. Francois Tolmie, and Ruben Zimmermann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 202-213, here 208.

²⁸⁶ Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, 400.

²⁸⁷ Coloe, 'The Mother of Jesus', 208. Coloe declares that the literal interpretation of this narrative feature – of a son taking care of his mother – does not do full justice to the story.

²⁸⁸ The NRSV translation does not use the word 'behold'. However, other translations (such as KJ21, ASV, BRG, DARBY, GNV, JUB, KJV, AKJV and OJB) use the word 'behold' which is equivalent to ἴδε. These translations are consistent with the Septuagint, which reads: 'ἄρον κύκλω τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς σου καὶ ἴδὲ πάντας...' (Isa. 49:18 LXX).

²⁸⁹ Moloney, *Johannine Studies*, 274.

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mother to one of her kin and whose disciples would not have been standing at the foot of the cross, in accordance with what is known about crucifixion practices.²⁹⁰ However, it is doubtful whether the Fourth Gospel (either the author or its editors) would intend to highlight only the literal connotation of filial solitude in light of the highly rich symbolism of John's passion narrative.²⁹¹

Such a symbolic interpretation is challenged by other scholars, including Dodd, Haenchen, Bennema and Beasley-Murray.²⁹² The latter argues that the language used by Jesus in his request to the Beloved Disciple to take Jesus' mother to his house resembles adoption formulae in Jewish literature. When Raguel gives his daughter to Tobit, he says, 'Take her to be your wife in accordance with the law and decree written in the book of Moses. Take her and bring her safely to your father Tobit' (Tob. 7:12).²⁹³ Traditionally, a crucified person would have the right to offer testimony before his death, and so John's Gospel presents Jesus as using this right to fulfil his filial duty towards his mother 'in language reminiscent of adoption'.²⁹⁴ Brown significantly notes that interpreting Jesus' words as an adoption formula could be acceptable if these words belong to the historical Jesus, which, according to him, is not the case.²⁹⁵

Cornelis Bennema in particular stresses the literal interpretation of Jesus' words on the cross as initiating an earthly, rather than spiritual, relationship between the Beloved Disciple and Mary. First, he argues that the new relationship between Mary

²⁹⁰ Brown, *The Gospel According to John, XIII-XXI*, 923; C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 552.

²⁹¹ Brown, *The Gospel According to John, XIII-XXI*, 923.

²⁹² C. H. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 428, n. 2; Ernst Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 7-21*, trans. Robert W. Funk (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 193; Cornelis Bennema, 'Character Reconstruction in the New Testament (2): The Practice,' *The Expository Times* 127, no. 9 (2016): 417-429, here 427, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524615615093>; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 349.

²⁹³ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 349.

²⁹⁴ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 349; Jey J. Kanagaraj, 'The Implied Ethics of The Fourth Gospel: A Reinterpretation of The Decalogue,' *TynBul* 52, no. 1 (2001): 33-60, here 50, <https://www.galaxie.com/article/tynbul52-1-02>.

²⁹⁵ Brown, *The Gospel According to John, XIII-XXI*, 923. Barrett, who shares Brown's view about the symbolic meaning of this passage, also questions the historicity of this scene because of the absence of Jesus' kin and the presence of his friends near the cross (Barrett, *St. John*, 552). This assumption, however, does not exclude filial piety as a possible reading, for the Fourth Gospel represents Jesus' conduct in the whole Gospel as implicitly embodying the Decalogue. This will be explored below in my discussion of the image of moral agent in John 19:36-37 (Section 3.1.3).

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and the Beloved Disciple is a mother-and-son relationship, not one of spiritual sister and brother *within the same family* as required by a symbolic interpretation. Second, Jesus' relationship with Mary is distanced in that she becomes the Beloved Disciple's mother. He *replaces* Jesus rather than sharing in the disciple's filial relationship with Mary. Third, John's comment about the scene, 'And from that hour the disciple took her into **his own home** (εἰς τὰ ἴδια)' (19:27), suggests that Mary falls under his care, rather than that the two of them become part of *Jesus' household* (as the symbolic interpretation would suggest).²⁹⁶ Fourth, Jesus' new spiritual family, claims Bennema, has already been established 'during his ministry when people believed in and remained with him'.²⁹⁷ Even if this analysis of Jesus' words is valid, it does neglect what Bennema states elsewhere, namely that 'context rather than individual words produces meaning...to understand John's epistemology'.²⁹⁸ The context here is the crucifixion scene which is particularly rich in symbolism.

Given the possibility of both symbolic and literal readings, the presence of an *interaction* metaphor, as defined by Jan van der Watt,²⁹⁹ better interprets this incident as a statement with a double meaning. This is undoubtedly a common feature of John's language.³⁰⁰ Accordingly, van der Watt regards Jesus as acting on two levels; on the earthly level, he fulfils the Fifth Commandment to honour his mother, while, on the metaphorical level, he uses filial duty to explain relations within the 'transcendental narrative'.³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ Kanagaraj stresses this point too. See Kanagaraj, 'The Implied Ethics of the Fourth Gospel,' 50.

²⁹⁷ Bennema, 'Character Reconstruction,' 427.

²⁹⁸ Cornelis Bennema, 'Christ, the Spirit and the Knowledge of God: A Study in Johannine Epistemology,' in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God*, eds. M. Healy and R. Parry (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 107-33, here 109.

²⁹⁹ Jan G. van der Watt, *Family of the King: Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel According to John* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 111-16. Van der Watt differentiates between two types of metaphor in the Fourth Gospel: substitution and interaction. In the former, the object of the metaphor (the literal meaning) is not intended, while in the latter the literal meaning is intended as well as the metaphorical one.

³⁰⁰ Kanagaraj, 'The Implied Ethics of The Fourth Gospel,' 61.

³⁰¹ Jan G. van der Watt, *A Grammar of the Ethics of John: Reading John from an Ethical Perspective. Volume 1* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 393. A part of the transcendental narrative to which van der Watt refers is Jesus' relationship with his Father, whom he obeys and honours (Jn 3:31-36; 5:19ff).

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Such an embodiment of God's commandment in Jesus' actions and words is to be imitated by Johannine Christians, for Jesus is presented as a mimetic character.³⁰² The macro-genre of John's Gospel, and indeed the Synoptic Gospels, is that of a Graeco-Roman *bios* which portrays the main figure as a character to be emulated.³⁰³ In John's Gospel in particular, the notion of mimesis is explicitly stressed by Jesus himself in the foot-washing scene: 'I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you' (13:15).³⁰⁴ Imitating the role model offered by Jesus is presented as a firm expectation rather than as a voluntary option (13:1, 34-35; 15:9-10).³⁰⁵

As for the absence of Jesus' brothers, which Brown uses to argue for excluding the literal meaning of John 19:36-37, this can be justified on the grounds that the Beloved Disciple replaces Mary's kin, who are traditionally supposed to play this role after Jesus' death. This replacement of characters and the climactic function of the cross in John's passion narrative therefore exemplify filial piety as an ethical norm of 'strong value', as will now be discussed.

3.1.3.2 The Hierarchy of Filial Piety in John's Crucifixion Scene

A grammatical analysis of Jesus' words on the cross presents filial piety as a *classificatory* ethical norm, i.e., one with no comparison to other values.³⁰⁶ However, a form analysis of John's passion narrative might render this *classificatory* ethical norm to be of 'strong value', as Zimmermann notes that the literary form of the biblical texts could be giving strong value to the ethical norms embedded in the text.³⁰⁷ According to Moloney, the passion narrative is composed of five major scenes (18:1-11; 18:12-27; 18-28-19:16; 19:17-37; 19:38-42) in which Jesus' words on the cross form the centre-

³⁰² See Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 68: 'the narrational presentations of characters can become models of conduct for the addressees or recipients of the text'.

³⁰³ Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 23-31.

³⁰⁴ Bennema, *Mimesis in the Johannine Literature*, 91-93.

³⁰⁵ Van der Watt, *A Grammar for the Ethics in John*, 245.

³⁰⁶ See Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 29.

³⁰⁷ See Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 146-147; 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 24-25, 30-31.

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point.³⁰⁸ This would suggest that the ethical norm embedded within Jesus' words can be regarded as the most significant element within the passion narrative; the centrality of the crucifixion scene points to the greater value of its embedded ethical norms.

As an integral part of John's passion narrative, the crucifixion scene is central to the Johannine gospel and to New Testament ethics more widely conceived. Since John's Gospel functions as a biography (*bios*) whose climax is Jesus' death on the cross,³⁰⁹ his last words are of significance to the whole Johannine story.³¹⁰ In addition, the cross motif, according to Richard Hays, is not limited to the gospel tradition (as *bios*) but functions as a valid 'focal image' for New Testament ethics in their entirety. This focal image gives coherence to New Testament ethics, is central to each NT witness, and it is not contradicted by any of the accounts.³¹¹

In addition to the integral role of the crucifixion scene within John's narrative, the ways in which its chosen characters are depicted suggests that 'strong value' is accorded to the motif of filial piety. Jesus' brothers, who were supposed to take responsibility for Mary's care after his death, are replaced by the most beloved person among Jesus' followers. The brothers are elsewhere described as outsiders (7:1-9).³¹² Allocating filial piety to one within the *spiritual* family would undoubtedly point to the importance of this ethical norm to the new community established through Jesus.³¹³

The choice of the Beloved Disciple attaches greater significance to filial piety in this scene, for he is the most beloved among Jesus' spiritual family members and is the

³⁰⁸ Moloney, *Johannine Studies*, 271-272.

³⁰⁹ Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 23-25.

³¹⁰ According to Zimmermann, the climax of the text reveals what he calls an 'implicit hierarchy of values' ('How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 30-31).

³¹¹ Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 193-200.

³¹² Kanagaraj, 'The Implied Ethics of The Fourth Gospel,' 50; Bennema, 'Character Reconstruction,' 427, with reference to Ritva H. Williams, 'The Mother of Jesus at Cana: A Social-Science Interpretation of John 2:1-12,' *CBQ* 59 (1997): 679-692, here 690-91. Also, the characterization of the Beloved Disciple in this scene could suggest that Mary now is part of Jesus' spiritual family. This scene is different from the Synoptic presentations where Mary is seen with Jesus' brothers and all of them are presented as outsiders (Mk 3:31, Lk. 8:19-21, Mt. 12:46-50). See van der Watt, *A Grammar of the Ethics of John*, 564.

³¹³ Kanagaraj, 'The Implied Ethics of The Fourth Gospel,' 50.

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only male disciple present at the foot of the cross.³¹⁴ He is presented here as an active character, in contrast to the description of the more passive presence of the disciples at Cana (Jn 2:2).³¹⁵ In comparison to the wedding in Cana, which represents Mary's only other appearance in the narrative, the focus on the Beloved Disciple taking care of Jesus' mother marks his only character development in the two scenes. Since this response happens immediately, it highlights the urgency of filial piety whatever the circumstances. Not only does the Beloved Disciple play an active role in the crucifixion scene but Jesus' agency on the cross itself is unique to John's passion narrative.

3.1.3.3 The Image of the Moral Agent in John's Crucifixion Scene

Jesus' words on the cross are unique to John and stand in contrast to the Synoptic depiction of his silence. Only in John's passion narrative, moreover, does Jesus treat his mother respectfully,³¹⁶ and, despite being on the cross, 'he remains in charge, arranging for the Beloved Disciple to care for his mother'.³¹⁷ Jesus' action on the cross thus uniquely presents him as a positive moral agent in his attitude towards his mother. With reference to Zimmermann's model of 'implicit ethics', this positive image can be explored with the aid of three concepts: Jesus' emotion, motivation, and the wider implication of his actions within the narrative.³¹⁸

From the perspective of his emotions, Jesus' dignified stance and his sense of triumph in the crucifixion scene contradicts the expected passivity and victimhood of those who are being crucified; he is in control of events, knowing what is going to happen, and acts with free will. Also, different from Mark, there are no insults directed

³¹⁴ James L. Resseguie, 'The Beloved Disciple: The Ideal Point of View,' in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John*, eds. Steven A. Hunt, D. Francois Tolmie, and Ruben Zimmermann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 537-549, here 543.

³¹⁵ Moloney, *Johannine Studies 1975-2017*, 267.

³¹⁶ Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 337.

³¹⁷ Haenchen, *John 7-21*, 200; Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 302-03.

³¹⁸ On the importance of considering emotions and motivations as part of the moral agent's image, see Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 75-80.

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at Jesus during his crucifixion.³¹⁹ Furthermore, the consequences of his death are contrary to the wishes of the Jewish authorities and Pilate, namely, that Jesus' death will bring his movement to an end.³²⁰ On the contrary, because of his 'lifting up' ('status-elevation', as noted by Campbell) Jesus is in control throughout the scene and from the cross establishes a new family on both earthly and spiritual levels.³²¹

In addition to glory and honour, love can be regarded as embedded in Jesus' actions in the Johannine passion narrative. He establishes an example of love and loving actions by embodying them in and through his own character. He obeys the Father and is willing to drink the cup he prepared for him (18:11); he accomplishes the Father's mission (19:30); he takes care of those closest to him, including the disciples (18:8) as well as Mary and the Beloved Disciple (19:26-27).³²²

As a result, Jesus' action of entrusting the care of his mother to the Beloved Disciple can be regarded as *autonomous*, which means that he is self-motivated to do so without any external (*heteronomous*) factor accounting for his motivation.³²³ However, a literary analysis of the Fourth Gospel reveals one element that might otherwise be overlooked: the will and commandments of God are in fact the motivation for Jesus' 'response'³²⁴ (Jn 7:16-18).³²⁵ Such a response, argues Weyer-Mekhoff, means that each word or act attributed to Jesus contains a certain 'pathos'.³²⁶

³¹⁹ Because of that moment of glorification, John does not mention the mockery of Jesus by the crowd (Mk 15:29-30) or by the chief priest (Mk 15:31, 32a) (see Haenchen, *John 7-21*, 193). This could explain the absence of Mary's grief from the scene.

³²⁰ Shin, *Ethics in the Gospel of John*, 188.

³²¹ Joan Cecelia Campbell, *Kinship Relations in the Gospel of John* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 2007), 145.

³²² Van der Watt, *A Grammar of Ethics of John*, 247-248.

³²³ For the difference between the *autonomous* and *heteronomous* motivations of moral agents, see Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 75-76.

³²⁴ Weyer-Mekhoff uses the term 'responsivity' to mean that every action is determined by what induces people to act, in contrast to the categories of *τέλος* and imperative suggested by Aristotle and Kant respectively (Karl Weyer-Mekhoff, 'The Response of Jesus: Ethics in John by Considering Scripture as Work of God,' in *Rethinking the Ethics of John: 'Implicit Ethics' in the Johannine Writings*, eds. Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 159-174, here 162-63).

³²⁵ Weyer-Mekhoff, 'The Response of Jesus,' 162.

³²⁶ Weyer-Mekhoff, 'The Response of Jesus,' 163.

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Thus, Jesus' response on the cross may be implicitly related to one specific divine instruction.³²⁷ According to Jey Kanagaraj, the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus as fulfilling the Law, particularly the Decalogue. The Ten Commandments are presented as manifested in Jesus' character and conduct, a notion that is already hinted at in the Prologue: '...the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (Jn 1:17).³²⁸ So, like Bennema, Kanagaraj, views Jesus' response on the cross as a fulfilment of the Fifth Commandment, although both scholars offer this proposal from quite different perspectives. Where Bennema states that filial piety is the direct significance of Jesus' words on the cross and that a symbolic meaning is not likely intended,³²⁹ Kanagaraj regards the symbolic establishment of a new spiritual family as the primary meaning of Jesus' words, with filial piety embedded in this deeper layer of signification.³³⁰ Given the possibility of both interpretations existing side by side, Jesus' action on the cross could be interpreted as the practical embodiment of God's commandment. His motivation for fulfilling his filial duty on the cross would, then, be *heteronomous*, with the Decalogue standing behind it.

Al-Miskīn's much later reception of Jesus' attitude to his mother at the crucifixion scene, as well as of Jesus' double citation of the Fifth Commandment, bears some similarities to but also differences from what has been claimed, so far in this chapter, from the perspective of the world within the text. What follows is an exploration of these NT traditions from the perspective of theological interpretation.

3.2 Al-Miskīn's Interpretation of Jesus' Teachings about Filial Piety

Al-Miskīn states that, to understand the Christian Bible, an exegete must regard it as a single entity representing the Word of God and must accept that its Two Testaments were written entirely under divine inspiration.³³¹ Al-Miskīn explains that academic

³²⁷ Kanagaraj, 'The Implied Ethics of The Fourth Gospel,' 50.

³²⁸ Kanagaraj, 'The Implied Ethics of The Fourth Gospel,' 61.

³²⁹ Bennema, 'Character Reconstruction,' 427.

³³⁰ Kanagaraj, 'The Implied Ethics of The Fourth Gospel,' 61.

³³¹ Mattā Al-Miskīn, *Kayfa Taqra' Al-Kitāb Al-Muqaddas [How to Read the Bible]* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 2019), 3.

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readings of the Bible, which focus on the language of the text and on the relationship between its different parts, is not sufficient for a [Christian] reading community.³³² What is required, he claims, is a *practical and spiritual* reading that lives the Bible's words and commandments, receives support from the Holy Spirit and which inspires one's soul.³³³ In his autobiography, Al-Miskīn narrates how he himself carried out this task, attempting to write his exegesis by living the Bible and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.³³⁴ The final part of this chapter will therefore analyse Al-Miskīn's reception of the NT passages in question, again through the three elements of *Organon* 3, with a view to their potential contribution to the praxis of Scriptural Reasoning.

3.2.1 The Ethical Norm, its Authority and Motivation

We will first focus on Al-Miskīn's interpretation of the NT texts that explicitly promote filial relations in Jesus' teaching: his double use of the Fifth Commandment (Mk 10:19; 7:10; Mt. 19:19; 15:4; Lk. 18:20) and his request to the Beloved Disciple to take care of his mother (Jn 19:26-27). Al-Miskīn states that the Ten Commandments are validated by Jesus and that they constitute an essential part of Christian ethics.³³⁵ Accordingly, Jesus' combined quotation in his controversy with the Pharisees (Mk 7:10 par.) - 'Honour your father and mother' (Exod. 20:12) and 'Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death' (21:17) - contains two material ethical norms, which means that two actions are required.³³⁶ The first is a positive action towards parents, namely to honour and respect them.³³⁷ The other ethical norm is a negative directive forbidding the cursing of parents, and this on pain of death. The justification for this severe punishment is the reciprocity revealed in all the commandments, which are a

³³² Al-Miskīn, *Kayfa Taqra' Al-Kitāb Al-Muqaddas*, 10-11.

³³³ Al-Miskīn, *Kayfa Taqra' Al-Kitāb Al-Muqaddas*, 11.

³³⁴ Mattā Al-Miskīn, *Al-Sīrah Al-Dhātīyah Li Al-Abb Mattā Al-Miskīn [The Autobiography of Father Matthew the Poor]* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 2011), 15-23, 41, 51-54.

³³⁵ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 110.

³³⁶ On the definition of material ethical norm, see Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 27.

³³⁷ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 467.

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manifestation of the wisdom of God.³³⁸ Life practically ends if someone is cursed, and so children who curse their parents (who gave them life) fairly deserve death.³³⁹

According to Al-Miskīn, the ethical norm in Jesus' statement to the Rich Man, 'you know the commandments' (cf. Deut. 5:16-21; Exod. 20:12-17), is not restricted to knowing the commandments in the sense of memorization but rather in fulfilling them.³⁴⁰ The motivation for fulfilling the Fifth Commandment, he claims, is stated in the Decalogue: 'so that your days be long in the world' (Exod. 20:12), as confirmed in the letter to the Ephesians (6:3).³⁴¹ This reward is not mentioned in the Markan or Matthean account of Jesus' controversy with Pharisees, but, based on Al-Miskīn's understanding of the unity of the Bible, this reward is to be linked specifically to Jesus' citation of the Fifth Commandment.

Based further on the principle of scriptural unity, the motivation for fulfilling the Fifth Commandment as quoted by Jesus to the Rich Man may also be linked to the other quotation by Jesus in his controversy with the Pharisees. The motivation that Jesus offers to the man is eternal life, but this is then denied to him because he fails to fulfil the demands of discipleship. This raises the question of the relationship between the Commandments and discipleship: do they confirm each other, or does discipleship abrogate the Commandments? Al-Miskīn's answer to this question will be discussed (Section 3.2.2) when examining the hierarchy between filial relations and discipleship.

The authority behind the ethical norm of filial piety in the Fifth Commandment, stresses Al-Miskīn, is God, the authoritative author of the Decalogue.³⁴² He states that in the New Testament account of Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees this authority is confirmed in Matthew's introductory statement to the scriptural citation: '*For God*

³³⁸ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 467, n. 141.

³³⁹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 467.

³⁴⁰ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 618.

³⁴¹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 467. However, the contemporary discussion on Paul's authorship of the Epistle to Ephesians, Matta Al-Miskīn sees Paul as authentic author of this epistle. See the introduction to his *Tafsīr Risālat Afasus Li Al-Qiddīs Pūlus Al-Rasūl [Commentary on Saint Paul the Apostle's Epistle to Ephesians]* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 1994), 18-20.

³⁴² Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 345-347.

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says, “Honour your father and mother” (15:4).³⁴³ Al-Miskīn rejects the notion that the Markan introduction to this citation, ‘for Moses says’ (7:10), goes against the divine origin of the commandments. Rather, it is a counter-response to the Pharisees who stress the importance of the oral tradition at the cost of the written law of Moses.³⁴⁴

Jesus, as divine agent, is the authority behind observance of the Fifth Commandment in the account of the Rich Man, according to Al-Miskīn, even if Jesus rejects the man’s description of him as ‘good’, stating: ‘only God is good’ (Mk 10:18). This rejection is justified on the grounds that this appellation (‘good’) is exclusive to God and that the Rich Man shows signs of respect traditionally given to teachers, including kneeling before him (10:17).³⁴⁵ Al-Miskīn thus argues that Jesus would have accepted the title ‘good’ from the man if he had recognized Jesus’ divine identity.³⁴⁶

The authoritative character of Jesus in all these accounts, according to Al-Miskīn, belongs to ‘the historical Jesus’ since he assumes that the Four Gospels are historically authentic sources from the first century CE.³⁴⁷ These passages, as a result, are not later insertions by gospel editors, as some NT scholars would argue, but rather derive from the Jesus of history.

Jesus’ authority is also displayed in the Johannine crucifixion scene, also regarded as promoting filial piety, although, according to Al-Miskīn, the new relationship between Jesus’ mother and the Beloved Disciple is to be understood in terms of the establishment the Church, that is, the new spiritual family.³⁴⁸ This aligns Al-Miskīn’s exegesis with that of several New Testament scholars, including Rudolf Bultmann and Francis Moloney, who argue for the symbolic interpretation of Jesus’ words on the cross.³⁴⁹ This interpretation stands in contrast to that of his contemporary,

³⁴³ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 467; *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 346.

³⁴⁴ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 347.

³⁴⁵ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 444-45.

³⁴⁶ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 445.

³⁴⁷ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 55, 346, 446; *Tafsīr Mattā*, 86-87; *Tafsīr Lūqa*, 27-28,

³⁴⁸ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Yūḥannā*, 2:1207-1213.

³⁴⁹ Bultmann, *Gospel of St. John*, 673; Moloney, *Johannine Studies*, 261-282. For more details, see Section (2.1.3.1) above.

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Pope Shenouda III (d. 2012), who interprets Jesus' request to the Beloved Disciple in terms of filial duty.³⁵⁰ In response, Al-Miskīn states that the crucifixion scene is too important for establishing *earthly* filial relations,³⁵¹ although, as will now be demonstrated, he claims that filial piety is given superiority in the Synoptic accounts of Jesus' double citation of the Fifth Commandment.

3.2.2 Hierarchy in Jesus' Teachings about Filial Piety

In Al-Miskīn's exegesis of the Synoptic Gospels, filial piety is given priority over Temple sacrifices, ritual handwashing before eating (in Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees), and strict sabbath observance (in the account of the Rich Man). He argues that a child's material maintenance of their parents could not be offered as a temple sacrifice in the time of Jesus.³⁵² The Pharisees, rather, legalized parental support as temple offerings for their own self-interest, and this because they would receive a share of those financial offerings.³⁵³

Further, while the Pharisees were breaking the Fifth Commandment by misusing *korban*, they were adhering to less important practices which they called 'the tradition of the elders' (Mk 7:5). Al-Miskīn notes that this exaggerated act of handwashing up to the elbows used to be a Jewish tradition practiced in the Temple before a sacrifice was offered.³⁵⁴ Jesus and his disciples also used to wash their hands in the Temple and, during the Last Supper, he also washed their feet (Jn 13:5) in order to accentuate the importance of humility as attached to ritual washings.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁰ Shenouda III, *Al-Waṣāyā Al-ʿAshr II: Akrim Abāka wa Akrim Ummak*, 21.

³⁵¹ Bultmann, *Gospel of St. John: A Commentary*, 673; Moloney, *Johannine Studies*, 261-282. For more details, see Section (2.1.3.1) above.

³⁵² Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 347.

³⁵³ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 347.

³⁵⁴ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 466; Al-Miskīn, *Al-Ifkhāristiyyā: ʿAshāʾu Al-Rabb [Eucharist: The Supper of God]* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 2000), 240.

³⁵⁵ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Ifkhāristiyyā*, 240-243. See also Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York City: Doubleday, 2011).

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The Church kept this ritual of handwashing as part of the Eucharist,³⁵⁶ which is one of the seven sacraments recognized by the Coptic Orthodox Church.³⁵⁷ A deacon pours water for the priest to wash his hands (and he dries them) before approaching the wine and the bread which, according to Coptic tradition, is transformed into Christ's blood and flesh.³⁵⁸ Al-Miskīn therefore justifies the obligation to wash hands before partaking of the Eucharist because the sacred food was placed in people's hands of rather than in their mouths, which is the current practice among Coptic priests.³⁵⁹

Thus, Al-Miskīn explains Jesus' direct response to the Pharisees' criticism of his disciples eating with unwashed hands as stemming from their contradictory practices; on the one hand, they extend the practice of ritual handwashing to everyday meals (which is oral tradition) while, on the other, they break the highly regarded [scripturally rooted] moral virtue contained in the Fifth Commandment.³⁶⁰

Al-Miskīn states that extending ritual handwashing to everyday meals, along with exaggerated concerns about legal purities, is regarded by Jesus as an unnecessary preoccupation. Thus, Jesus calls for to shift towards the spirit of the Commandments focusing on moral purity.³⁶¹ Defilement does not result from eating with ritually unwashed hands during everyday meals; it is rather the outcome of the moral pollution that comes from the heart through the tongue to the ears of others.³⁶² It is this moral pollution that renders a person as defiled before God.³⁶³

The purpose of Jesus' dispute with the Pharisees, Al-Miskīn states, is to reveal the difference between worshipping God by the act of mouth and lips and worshipping him with the heart. The former is what the Pharisees do by adhering to the oral

³⁵⁶ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 466; Al-Miskīn, *Al-Ifkhārīstīyyā*, 240.

³⁵⁷ On the secrets of the Coptic Orthodox Church, see Tadros Ya'qūb, *Al-Asrār Al-Sab'ah Li Al-Kanīṣah [The Seven Sacraments of the Church]* (Al-Qalyūbiyyah: Shubrā El Khimā Diocese, n.d.).

³⁵⁸ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 466.

³⁵⁹ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Ifkhārīstīyyā*, 482-284. Al-Miskīn rightly notes that Muslims have similar ritual hand washing up to the elbows before observing their five daily prayers (Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 342).

³⁶⁰ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 345.

³⁶¹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 348-49.

³⁶² Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 468.

³⁶³ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 468.

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commandments of the elders. The latter is manifested in love, passion and mercy towards parents and the others, and this is what is neglected by the Pharisees.³⁶⁴

Similarly, the importance of exhibiting mercy towards others is the reason behind Jesus' choice of what can be described as socio-ethical Commandments (from the Fifth to the Ninth) in response to the Rich Man's question about eternal life.³⁶⁵ The Commandments that relate to God (from the First to the Third) are omitted from Jesus' response because they are beyond the Rich Man's question and status in this story.³⁶⁶ The man apparently observes the Commandments since his youth and Jesus wants him to fully observe those that relate to relationships with others in order to test his claim that he *fulfils* the Commandments.³⁶⁷

In his commentary on the pericopes of Plucking Grain (Mk 2:23-28; Mt. 12:1-8; Lk. 6:1-5) and Healing on Sabbath (Mk 3:1-6; Mt. 12:9-14; Lk. 6:6-11), Al-Miskīn notes that the Fourth Commandment (sabbath observance) could be lessened for the sake of the needs of others: to take care of others is the ultimate aim of the Commandments, the whole Law, and the earthly mission of Jesus who sacrificed himself for the salvation of people.³⁶⁸

3.2.3 The Image of Moral Agents

The two moral agents in relation to Jesus' double-citation of the Fifth Commandment are the Pharisees and the Rich Man. A moral agent, as noted above, is a character presented as *either* a positive *or* negative role model.³⁶⁹ Al-Miskīn regards the Pharisees in this respect as absolute anti-models. They are hypocrites; their words do

³⁶⁴ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 469.

³⁶⁵ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 618.

³⁶⁶ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 618.

³⁶⁷ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 618.

³⁶⁸ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 345-47.

³⁶⁹ On the definition of the moral agent, see Zimmermann, 'The "Implicit Ethics" of New Testament Writings: a Draft,' 414.

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not match their hearts; they claim to be adhering to the Law and the oral commandments, while their hearts are far away from God. In this regard, Isaiah's prophecy (29:13) applies to them: 'This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me' (Mt. 15:8).³⁷⁰

Nevertheless, Al-Miskīn views the Rich Man as a largely positive moral agent.³⁷¹ Wealth is deemed by him to be a sign of success, a sign of God's blessing and a means to do charitable works.³⁷² The Rich Man is the first character in the Synoptic Gospels said to be loved by Jesus. Love in this story, according to Al-Miskīn, is not a metaphor but stands for the real love that the man deserves because he is a perfect Jew who memorizes and keeps the Law and also searches for teachers to politely ask about eternal life.³⁷³ He shows intelligence in knowing the perfect person to ask.³⁷⁴

In response to the question about the deeds that enable people to gain eternal life, Jesus quotes the basic commandments that all people have to fulfil.³⁷⁵ The Rich Man is not convinced that keeping the Commandments will grant him eternal life.³⁷⁶ He insists on asking what he lacks, which shows that he is seeking a form of perfection that is above the Law. This perfection, according to Al-Miskīn, can only be achieved through Jesus whose mission is to complete the Law (Mt. 5:17).³⁷⁷ The man expects to fulfil the Law by receiving the advice from Jesus that he can fulfil it by spending *some* of his money; but he is faced with Jesus' call to sell everything, to give the money to the poor, and to follow him.³⁷⁸ His love for what he possesses materially thus prevents him from following Jesus, because money is a serious enemy that incites a person to grasp it and then to become enslaved by it.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁰ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 467.

³⁷¹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 446.

³⁷² Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 444-45.

³⁷³ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 446; *Al-Miskīn, Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 444-445.

³⁷⁴ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 537.

³⁷⁵ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 445.

³⁷⁶ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 537.

³⁷⁷ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 445.

³⁷⁸ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 445.

³⁷⁹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 537.

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On the basis of a literary analysis of the Markan text, Al-Miskīn suggests that the evangelist intentionally places the account of the Rich Man after a pericope about receiving the kingdom in the manner of little children (10:13-16) and that this is done for the purpose of contrast: the Rich Man fails to act like children who submit themselves fully to God. While children can enter the kingdom with ease, for the rich it is as difficult as a camel passing through the eye of a needle (Mk 10:22-25).³⁸⁰ The Rich Man's inability to gain eternal life cannot, by any means, be his fault, but that of his former teachers from Israel, who call on people to memorize the Commandments without leading them by example and through commitment to fulfil the Law.³⁸¹ This is based on Al-Miskīn's perception that the account of the Rich Man echoes the biblical story of Israel. Jesus' love for the Rich Man (Mk 10:21) who has kept the Law since his youth is a symbol of Jesus' love for Israel: 'When Israel was a child, I loved him' (Hos. 11:1). Prevented by his love of money, the Rich Man fails to accept Jesus' call to discipleship. Similarly, Israel was charmed by its possessions and richness and forgot its God and worshiped all but him.³⁸²

Examining Al-Miskīn's reception of these NT passages through the lens of *Organon* 3 therefore brings to light some significant similarities as well as differences between interpretation undertaken from the perspective of the world *within* and those in *front* of the text.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has conducted the first proposed analytical task, which is to interpret Jesus' traditions that promote filial piety as part of a five-strand investigation of the textual tension about filial relations in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad. Using the hermeneutics of *Organon* 3, this discussion has attempted to fill the gap in the literature in the New Testament studies, which virtually neglect these texts, as well as

³⁸⁰ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 443

³⁸¹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 446

³⁸² Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 446.

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providing a fresh analysis of Al-Miskīn's reception of these texts as a case study for the world in front of the text. In the lines below, I will show the relevance of such analyses to the question of 'understanding' these texts in relation to the study's discussion about Christian-Muslim discourses about commonalities and polemics.

Rather than the polemical discourses, these texts among Jesus' traditions are employed to stress the commonalities between the two traditions, as in the work of Günther, who marks the commonalities between the Ten Commandments in the Christian Bible and the *Qurʾān*.³⁸³ With regard to Jesus' traditions, Günther only stresses that Jesus quotes a short version of the Decalogue that includes the socio-ethical Commandments (Mt. 19:17-19).³⁸⁴ This account by Günther ignores the interpretive role of Jesus from the perspective of the horizon of the text to confirm the quotes commandments and to abrogate/relax the omitted commandments, particularly the one about observing Sabbath. Further, it ignores the question about the identity of Jesus either as a humble teacher who rejects to be called 'good' by the Rich Man, as indicated in the world within the gospels' traditions (Mk. 10:18 par.), or as divine agent, as stated by Al-Miskīn, who would only accept to be called if the Rich Man would have considered him as God. This notion of the divine identity of Jesus, which is central to the Al-Miskīn's Coptic Orthodox theology, would not obviously be an area of commonalities between the Christian Bible and the *Qurʾān* which identifies Jesus as a human prophet of God (Q. 5:116-117; 19:30). In additions, Günther neglects the implication of the reorder of the quoted short list of the Decalogue by Jesus, where it is located at the end of the Second Tablet of the Decalogue to stress its importance probably more than the other commandments.

This superficiality about the analysis of Jesus' traditions that promote filial piety is also echoed in Anthea Portier-Young's account about the Fifth Commandment as

³⁸³ Günther, 'The Ten Commandments and the Qur'an,' 28-58.

³⁸⁴ Günther, 'The Ten Commandments and the Qur'an,' 29.

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one of the commonalities (between the Christian Bible, the Hebrew Bible and the others):

Jesus himself is often, and rightly cited as a model of filial devotion, obedience, and humility. Both in his attitude towards his human parents and in his divine sonship he images for us a perfect mode of honoring parents.³⁸⁵

This account by Portier-Young about Jesus' attitude towards his human parents could be in reference to the crucifixion scene in the Gospel of John when Jesus entrusts Mary to his Beloved Disciple (Jn 19:26-27). While this reference by Portier-Young matches with one of the potential meanings of this episode (that is Jesus' observance of filial duty towards Mary), it neglects the other possible meaning of the world within the text which is to start the new fictive family of Jesus. Further, this neglects that moral theologians, such as Al-Miskīn, would argue against the former meaning, and consequently its use in the commonalities discourse, because it would reduce the significance and the spiritual meaning of the crucifixion scene. This notion of Jesus' crucifixion could be controversial from the perspective of Christian-Muslim relations because it is different from the *Qur'anic* account about the death of Jesus (Q. 4:157-158; 43:57-61).

Furthermore, such superficial commonalities discourse could waste the opportunity for 'the others' to 'understand' other rich aspects that are embedded in Jesus traditions that promote filial piety. In additions to confirming the *formal* ethical norm to honour parents in both the account of the Rich Man and in Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees over the ritual purity laws, the latter provides another *material* ethical norm: to prohibit cursing parents, insulting them or to speak to them in an evil way through quoting the Levitical threat 'Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death' (Exod. 21:17; Lev. 20:9). Through this quotation, Jesus relativised the purity laws, which were an essential part of the traditions of the elders, for the sake of the

³⁸⁵ Anatheia E. Portier-Young, 'Response to "Honoring Parents",' in *The Ten Commandments for Jews, Christians, and Others*, ed. Roger Van Harn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 100-11, here 109.

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Fifth Commandment which is part of the written laws that was meant for the sake of (the elder) parents.

One further aspect of Jesus' traditions that promote filial piety, which is neglected in the commonalities discourses, is his designation of a number of moral agents as either positive or negative role models based on their attitude towards their parents. On the one hand, the religious authorities (the Pharisees) are condemned by Jesus for their failure to prioritize filial piety over the *korban* vows, which implicitly suggests that his disciples were observing filial piety. On the other hand, from the perspective of the world within the Gospel of Mark, Jesus promotes filial piety through portraying the Rich Man as a positive role model for his observance of the socio-ethical commandment, however he lacks observing discipleship (Mk 10:21). Probably because of his failure to fulfil discipleship, Matthew and Luke omit Mark's reference to Jesus' love for the Rich Man, but Al-Miskin stresses Mark's account in conformity with his account about the unity of the Bible. The other aspect of the image of the Rich Man, which is his failure to fulfil discipleship, relates to the notion of relativising filial relations in the teachings of Jesus which is the subject of the next chapter.

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Chapter Four:

The Teachings of Jesus that Relativize Filial Relations

In addition to the Jesus traditions that promote filial piety, another set of traditions relativises filial relations for the sake of discipleship (Mk 1:19-20; 10:28-31; Mt. 4:21-22; 8:18-22; 10:35-37; 19:29-30; Lk. 5:10-11; 9:61; 14:26; 18:28-30) or the fictive family (Mk 3:31-35; Mt. 12:46-50; Lk. 8:19-21; Jn 2:4). The aim of this present chapter is to examine these traditions in order to embark on the second of the proposed five-task analysis that can facilitate mutual understanding of the textual tensions about filial relations in the teachings of both Jesus and Muhammad. This will be undertaken in an identical manner to the first task, as presented in the previous chapter, through the hermeneutical lens of *Organon 3* - and from the perspectives of the world within the text (Section 4.1) and that in front of the text (Section 4.2), with particular reference to the reception of those Jesus traditions in the work of Al-Miskin. *Organon 3* will also be used at the end of this chapter for the purpose of comparative analysis, with the aim of systematising the principles of Scriptural Reasoning (Section 4.3).

In all three sections of this chapter, the first two elements of *Organon 3* will be merged because discussion of the ethical norms embedded in texts *relativising* filial relations (element 1) overlaps with the question about the hierarchy of those norms (element 2).

4.1 The Texts that Relativize Filial Relations (the World within the Text)

Jesus' traditions that relativize filial relations in the Four Gospels can be classified into three thematic groups: a) Jesus' commandment for those who follow him to leave their parents (Mk 1:19-20; 10:28-31; Mt. 4:21-22; 8:18-22; 19:29-30; Lk. 5:10-11; 9:61; 18:28-30) (Section 4.1.1); b) Jesus' statement that his mission is to cause division between children and their parents (Mt 10:35; 10: 37; Lk. 14:26) (Section 4.1.2); c) Jesus' apparent 'distancing' attitude towards his mother (Mk 3:31-35; Mt. 12:46-50; Lk. 8:19-21; Jn 2:4) (Section 4.1.3). Similar to my earlier discussion of texts that

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promote filial piety, the Synoptic Gospels provide the starting-point for this task because of their similarity in form and content; this will be followed by an examination of Jesus' attitude towards his mother at the beginning of the Johannine narrative (2:4). In the same vein, Mark's account will be our point of departure, before proceeding, where relevant, to the redactional changes proposed by Matthew and Luke.

4.1.1 The Command to Leave Parents

Jesus' request for followers to leave their parents are attested in three Synoptic traditions, namely Jesus' call for his first disciples, including the sons of Zebedee, to leave their parents behind (Mk 1:19-20 par.); Jesus' refusal to allow one of his disciples to bury his father (Mt. 8:18-22 par.); and Jesus' promise of the kingdom for those who leave everything, including parents, for the sake of discipleship (Mk 10:28-31 par.).

4.1.1.1 The Ethical Norm (its Hierarchy), Authority and Motivation

1) Jesus' Call of the First Disciples

At the beginning of Mark's Gospel, Jesus calls two pairs of his first disciples to follow him: Simon and Andrew, together with the sons of Zebedee (John and James), all of whom leave everything behind in response to his call (Mk 1:16-20). The story of John and James brings the issue of filial relations into sharp relief, as their father is left behind with hired workers (Mk 1:16-20).³⁸⁶ Matthew's account is nevertheless more radical. On the one hand, Zebedee is introduced at the very beginning of the account (Mt. 4:21), which highlights his sons' action of leaving him, probably in order to highlight the abandonment of one's 'earthly' father as an essential part of discipleship.³⁸⁷ On the other hand, the Matthean Zebedee finds himself in a more difficult situation when his sons depart because, different from Mark, there is no reference to hired workers (Mt. 4:22).³⁸⁸ Luke's account can be considered even more

³⁸⁶ Yarbrow Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 159.

³⁸⁷ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, trans. James E. Crouh (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 162; Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 129-30.

³⁸⁸ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 162; Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 129-30.

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radical regarding the requirements of discipleship, as the disciples are said to leave not their father and nets (Mk 1:18, 20) but ‘everything’ (Lk. 5:11).³⁸⁹ While this conclusion may be right with regard to discipleship in its general sense, the absence of a reference to Zebedee or parents in Luke’s account is a less radical relativisation of filial relation.

In all these Synoptic accounts there are two ethical norms: to follow Jesus and, consequently to leave everything, including one’s father, for the sake of discipleship. An ethical norm, as defined by Zimmermann, is a ‘pronouncement that tells an individual or a group of people what they *ought* to do or not do’.³⁹⁰ The *normativity* of following Jesus, in that sense, can be clearly understood from the grammatical form of Jesus’ call to the first disciples, which is an explicit imperative: Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου ‘follow me’ (Mk 1:17).³⁹¹ In addition, the literary form of these call stories also supports this *normativity*, as well as stressing Jesus’ authority by evoking the prophetic call narrative of Elisha by Elijah (1 Kgs 19:19-21).³⁹² Both Jesus’ and Elijah’s calls comprise of a setting, call and response. The setting is initiated by an *authoritative* agent (Elijah/Jesus) who is introduced to a crowd; then the agent makes a conventional call for others to share his mission, which has far-reaching implications for parental commitments (Mk 1:20; cf. 1 Kgs 19:20).³⁹³

The disciples’ motivation for following Jesus, at the cost of their profession and family relations, can be regarded as *teleological*, since Jesus promises Simon and Andrew that he will make them ‘fishers of people’ (Mk 1:17 par.).³⁹⁴ Regardless of

³⁸⁹ Michael Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke: Volume II (Luke 9:51-24)*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2016), 229.

³⁹⁰ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 43.

³⁹¹ Culpepper, *Mark*, 53.

³⁹² Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 157. Elijah’s call of Elisha reads as follows: ‘So he set out from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, “Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” Then Elijah[a] said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah and became his servant’ (1 Kgs 19:19-21).

³⁹³ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 6; Culpepper, *Mark*, 53.

³⁹⁴ As noted above, teleological motivation is ‘to do an action in order to achieve a certain goal’, verses *deontological* motivation which is ‘to do the prescribed good for its own sake’. See Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 65; ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,’ 31-32.

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Jesus' promise, the motivation could still be *deontological* as being 'fishers of people' points to their 'missionary activity' in the future (Mk 6:7-13; Mt. 28:19-20; Lk. 6:12-19).³⁹⁵ Furthermore, Jesus' call to the sons of Zebedee is, in all Synoptic accounts, more clearly *deontological*, given that there is no reference to them becoming 'fishers of people' as compensation for following Jesus.

Four named disciples are the explicit addressees of Jesus' call to discipleship in this episode. However, some NT scholars argue that Jesus' command is designed to be interpreted as a requirement of discipleship more generally. Mark, as noted by Hooker, uses the verbal form ἠκολούθησαν ('followed') to refer to the first disciples' response to Jesus, which could be understood by readers as a call for themselves to become followers of Jesus.³⁹⁶ Luke, as noted by Fitzmyer, similarly uses the word ἠκολούθησαν ('followed') for the first disciples, which is often used by the third evangelist to refer to discipleship in a general sense rather than the call to apostleship (Mk 1:18; Lk. 5:27-28; 9:23, 49, 57, 59, 61; 18:22, 28).³⁹⁷ Likewise, Matthew uses ἠκολούθησαν to describe the disciples' response but also that of 'the crowds' (ὄχλοι) who follow Jesus and thus form one group with the disciples (Mt. 4:18, 25).³⁹⁸

Barton, however, notes that the itinerant model of discipleship would not be a general and permanent requirement; the disciples leave temporarily only for Jesus to return later to Simon's house to heal his mother-in-law (Mk 1:29-31; Mt. 8:14-15; Lk. 4:38-41).³⁹⁹ This temporary departure, as rightly noted by Barton, represents a significant difference between the stories of Elijah and Jesus calling Elisha and the disciples respectively. Unlike the story of Elijah, Jesus' call does not dismantle his disciples' livelihood: Zebedee's boat is still there, and the house of Simon and Andrew is still open to visitors, including Jesus himself to heal Simon's mother in law (Mk

³⁹⁵ Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 159; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 161-162.

³⁹⁶ Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 59-60.

³⁹⁷ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 28 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985), 567.

³⁹⁸ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 163; Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 131.

³⁹⁹ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 66.

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1:29, 31, 34; cf. 1 Kgs 19:19-21).⁴⁰⁰ Accordingly, filial relations are not abrogated *per se*, but are relativised for the sake of the urgency of the call to discipleship.⁴⁰¹

Matthew and Luke also include another call story that, as will now be demonstrated, heightens the radical nature of discipleship on the question of filial relations.

2) 'Let the Dead Bury Their Own Dead'

A nameless individual asks Jesus to be allowed to bury his father before he follows him, but Jesus responds: 'Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead' (Mt. 18:22; Lk. 9:60). This non-Markan tradition is likely to have been incorporated into the Matthean and Lukan narratives to elaborate further upon the implications of discipleship on family ties.⁴⁰² Whereas Jesus' call of the first disciples impacts on their *living* father, in this pericope discipleship centres on burial responsibilities for a *dead* father.⁴⁰³

The ethical norm implied in Jesus' radical command is controversial, because it goes against the most supreme Jewish requirement to bury one's father: 'He who is confronted by a dead relative is freed from reciting the Shema, from the Eighteen Benedictions, and from all the commandments stated in the Torah' (b. *Ber.* 31).⁴⁰⁴ Barton therefore proposes that Jesus' logion, 'let the dead...', does not abrogate one's duty to bury their parents, but it relativizes filial relations and sets them in a different frame: a person must give priority to following Jesus, because the End is imminent and the proclamation of the kingdom to all people is 'the over-riding priority' (Mt. 8:24-

⁴⁰⁰ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 66-67.

⁴⁰¹ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 64-65

⁴⁰² John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34* (Dallas, Texas: Word Publisher, 1989), 539; Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 148.

⁴⁰³ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 140.

⁴⁰⁴ See Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publisher, 2005), 8-10; Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 542. Due to this logion's contrast contradiction to the Torah, there is a unanimous agreement to consider this logion to belong to the historical Jesus based on the embarrassment criterion. See Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 540; Wolter, *Luke 9:51-24*, 50; Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 149.

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25).⁴⁰⁵ This reordering of priorities stems from conflicting assertions regarding the rightful source of authority, which therefore redefines the hierarchy of ethical norms.⁴⁰⁶ The Pharisees, on the one hand, interpret the Torah primarily from the perspective of household piety, but Jesus' radical command, on the other hand, now highlights the significance of the new fictive family.⁴⁰⁷

Contra to Barton, both John Nolland and Luz argue that Jesus' pronouncement should be interpreted literally, and that burial duty is abrogated for the would-be disciple.⁴⁰⁸ According to Luz, such opposition between Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God and the 'world' is a sign of discipleship that requires obedience of radical and 'inhuman' demands.⁴⁰⁹

The literal interpretation offered by Luz and Nolland is rightly challenged by Barton because it neglects the continued social interaction between Jesus' first disciples and their families (Mk 1:29-31; Mt. 8:14-15; Lk. 4:38-41). Those who accepted Jesus' call to discipleship were still able to visit their homes and be dutiful to their families.⁴¹⁰ In addition, such literal interpretations overlook the possibility of a figurative interpretation of Jesus' logion as a 'pun', intended as a 'verbal thunderbolt, focussing upon an extreme and normally deserving case, intended to crack open people's perception of the way things are'.⁴¹¹ Based on Barton's interpretation, this 'pun' has no *material* ethical norm, for Jesus' would-be disciple who would have been able to bury his father. One factor that supports this figurative interpretation is the story's silence about the disciple's response to Jesus' rejection of his burial duties. This is different from other accounts about the requirements of discipleship, such as Jesus' call of the first disciples and his challenge to the Rich Man, where the reaction of those addressed is noted. The positive response of the disciples, in contrast with that of the Rich Man,

⁴⁰⁵ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 150.

⁴⁰⁶ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 154.

⁴⁰⁷ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 154.

⁴⁰⁸ Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 540; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 18.

⁴⁰⁹ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 18.

⁴¹⁰ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 66-67.

⁴¹¹ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 153.

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is a motif that recurs later, as we shall now see, in Jesus' promise of the kingdom for those who leave their parents in order to follow him.

3) Jesus' Promise of the Kingdom for Those who Leave their Parents

Attention has been given earlier in this study to the Synoptic account of the Rich Man who claims to have fulfilled the socio-ethical commandments, including the Fifth Commandment (Mk 10:17-20 par.), but fails to accept the call to sell everything, give the money to the poor and follow Jesus (Mk 10:21-22 par.). Consequently, Peter enquires about their reward for leaving all to follow Jesus, who replies: 'there is no one who has left... mother or father... for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age... and in the age to come eternal life' (Mk 10:29-30 par.).

Jesus' response transforms the motivation for discipleship from it being *deontological*, in the narratives about the call of the first disciples, to *teleological*, since the promised reward is 'hundredfold now in this age... and in the age to come eternal life' (Mk 10:29-30 par.). This reward is not limited to Jesus' own disciples but extended to 'whoever leaves ...father or mother' (ὅς ἀφῆκεν ὅς ἀφῆκεν...μητέρα ἢ πατέρα), which, as argued by Barton, can signify that 'leaving family and household has to do, not just with itinerant missionary activity of the kind referred to in [the first disciples stories] (Mk 1:16-20; Mt. 6:7-13), but .. more fundamentally, with conversion and discipleship'.⁴¹² The relative pronoun 'whoever' (ὅς ἄν) is used elsewhere by Mark to refer to general demands in Jesus' teaching on marriage (10:11) and on receiving the kingdom as a child (10:15).⁴¹³

Further evidence of this extended concept of discipleship is the use of the phrase 'Truly I tell you' (Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν) to accentuate the reward promised to those who leave their parents; this is used elsewhere by the Markan Jesus in his wider discourse to followers (10:15), and thus, the demand for discipleship is extended beyond the

⁴¹² Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 106.

⁴¹³ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 101-2.

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requesting to relinquish one's wealth to the demand to abandon all earthly ties and possessions.⁴¹⁴ Barton therefore argues that the motivation for leaving one's parents, according to Mark, is to do so for the sake of Jesus and the gospel (10:29), a motif used elsewhere by the evangelist to accentuate Jesus' *authority* in telling everyone what they have to do (Mk 8:34-35).⁴¹⁵ The same applies to the Matthean account about the Rich Man, in which Jesus links discipleship with everyone from among his followers being 'perfect' (*teleios*) (5:48).⁴¹⁶

Adela Yarbro Collins, nevertheless, rightly challenges the notion that leaving families is a general requirement of discipleship in the Gospel of Mark, who also mentions 'persecutions' as part of Jesus' promised reward (10:30). Such 'persecutions' indicate that some of Jesus' followers would, unwillingly, have to leave their households.⁴¹⁷ Luz also challenges Barton's conclusion about the Matthean Jesus regarding the proposed link between perfection and leaving families, since perfection varies from one disciple to another: 'Some are called to celibacy and others to marriage; some are called to poverty and others to richness and almsgiving'.⁴¹⁸ Furthermore, Matthew's redactional modification of the word 'house' (*oikíān*) to the plural 'houses' (*oikíās*) shifts the focus of the story to leaving one's properties rather than family and household.⁴¹⁹ The Lukan version of Jesus' encounter with the Rich Man, which is beyond the scope of Barton's analysis, adds 'wife' to the list of family members who are to be left for the sake of Jesus.⁴²⁰ This addition, as rightly noted by Wolter, indicates that family ties are not meant by Jesus to be voluntarily broken, as marriage is unsolvable according to Luke (Lk. 16:18).⁴²¹

⁴¹⁴ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 99, 103.

⁴¹⁵ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 106.

⁴¹⁶ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 208.

⁴¹⁷ Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 483.

⁴¹⁸ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 19-28: Volume III* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 59-60.

⁴¹⁹ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 517.

⁴²⁰ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1202; Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 889; Wolter, *Luke 9:51-24*, 334-335.

⁴²¹ Wolter, *Luke 9:51-24*, 334-335.

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Whether leaving parents is interpreted as a requirement of discipleship or as one of its consequences, there is no indication in the Synoptic accounts that children can provoke animosity towards their parents or any other family members.⁴²²

4.1.1.2 The Moral Agency

The texts focusing on the theme of leaving one's parents for the sake of Jesus provide a number of moral agents, embodied in characters who serve either as positive or negative role models.⁴²³ The most positive of these characters are Jesus' first disciples who are with him 'from the beginning as witnesses of his activity, as hearers of his message, as the first of the future apostles (Mt. 10:2)'.⁴²⁴ In line with the overarching plot of the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' disciples are the most significant characters whose behaviour is afforded exemplary status (Mk 1:29-31; 3:14ff.; 5:37; 8:29; 9:2; 10:35-45; 13:3).⁴²⁵ Particularly on the question of filial relations, the sons of Zebedee are presented as paradigmatic role models who 'immediately' leave everything behind, including their father, without any sign of inner conflict or *teleological* motivation.⁴²⁶

The would-be disciple who asks to be allowed to bury his father is presented as less responsive. This is why Robert Gundry regards him as a negative moral agent because he lacks absolute commitment to Jesus: he agrees to follow him on certain conditions, while discipleship is expected to be unconditional.⁴²⁷ Kingsbury, however, notes that the man's request to bury his father could be justified on the basis of the sanctity attached to this custom in ancient Judaism (cf. Tob. 4:3; 6:16), including the

⁴²² See Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 107; Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 482-483; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 517-518.

⁴²³ For the definition of moral agency, see Zimmermann, 'The "Implicit Ethics" of New Testament Writings: a Draft,' 414.

⁴²⁴ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 162.

⁴²⁵ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 65-66.

⁴²⁶ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 138; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 162.

⁴²⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew, a Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1982), 153.

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example of Joseph's burial of his father Jacob (Gen. 50. 5-6).⁴²⁸ Kingsbury, therefore, rightly notes that Matthew presents him as a 'disciple' with positive connotations, in contrast to the other interlocutor presented as a 'scribe'.⁴²⁹ In addition, this would-be disciple is presented as belonging to the crowds, who are positively portrayed by Matthew as followers of Jesus (Mt. 8:18).⁴³⁰ Luke's account uses the term 'other' (ἄλλος) to refer to this person, which is neutral language to denote 'a different [person]'. However, he is still considered by Luke to be a positive character for he addresses Jesus as 'Lord' (Κύριε) which amounts to a sign of respect (9:59).⁴³¹

In all Synoptic cases, this would-be disciple is presented in a less positive light than the sons of Zebedee, who follow Jesus immediately; he is, nevertheless, less negatively depicted than the Rich Man, who explicitly rejects Jesus' call to discipleship. This man's rejection of Jesus probably accounts for the Matthean and Lukan omission of Mark's reference to Jesus' love towards him (10:21); rather, Matthew's description of him as 'a young man' (19:22) points to his lack of maturity and complete devotion to God.⁴³²

4.1.2 Family Division and Discipleship in Jesus' Teaching

The other group of texts that relativise filial relations are those in which Jesus declares that his mission is to set up children against their parents (Mt. 10:35; Lk. 12:51), that children must love Jesus more than their parents (Mt. 10:36), or they should hate their parents for the sake of Jesus (Lk. 14:26).

⁴²⁸ Jack Dean Kingsbury, 'On Following Jesus: the "Eager" Scribe and the "Reluctant" Disciple (Matthew 8.18-22),' *New Testament Studies* 34, no. 1 (1988): 45- 59, here 54.

⁴²⁹ Kingsbury, 'On Following Jesus,' 54.

⁴³⁰ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 145.

⁴³¹ Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 541; Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 145; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 18.

⁴³² Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 204.

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4.1.2.1 The Ethical Norm (Its Hierarchy), Its Authority and Motivation

1) Setting Children against Parents

Jesus' words, 'I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother' (Mt. 10:35), are an indicative statement with controversial implications. On the one hand, Davies and Allison note that this statement is to be interpreted in the light of Micah's prophecy: 'Put no trust in a friend; have no confidence in a loved one... for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother' (7:5-6).⁴³³ They therefore suggest that it does not set up an ethical norm for children to be hostile towards their parents; it rather indicates that the division associated with Jesus' mission aligns with the fulfilment of Micah's prophecy.⁴³⁴ Matthean community members have been estranged from their households, leading to the association of Micah's prophecy with the consequences of accepting Jesus' mission.⁴³⁵

In agreement with Davies and Allison, Warren Carter interprets Jesus' statement as indicative of the consequences of discipleship based on other occurrences of Jesus' 'I have come' statements in Matthew (5:17; 9:13; 10:34; 10:35; 20:28).⁴³⁶ All these statements are to be interpreted in relation to God's purpose for Jesus, as declared at the beginning of Matthew's narrative: 'She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will [come to] save his people from their sins' (1:21).⁴³⁷ This exposure of people's sins is what causes division within families because of their reaction to family members who accept Jesus' mission.⁴³⁸ Thus, Jesus' disciples approach people with his greetings of peace (Mt. 10:12); this is accepted by some but rejected by others (10:13-15) who will cause Jesus' disciples to suffer (10:17-23).⁴³⁹

⁴³³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 219-220.

⁴³⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 219-220.

⁴³⁵ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 176.

⁴³⁶ Warren Carter, 'Jesus' "I Have Come" Statements in Matthew's Gospel,' *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (1998): 44-62.

⁴³⁷ Carter, 'Jesus' "I Have Come" Statements in Matthew's Gospel', 47.

⁴³⁸ Carter, 'Jesus' "I Have Come" Statements in Matthew's Gospel', 59-60.

⁴³⁹ Luz, *Matthew 8-12*, 112.

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Luz notes, on the other hand, that another possible interpretation is to regard Jesus' statement (to put children against their parents) as an ethical norm that requires his disciples to break their family ties.⁴⁴⁰ The mission of the Matthean Jesus therefore calls for radical love for Jesus' sake (5:43-47) and, at the same time, requires 'a break with the world whose expression among the followers [that] is a renunciation of possessions, vocation, and family' (10:35-37).⁴⁴¹

Luz's interpretation is nevertheless weakened by the fact that strong conflicting feelings towards relatives arise from severe instances of persecution instigated by family members, as highlighted elsewhere by Matthew: 'Sibling will betray sibling to death and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all because of my name...When they persecute you in this town, flee to the next' (Mt.10:21-23).⁴⁴² In support of the view that family relations are not meant to be broken by Jesus' statement, 'to put children against their parents', is the subsequent command for those children, who will potentially experience such persecutions, to love their parents though to a lesser degree than Jesus (10:37).⁴⁴³

2) Jesus' Commandment for Followers to Love Him More than Parents

After declaring that his mission is to set children against their parents (Mt. 10:35), Jesus says, 'Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me' (10:37). The occurrence of these two statements in the same Matthean missionary discourse has a 'logic of juxtaposition' according to Barton, as the former expresses the implication of Jesus' mission from his own perspective and the latter from the viewpoint of his disciples.⁴⁴⁴ Jesus' commandment for others to love him more than their parents implies a *formal* ethical norm, as nothing in particular is required as a consequence of

⁴⁴⁰ Luz, *Matthew 8-12*, 111.

⁴⁴¹ Luz, *Matthew 8-12*, 111.

⁴⁴² Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 177.

⁴⁴³ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 177.

⁴⁴⁴ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 168.

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this ‘lesser love’. However, Barton and Luz note that Jesus’ commandment to love him more than one’s parents is a *material* ethical norm, which is related to the question of allegiance. This means that when loyalty to one’s parents and family ties opposes that to Jesus, the latter has to be given preference.⁴⁴⁵

Commented [CW3]: So what have you demonstrated in this paragraph?

3) Jesus’ Commandment to Hate Parents

Luke’s version of Jesus’ commandment to love one’s parents less than him is more radical than its Matthew counterpart for it commands children to *hate* their parents: ‘Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother... cannot be my disciple’ (Lk. 14:26). From a redaction-critical perspective, the Lukan version is probably older because it retains Q’s harsh word ‘hate’, probably to heighten the requirements of discipleship and to highlight the level of priority to be given to the commandments of Jesus over the parents.⁴⁴⁶

Commented [CW4]: I don’t think you have yet introduced Q. Will you external examiner know what you mean by this?

The literal meaning of hatred does not, no more than love, imply a particular action on the part of children; it is an expression of emotion, which renders this a *formal* ethical norm. However, the connotations of the reference to hatred (μισεῖν) in Luke 14:26 could have *material* implications. The word is used elsewhere by Luke as the opposite of love (ἀγαπᾶν) when one has to choose between two ‘masters’, that is, to love one and hate the other (Lk. 16:13).⁴⁴⁷ Accordingly, the reference to hatred in Luke 14:26 implies that, where there is conflict between Jesus’ words and people’s attitude to their parents, children must give priority to Jesus’ commandments.⁴⁴⁸

This connotation of μισεῖν could be understood from the Hebrew origin of μισεῖν in LXX which is translated from נָשָׂא which means to discard, refuse and reject (Gen.

⁴⁴⁵ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 112; Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 177. See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 221.

⁴⁴⁶ John D. M. Derrett, ‘Hating Father and Mother (Luke 14:26; Matthew 10:37),’ *The Downside Review* 117, no. 409 (1999): 251-272, here 251, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001258069911740902>; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1060-1062. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 221.

⁴⁴⁷ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1063.

⁴⁴⁸ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1063.

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29:30-33; Deut. 21.15-17; Judg. 15.2; Sir. 7.26; Mal. 1:2-3).⁴⁴⁹ In Genesis 29, for example, there is a comparison between Jacob's relation to Rachel whom he loved (יָרָא/ αγαπαω) and Leah whom he hated (שָׂנְאָה/ μισεω) (Gen. 29:30-33). The verb שָׂנְאָה or μισεῖν here does not denote emotional hatred, as noted by Wolter, but it refers to the side that is decided not to be chosen in comparison.⁴⁵⁰ Accordingly, Wolter translates μισεῖ in Luke 14:26 into 'to reject' rather than 'to hate' as in NRSV and most of the English translations of the Bible.⁴⁵¹

Commented [CW5]: Do you need this paragraph? If so, what is its function within the section?

4.1.2.2 The Moral Agency

The group of texts about Jesus' mission and family divisions does not present any moral agents who can be considered as either positive or negative role models. Those that relates specifically to Jesus' attitude towards his mother do not present explicit ethical norms, but, as we shall see, they raise question about Jesus' image as a role model.

4.1.3 Jesus' Attitude towards Mary and the Relativizing of Filial Relations

As noted above, there are two occasions in gospel traditions where Jesus' attitude towards his mother can be regarded as controversial. The first such episode is when he keeps his mother (and brothers) standing at his door (Mk 3:31-35; Mt. 12:46-50; Lk. 8:19-21). Similarly, and intriguingly, he addresses his mother at the beginning of John's Gospel with the words: 'Woman, what concern is that to me and to you? My hour has not yet come' (2:4).

⁴⁴⁹ Wolter, *Luke 9:51-24*, 227.

⁴⁵⁰ Wolter, *Luke 9:51-24*, 227.

⁴⁵¹ Wolter, *Luke 9:51-24*, 225. Similar to Wolter, WEB translates μισεῖ into 'disregard', and GW and NOG uses 'abandon' instead of 'hate' that is used in NRSV, KJ, AMP, ESV and NIV.

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4.1.3.1 The Ethical Norm (its Hierarchy), Its Authority and Motivation

Different from Jesus' attitude towards his mother during the Johannine crucifixion scene, the other examples in gospel tradition are less indicative of ethical norms in that they constitute an 'ought-to-do' statement.⁴⁵² In the Synoptic Gospels, the aim is not to demonstrate whether Mary has finally been admitted into the house where Jesus sits with his followers, or whether she has been rejected.⁴⁵³ Likewise, the reference to Jesus' attitude towards his mother during the wedding at Cana marks an unexpected shift in the narrative. While Jesus' response to her seems to be harsh, 'Woman, what concern is that to me and to you?', he ultimately fulfils her request to solve the problem of the shortage of wine by turning six jars of water into the best-quality wine (Jn 2:6-10). Nevertheless, Jesus' attitude towards his mother in these two episodes is - as we will now argue - problematic as far as his image as a role model is concerned.

4.1.3.2 Jesus' Attitude towards Mary and His Image as a Role Model

1) Synoptic Evidence

All three Synoptic accounts portray Jesus' mother and brothers as standing outside a house where he has gathered with a crowd of people (Mk 3:31-32b par.). According to first-century norms Jesus' family would be expected to be admitted to the house, as indicated by the crowd's alerting of Jesus to their presence outside (Mk 3:32b par.).⁴⁵⁴ Jesus, however, gives an unexpected response which comprises of three parts: a rhetorical question, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?'; Mark's setting of the scene, 'And looking at those who sat around him, he said'; and, finally, Jesus' indicative statement: 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother' (Mk 3:33-35 par.).

⁴⁵² For the definition of 'ethical norm', see Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 43.

⁴⁵³ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 67.

⁴⁵⁴ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 81.

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Jesus' pronouncement about familial ties is interpreted by Howard Kee as articulating that 'all genetic, familial, and sex distinctions are eradicated in the new concept of the true family'.⁴⁵⁵ This interpretation is based on the presence of the phrase 'around him' (περιβλεψάμενος) to denote the crowd, which – as in the account about the Rich Man (Mk 10:29) – refers to Jesus' inner circle in contrast to 'outsiders'.⁴⁵⁶

Barton, however, rejects Kee's conclusion that the Markan Jesus eradicates family ties; this 'pushes the relatively slender evidence too far... [as] Kee's view loses sight of the metaphorical dimension of 3.35; and makes nonsense of the support of the Fifth Commandment in 7.10-13 and 10.19, and the teaching on divorce in 10.1-12'.⁴⁵⁷ The metaphorical dimension of Jesus' response lies in its use of kinship terminology to define Jesus' true mother, brothers and sisters in spiritual terms.⁴⁵⁸ This is supported by the fact that Jesus' biological family members disappear from the story while it is still relatively 'primitive' and without revealing whether they are admitted in or not; the climax of the scene is Jesus' redefinition of his true family: 'my mother and brothers are those who hear and do the word of God' (Mk 3:34-35 par.).⁴⁵⁹ So, the main purpose of this Synoptic scene is to accentuate the establishment of the new fictive family of followers rather than to highlight Jesus' attitude towards his biological family.⁴⁶⁰ One further potential implication of this redefinition is that the fictive family should supersede biological relations when there is a conflict between the two, given that Jesus ignores the call of his biological family when they distract him from preaching to his true disciples gathered around him.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁵ Howard Clark Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983), 109.

⁴⁵⁶ Kee, *Community of the New Age*, 109.

⁴⁵⁷ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 82.

⁴⁵⁸ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 79.

⁴⁵⁹ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 67.

⁴⁶⁰ Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 236; Culpepper, *Mark*, 129.

⁴⁶¹ Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 235-237; Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, "'Who Are My Mother and My Brothers?'" Family Relations and Family Language in the Gospel of Mark, *The Journal of Religion* 81, no. 1 (2001): 1-25, here 14.

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Both of these implications – the declaration of a new family and its priority over biological relations – are more evident in the Matthean and Lukan accounts, as both reduce the Markan tension between Jesus and his biological family.⁴⁶² Jesus' mother and brothers are not compared to the scribes by Matthew, who omits reference to the family's attempt to take him back on the grounds of insanity (Mk 3:20-1, 22-30, 31-5).⁴⁶³ Furthermore, Jesus' mother and brothers, in Matthew, do not summon him while he fails to respond (Mk 3:31); they naturally seek to talk to him (Mt. 12:46-47).⁴⁶⁴

Luke's version of the episode is similarly less radical: it is the crowd that hinders Jesus' mother and brothers from reaching him (Lk. 8:19), and in marked contrast to its Synoptic counterparts, it also omits Jesus' rhetorical question, 'who are my mother and brothers?'.⁴⁶⁵ These changes are consistent with Luke's presentation of Mary not as an outsider, as in Mark, but as 'the servant the Lord' (1:38).⁴⁶⁶

2) Johannine Evidence

Unlike the open-ended character of Jesus' interaction with his mother in the Synoptic Gospels, their encounter at the beginning of John's Gospel appears incongruent with the opening of the scene. It starts with Mary and Jesus attending a wedding, possibly as kin (or close friends) of the bridegroom given Mary's concern regarding the shortage of wine and her implicit request for Jesus to intervene: 'They have no wine' (Jn 1:3).⁴⁶⁷ Jesus' response consists of three parts: he calls his mother 'Woman'; he asks her, 'What have you to do with me?'; and he justifies his response on the grounds that 'My hour has not yet come' (2:4). In what amounts to a narrative rupture, Mary does not react directly to Jesus but asks the servants to do whatever he tells them. This leads to Jesus'

⁴⁶² Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 78.

⁴⁶³ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 179; Yarbrow Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 237

⁴⁶⁴ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 179; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 224-225.

⁴⁶⁵ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 79; Wolter, *Luke 1-9:50*, 344; John Nolland, *Luke 1:1-9:20* (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1989), 394.

⁴⁶⁶ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 393.

⁴⁶⁷ Campbell, *Kinship Relations in the Gospel of John*, 114, 123; Matthew S. Collins, 'The Question of Doxa: A Socio-literary Reading of the Wedding at Cana,' *BTB* 25, no. 3 (1995):100 -109, here 103, <https://doi.org/10.1177/014610799502500302>. For the culture of first-century Mediterranean weddings, see Campbell, *Kinship Relations in the Gospel of John*, 127-128.

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miraculous act, the first such ‘sign’ in John: he turns six full water jars into good wine, which is far beyond Mary’s (and the attendants’) expectation (2:6-11).⁴⁶⁸

Jesus’ interaction with his mother in this scene is enigmatic as far as his role as moral agent is concerned. Matthew Collins regards Jesus’ way of addressing his mother as a part of John’s ‘anti-kinship orientation’ for the sake of a new fictive family.⁴⁶⁹ In line with this, Leon Morris justifies Jesus’ attitude as a requirement of his public ministry.⁴⁷⁰ In particular, the word ‘woman’ (γύναι) in Jesus’ response seems ‘dismissive’, which is why some English translations change it to ‘mother’ (CJB, CEV, MSG, NTE and TNVI), ‘dear woman’ (AMP, AMPC, ERV, EXB, ICB, NCV, NIRV and NLT), or even ‘dear mother’ (NVI84).⁴⁷¹ The underlying Greek text does not support this interpretative rendering, as the vocative γύναι is only used in the NT to mean ‘woman’ (Jn 4:21; 19:26; 20:13, 15; Mt. 15:28; Lk. 13:12; 22:57).⁴⁷² Barrett and Brown rightly note, moreover, that Jesus’ address to his mother is not necessarily negative, as he addresses with the aid of the same designation in the crucifixion scene where she is honoured and dignified by Jesus and entrusted into the care of his Beloved Disciple (19:25-27).⁴⁷³

As for the second part of Jesus’ response to Mary – ‘What to me and to you?’ (Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί) – it appears to express anger, or at least frustration, in line with its use elsewhere to express a person’s irritation at the interfering behaviour of the other party’ (Mt. 8:29; Mk 1:24; Jn 2:4; cf. Judg. 11:12; 2 Sam. 16:10; 19:22; 1 Kgs 17:18; 2 Kgs 3:13; 2 Chr. 35:21 LXX).⁴⁷⁴ Sookgoo Shin therefore proposes that what underlies Jesus’

⁴⁶⁸ For the setting of the story, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 33.

⁴⁶⁹ Collins, ‘The Question of Doxa: A Socio-literary Reading of the Wedding at Cana,’ 103.

⁴⁷⁰ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 158-59, quoted in Campbell, *Kinship Relations in the Gospel of John*, 115.

⁴⁷¹ Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, 60, n. 65.

⁴⁷² Barret, *The Gospel According to St John*, 191; Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, 60, n. 65; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1966), 99; Bennema, ‘Character Reconstruction... The Practice,’ 26; Judith M. Lieu, ‘The Mother of the Son in the Fourth Gospel,’ *JBL* 117 (1998): 61-77, here 65.

⁴⁷³ Barret, *The Gospel According to St John*, 191; Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, 99.

⁴⁷⁴ Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1965) 43-4, quoted in Coloe, ‘The Mother of Jesus,’ 205.

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response could be Mary's implicit request for him to intervene miraculously even though his 'hour' to reveal his identity publicly, as the one sent by the Father, has not yet arrived.⁴⁷⁵

Brown considers an explanation of this kind as unlikely because the Cana miracle is the first such 'sign' in the narrative and thus Mary is unlikely yet to expect him to carry out a miracle.⁴⁷⁶ Campbell suggests, however, that there may be three reasons why Mary would have been expecting Jesus to carry out a miracle. First, Jesus' miraculous transformation of water into wine at Cana could have been preceded by other miracles in the Johannine narrative but edited out during its compositional history.⁴⁷⁷ Also, in the text's final form, there are a few earlier hints that Jesus is 'capable of astonishing feats' (Jn 1:3, 4, 15-30, 41, 45, 48, 49), and some of them could have reached Mary through gossip.⁴⁷⁸ Furthermore, this fits with Jesus' pronouncement that his hour has not come yet, i.e. to reveal his identity, which implies that his mother should have allowed him to act in his own way.⁴⁷⁹ This is the meaning adopted by William Barclay, who translates Jesus' statement as 'let me handle this in my own way' (cf. also CEV, ERV TLB and AMPC).⁴⁸⁰ Mary could thus she asked the servants to do what he tells them without any subsequent interference from her side.⁴⁸¹

The later sequence of events shows that Jesus is able to balance his mother's request with his Father's will that he does not yet reveal his identity, in that he carries out the miracle not in public but only in the presence of his mother, disciples and the servants.⁴⁸² When his 'hour' arrives, as defined by the Father, Jesus carries out a public

⁴⁷⁵ Shin, *Ethics in the Gospel of John*, 178.

⁴⁷⁶ Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, 103.

⁴⁷⁷ Thomas H. Olbricht, 'The Theology of the Signs in the Gospel of John,' in *Johannine Studies: Essays in Honour of Frank Pack*, ed. James E. Priest (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University Press, 1989), 171-81, here 176-79, quoted in Campbell, *Kinship Relations in the Gospel of John*, 121.

⁴⁷⁸ Campbell, *Kinship Relations in the Gospel of John*, 122.

⁴⁷⁹ Campbell, *Kinship Relations in the Gospel of John*, 126.

⁴⁸⁰ William Barclay, *The Gospel of John: Chapters 1-7* (Burlington: Welch, 1975), 1:95, quoted in Campbell, *Kinship Relations in the Gospel of John*, 126.

⁴⁸¹ Campbell, *Kinship Relations in the Gospel of John*, 126; Coloe, 'The Mother of Jesus', 205-207.

⁴⁸² Campbell, *Kinship Relations in the Gospel of John*, 132-134; Bennema, 'Character Reconstruction...The Practice', 426; Barret, *The Gospel According to St John*, 188; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 34.

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miracle by raising Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11:38-44); this prompts the authorities to seek to kill him (11:45-57), which will mark the arrival of his 'hour' of glorification (19:25-27).⁴⁸³

⁴⁸³ Campbell, *Kinship Relations in the Gospel of John*, 132; Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 925.

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4.2 Al-Miskīn's Reception of Jesus Traditions that Relativize Filial Relations

It has already been noted that passages relativizing filial relations in Jesus' teaching can be classified into three groups: Jesus' commandment for followers to leave their parents; his statement that his mission is to cause division within families; and, thus, his attitude towards Mary in both the Synoptic and Johannine accounts. Al-Miskīn's interpretations of these textual groupings will now be considered.

4.2.1 The Commandment to Leave Parents

Jesus' commandment for his followers to leave their parents is attested in his call for the sons of Zebedee to leave their father in order to follow Jesus, in denying a potential disciple the right to bury his father, and in promising the kingdom to those who leave their parents for the sake of discipleship.

4.2.1.1 The Ethical Norm (Its Hierarchy), Authority and Motivation

1) Jesus' Call to the Sons of Zebedee

Al-Miskīn acknowledges that Jesus' instruction for the sons of Zebedee to leave their father behind is harsh, from a literal perspective, as he would be required to fix the boat and the net and to make a living without the assistance of his sons. However, Jesus' commandment, he claims, is intended as spiritual training for the first disciples to recognize the supremacy of God in Christian life.⁴⁸⁴ Thus, this commandment serves as an illustration of how Jesus' call should be given priority over every human relationship, even that of filial relations. By doing so, Jesus' disciples no longer belong to 'the world' (Jn 17:14), so that the Father will love them as he loves his son: 'Father...the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them' (Jn 17:25).⁴⁸⁵ Based on Al-Miskīn's hermeneutical understanding of scriptural unity, the

⁴⁸⁴ *Al-Miskīn, Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 150.

⁴⁸⁵ *Al-Miskīn, Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 150.

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first disciples are promised another *teleological* reward, which is to inherit eternal life and become part of a new fictive family, as highlighted by Jesus in his response to Simon (Peter) after his encounter with the Rich Man.⁴⁸⁶

As for the impact of Jesus' commandment on Zebedee himself, Al-Miskīn notes that the Markan version (1:20) is less harsh than its Matthean counterpart (4:22) because Zebedee has servants to help him, and his sons also return to offer assistance from time to time.⁴⁸⁷ This, according to Al-Miskīn, must amount to a historically authentic reminiscence.⁴⁸⁸ Al-Miskīn's comment about the sons' reunion with their father, however, is not supported textually in the gospel traditions.

2) 'Let the Dead Bury Their Own Dead'

Al-Miskīn notes that Jesus' rejection of the potential disciple's request to bury his father aligns with his call of the first disciples, where he is setting a clear boundary between what belongs to the world and to flesh, on the one hand, and what belongs to heaven, on the other. In the call stories, Jesus exerts his superiority over 'living' family members, while in his denial of burial duties he extends this superiority to 'dead' kin.⁴⁸⁹

Jesus' logion, 'let the dead...', is thus interpreted literally by Al-Miskīn and the underlying ethical norm is for the man to leave his father without burying him.⁴⁹⁰ Jesus' radical command can be justified, in his view, on various grounds. Jesus' disciple, as a seeker of the kingdom, should be more concerned about the souls of the dead rather than their bodies. Moreover, other people could oversee the father's burial service, otherwise Jesus' would not have asked the man to leave his father unburied. In addition, Jesus was aware of people's disobedience to the Torah's moderate commandments, and he therefore uses this startling teaching to emphasise the dichotomy between 'world'

⁴⁸⁶ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 199-200.

⁴⁸⁷ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 200.

⁴⁸⁸ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murguṣ*, 30-31.

⁴⁸⁹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 432.

⁴⁹⁰ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 433.

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and ‘kingdom’.⁴⁹¹ This dichotomy should, according to Al-Miskīn, continue to be important in the minds of contemporary Jesus followers, since many Christians can be overly attached to ‘the dead’ at the cost of their spiritual connection to the kingdom.⁴⁹² This overattachment is manifested in strong feelings towards dead relations, thereby mourning their loss more than they grieve about their own sins.⁴⁹³ Further, he observes that the building of tombs and the length of time spent in honouring the memory of dead family members points to less interest in kingdom and discipleship.⁴⁹⁴

Al-Miskīn therefore states that Jesus’ command to ‘let the dead bury the dead’ encourages his followers in all ages to identify the sharp dichotomy between ‘the world’ and the kingdom and, consequently, to free their souls from fleshly relations. This is what will enable them to lead their lives for the sake of kingdom and Gospel.⁴⁹⁵ By doing so, Jesus’ followers will not belong to the world, just as Jesus and the first disciples do not belong to ‘this world’ (Jn 17:14-16).⁴⁹⁶

3) Jesus’ Promise of the Kingdom for Those Who Leave Parents

Jesus’ indicative statement, ‘whoever leaves father or mother... will receive a hundredfold now in this age...and in the age to come eternal life’, can be interpreted in such a way that leaving parents is one of the requirements of discipleship or, alternatively, one of its consequences. Al-Miskīn adopts the former view, in that he regards Jesus’ statement as general in scope and thus directed at all his disciples.⁴⁹⁷

However, from Al-Miskīn’s point of view, the application of this ethical norm, varies from one scenario to another. On the one hand, all the disciples must possess what Al-Miskīn calls ‘volunteer poverty’, since not everyone is required to leave

⁴⁹¹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 432.

⁴⁹² Mattā Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 2019), 24-25.

⁴⁹³ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 24-25.

⁴⁹⁴ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 24-25.

⁴⁹⁵ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 24-26.

⁴⁹⁶ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 432.

⁴⁹⁷ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 450

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everything immediately but should be *ready* to do so willingly for the sake of Jesus.⁴⁹⁸ The core of this volunteer poverty is not directed at family relationships and property, but is meant to teach Jesus' disciples how to use their families and possessions for the sake of Jesus. This is because gospel tradition differentiates between the rich man who feeds the poor and receives his reward at the resurrection (Lk. 14:12-15) and the one who ignores Lazarus and consequently finds himself in agony (Lk. 16:19-31).⁴⁹⁹

Al-Miskīn suggests that one group of Jesus' disciples must apply his commandment literally, and thus willingly leave everything behind, give their money to the poor and follow the way of Jesus. In Jesus' time, the Twelve Apostles were elite disciples whose example is to be inherited by the Church's monks and priests in all subsequent ages.⁵⁰⁰

The motivation for Jesus followers to leave their parents (and all things) for his sake is apparently *teleological* since two rewards are promised: first, 'hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields'; secondly, 'and in the age to come eternal life' (Mk 10:30 par.). According to Al-Miskīn, the first reward promised to those who leave their family is the *Church*, which represents the new family with multitude members, all of whom share bread in the 'Eucharist'.⁵⁰¹ The other reward, eternal life, is not a reciprocal gift for abandoning everything for Jesus' sake but rather a gift of love from Jesus who is himself the *telos* of his disciples' 'volunteer poverty': 'for the sake of me and the Gospel' (Mk 10:29 par.).⁵⁰² Al-Miskīn stresses that only this purpose - for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel - renders 'volunteer poverty' a *Christian virtue*; otherwise, it would be a *sin* motivated by false teaching, psychological issues or a negative view of the value of people and the world.⁵⁰³

⁴⁹⁸ Mattā Al-Miskīn, *Al-Faḍā'il Al-Masīhiyyah bi Ḥasab Al-Injīl [Christian Virtues according to the Gospel]* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 1992), 87. See also Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 229.

⁴⁹⁹ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Faḍā'il Al-Masīhiyyah*, 92.

⁵⁰⁰ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 201; *Al-Miskīn, Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 450.

⁵⁰¹ *Al-Miskīn, Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 450.

⁵⁰² Al-Miskīn, *Al-Faḍā'il Al-Masīhiyyah*, 82, 85.

⁵⁰³ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Faḍā'il Al-Masīhiyyah*, 82.

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As for the persecutions mentioned by Jesus in relation to reward (Mk 10:30), Al-Miskīn notes that the ‘reward’ is not to be understood literally but rather represents a prophecy by Jesus that is fulfilled throughout the Church’s experiences of persecution through history, thus requiring Jesus’ followers to bear their cross on the way of the kingdom.⁵⁰⁴

4.2.1.2 The Moral Agents

Jesus’ teaching about leaving family relations presents the sons of Zebedee, the would-be disciple and also the Rich Man as moral agents. The sons of Zebedee, according to Al-Miskīn, are positive characters from the moment they are chosen by Jesus who, as divine agent, is able to see their future and to recognise that they are overqualified to remain fishermen.⁵⁰⁵ However, Al-Miskīn also suggests that their roles as fishermen, and therefore involved in everyday activities, is one reason why Jesus chooses them as disciples, and this in contrast to the Pharisees whose only profession is to ‘monopolise’ religious authority (Jn 7:47-49).⁵⁰⁶ For their part, Jesus’ first four disciples accept his call immediately because they have recognized its spiritual nature, and therefore regard their profession and possessions as worthless when compared to the spirituality of discipleship.⁵⁰⁷ Based on this interpretation, Al-Miskīn criticizes Alan McNeile’s proposal that Jesus’ first disciples were aware beforehand of his mission and had the opportunity to converse with him before their calling.⁵⁰⁸ This interpretation, emerging from the lens of ‘normal human logic’, neglects the irresistible spiritual power of Jesus’ call upon the disciples.⁵⁰⁹

The first disciples, therefore, are to be contrasted with the Rich Man in terms of their motivation for discipleship. They left everything ‘for the sake of me [Jesus] and

⁵⁰⁴ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 450.

⁵⁰⁵ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 146.

⁵⁰⁶ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 199.

⁵⁰⁷ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 149.

⁵⁰⁸ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 150; Alan Hugh McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew: The Greek Text* (London: Macmillan, 1915), 46.

⁵⁰⁹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 201; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 150; McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew: The Greek Text*, 46.

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the Gospel’, making them eligible to receive the greatest possible reward: ‘they sit beside Jesus, and they will judge the tribes of Israel’ (Mt. 19:27; Lk. 22:30).⁵¹⁰ Contrary to this, the Rich Man did not seek eternal life for Jesus’ sake and he consequently failed to place greater value on discipleship rather than property; his story therefore ended with him inheriting nothing but loss and sadness.⁵¹¹

Al-Miskīn views the potential disciples who asked Jesus to bury his father as a positive moral agent, and this because his request accords with burial responsibilities, one of the most demanding social duties.⁵¹² As for Jesus’ rejection of his request, this is deemed to be a positive indication that Jesus intends the man to follow the path of discipleship.⁵¹³

4.2.2 Al-Miskīn’s Reception of Traditions about Jesus’ Mission and Family Division

Another group of Jesus traditions, as we have seen, links his mission to family division: to set up children against their parents (Mt. 10:35; Lk. 12:51), to persuade them to love Jesus more than their parents (Mt. 10:36) or to hate parents for Jesus’ sake (Lk. 14:26).

4.2.2.1 The Ethical Norm (Its Hierarchy), Authority and Motivation

1) Setting Children against Their Parents

Al-Miskīn understands Jesus’ statement that he has come to set children against their parents as having two levels of application. In Jesus’ own time there was familial division between Jesus’ disciples and those who opposed him, in fulfilment of Simon’s prophecy that the child Jesus was ‘destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed’ (Lk 2:34).⁵¹⁴ This division happened because Jesus is the ‘Good Shepherd’ (Jn 10:14) whose mission brings forgiveness to

⁵¹⁰ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 450; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 622.

⁵¹¹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Murqūṣ*, 447, 450; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 622.

⁵¹² Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 432.

⁵¹³ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Usrah*, 26.

⁵¹⁴ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Usrah*, 18-21; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 369-370.

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the world; he is also the ‘rock’ (Isa. 26:4) that destroys the arrogance and hostility of those who oppose his mission.⁵¹⁵

The other level of familial division, as noted by Al-Miskīn, takes place within *Christian* families in later times, when children are truly committed to the mission of Jesus but their parents are more attached to the emotions of ‘flesh’.⁵¹⁶ Jesus’ statement ‘against his father/against her mother’ would therefore refer to parents’ resistance to their children walking along the way of Jesus when this is against their own desires.⁵¹⁷ In such cases, Jesus declares his eternal right of superiority over kinship relations: ‘Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me’ (Mt. 10:37).⁵¹⁸

2) Love Jesus More than Parents

Al-Miskīn argues that Jesus’ commandment to love him more than one’s parents creates a shift to a more spiritual plan by giving priority to him and to obedience of his commandments.⁵¹⁹ Jesus’ new message regarding family is to transform the relations that connect its members to a heavenly level, which is controlled by the desire to seek salvation. This, he claims, is clearly and accurately expressed in Paul’s addition to the Fifth Commandment: ‘Children, obey your parents **in the Lord**, for this is right’ (Eph. 6:1).⁵²⁰ The implication of this addition is that obedience to Jesus becomes more important than obeying one’s parents and thus Jesus himself becomes the *authority* and basis of filial piety.⁵²¹ Without this spiritual dimension, children’s display of love and respect towards their parents serves not as a fulfilment of God’s will but as a way of satisfying their own desires.⁵²²

⁵¹⁵ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 18-21; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 369-370.

⁵¹⁶ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 21.

⁵¹⁷ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 21.

⁵¹⁸ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 21.

⁵¹⁹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 370-371.

⁵²⁰ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 14.

⁵²¹ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 14.

⁵²² Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 15.

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3) To Hate Parents for the Sake of Jesus

Al-Miskīn acknowledges that Jesus' command to hate parents (Lk. 14:26) appears to contradict his instruction to honour parents (Mt. 15:3-4; Eph. 6:1) and to love everyone including one's enemies (Mt. 5:44).⁵²³ This contradiction remains valid even if the hatred required by Jesus is intended as a *material* ethical norm directed at parents themselves.⁵²⁴ Conversely, Al-Miskīn regards the reference to 'hatred' in Jesus' commandment as 'pure' emotion with only one *formal* implication, namely 'to prevent oneself from being immersed in the emotional psychological love that is based on the bonds of flesh and blood, which contradicts one's love for God'.⁵²⁵

Thus, Al-Miskīn relates his interpretation of 'hatred' in Jesus' commandment to the theology of the cross, since hatred according to Luke 14:26 is equivalent to the struggle experienced by Jesus' followers when they bear their own cross along Jesus' way.⁵²⁶ They are required to 'move' towards kingdom, but are also 'pulled down' by their bodily incentives, including their emotional attachment to their parents.⁵²⁷ Al-Miskīn compares the 'pain' experienced by children, when they overcome their own emotions for the sake of parents so that they reach true spiritual love towards them, to the biological labour pain that accompanies the birth of a new living soul.⁵²⁸ Al-Miskīn concludes that the burden of this cross must fall on children and that they should not by any means redirect it to their parents or other family members, otherwise such 'hatred' becomes a sin rather than a Christian virtue.⁵²⁹

⁵²³ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 10.

⁵²⁴ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 12.

⁵²⁵ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 11.

⁵²⁶ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 12.

⁵²⁷ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 12.

⁵²⁸ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 11-12; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 562-563.

⁵²⁹ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 12-13.

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4.2.2.2 Moral Agency

Jesus' teachings about family divisions contain no reference to moral agents. However, Al-Miskīn uses the passages in question as a paradigm for categorizing characters into positive and negative moral agents. He points out that the main reason why young people in Egypt and eastern societies fail to become members of religious orders is parental resistance, even from those who claim to be religious.⁵³⁰ In this regard, he observes that when a young man considers joining a monastery, he faces rejection and threat from his father and pleading from his mother; the parents also call on disloyal clergymen to discourage their son from joining religious order, until he gives up.⁵³¹ For Al-Miskīn, such practices reveal the deterioration of religiosity in families.⁵³²

Al-Miskīn also points out that there are others who were able to give ultimate priority to following Jesus and did so by overcoming the conflict within their souls between love of Jesus and attachment to families. He refers specifically to Saint Archillides, who vowed never to look again at the face of a woman.⁵³³ When his mother visited him in the monastery, he allowed her to enter his room but, before he was able to see her, he died in sadness for breaking his vows to Jesus.⁵³⁴

4.2.3 Al-Miskīn's Interpretation(s) of Jesus' Attitude towards his Mother

Jesus' attitude towards his mother in the gospels can be viewed as relativising filial relations, either because he keeps her standing by the door (Synoptic accounts) or due to his seemingly 'harsh' response to her at the beginning of his ministry (Johannine account).

⁵³⁰ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Usrah*, 22.

⁵³¹ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Usrah*, 22.

⁵³² Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Usrah*, 23.

⁵³³ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Usrah*, 28.

⁵³⁴ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Usrah*, 28.

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4.2.3.1 The Ethical Norm, (Its Hierarchy), Authority and Motivation

Jesus' attitude towards Mary is fairly open-ended in the Synoptic Gospels, but it undergoes a dramatic shift in the Gospel of John, thus making the Johannine episodes more relevant to Jesus' image as a moral agent.

4.2.3.2 Jesus' Attitude towards Mary and His Image as a Moral Agent

1) Synoptic Gospels

Al-Miskīn proposes that Jesus' decision to keep Mary standing outside should not be assessed as negative conduct for the following reasons. First, she was not able to enter the house because she was prevented from doing so by the crowd.⁵³⁵ While this is only mentioned in Luke (8:19), Al-Miskīn traces this account back the 'historical Jesus'. Secondly, he proposes that Mary, as his mother, sought reassurance about Jesus' mental capacities due to rumours circulating among relatives (cf. Lk. 3:21), and she was able to gain this reassurance, albeit from a distance.⁵³⁶

In addition, Jesus, as interpreted by Al-Miskīn, did not want Mary to be honoured because of their biological connections (Lk. 11:27-28), but because she treasured all the words of God and pondered them in her heart (Lk. 2:19).⁵³⁷ Based on Mary's traits as described by Luke, Al-Miskīn indicates that the word 'mother' in Jesus' redefinition of his true family - 'whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and **mother**' (Mt. 12:50) - is an implicit reference to Mary.⁵³⁸

2) John's Gospel

Similarly, Al-Miskīn notes that Jesus' attitude towards his mother in Cana should not be regarded as anti-kingship because this is a 'sacramental' episode and, therefore, all characters and features in this scene have symbolic connotations. As a result Jesus'

⁵³⁵ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 13; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 418; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 352-353.

⁵³⁶ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Masīhī fī Al-Uṣrah*, 13; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Mattā*, 418; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Lūqā*, 352-353.

⁵³⁷ Mattā Al-Miskīn, *Al-Qiddīṣah Al-ʿAdhrāʾ Maryam (Θεοτόκος)* (Wādī Al-Nuṭrūn: St. Macarius Monastery, 1993), 96-98.

⁵³⁸ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Qiddīṣah Al-ʿAdhrāʾ Maryam (Θεοτόκος)*, 100-101.

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mother not only behaves as the mother of ‘God’ but as a ‘prophet’ mediating between the Two Testaments and as one who stands between the bride in Cana (representing the Old Testament) and Jesus as the ‘True Bride’ (representing the New Testament).⁵³⁹ So, when she informs Jesus about the shortage of wine (Jn 2:3), Mary implicitly refers to Israel’s lack of salvation, not least because wine in Christian theological terms stands as a symbol for forgiveness and salvation (Mt. 26:27-28).⁵⁴⁰

Al-Miskīn therefore suggests that Mary’s words to Jesus, ‘they have no wine’, should not be interpreted merely as an informative statement because Jesus, as the Son of God, would be fully aware of the situation; rather, she is playing the role of intercessor between those in charge of the wedding and Jesus. On the one hand, she tells Jesus what people need, ‘they have no wine’, and also what Jesus demands: ‘Do whatever he tells you’ (Jn 2:5).⁵⁴¹ This points to Mary’s certainty that Jesus would intervene miraculously so that they can all drink the wine of ‘the Eucharist’.⁵⁴² Accordingly, Jesus’ response should not be interpreted as a rejection of Mary’s request, because she alone understands the implicit meaning of his response, namely that he will intervene through a miracle.⁵⁴³ Rather, Al-Miskīn notes, Jesus’ response does serve a contributing factor to his crucifixion, whose countdown commences at the ‘hour’, which would be a painful realization for Mary as his mother.⁵⁴⁴

Likewise, calling Mary ‘woman’ is a sign of respect and honour, based on the second use of this word with reference to him mother (Jn 19:25-27). She is ‘the woman’ who stands with him at the beginning of his public ministry (2:4) and on the day of his crucifixion (19:26).⁵⁴⁵

⁵³⁹ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Yūḥannā*, 1:171. Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Yūḥannā*,

⁵⁴⁰ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Yūḥannā*, 1:169.

⁵⁴¹ Al-Miskīn, *Al-Qiddīṣah Al-ʿAdhrāʾ Maryam*, 101-102; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Yūḥannā*, 1:169, 172-173.

⁵⁴² Al-Miskīn, *Al-Qiddīṣah Al-ʿAdhrāʾ Maryam*, 101-102; Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Yūḥannā*, 1:169, 172-173.

⁵⁴³ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Yūḥannā*, 1:173.

⁵⁴⁴ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Yūḥannā*, 1:173.

⁵⁴⁵ Al-Miskīn, *Tafsīr Yūḥannā*, 1:173.

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4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has employed the hermeneutics of *Organon* 3 to interpret Jesus traditions that relativise filial relations, both from the perspective of the world within the text and that in front of the text. This fulfilled the second of the five tasks seeking to analyse the textual tension about filial relations in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad which are usually ignored in the commonalities discourses and the literature about moral theology. In the lines below, I will consider the relevance of this analysis to the Christian-Muslim relations in terms of employing these texts in the polemical discourses where these texts are mainly utilised such as in Albert Bayet's *Les morales de l'Évangile* which was translated by ʿĀdil Al-ʿAwwah into Arabic.⁵⁴⁶ The latter has been used in a number of Arabic polemical websites.⁵⁴⁷

The main argument by Bayet regarding filial relations in Jesus traditions is that the Four Gospels have two contradictory ethical discourses: on the one hand, Jesus commands to honour parents and he questions who are his mother and brothers and commands to hate parents, on the other.⁵⁴⁸ According to Bayet, Jesus' question about his biological family is sarcastic for the sake of undermining the status of his mother as he does elsewhere in the wedding at Cana.⁵⁴⁹ This anti-familial notion, as claimed by Bayer, is also manifested in a number of Jesus' other traditions: his rejection of the normal request of his disciple to bury his father; his declaration that his mission is to put children against their parents; and in his promise of kingdom for those leaving their parents for the sake of him and the gospel.⁵⁵⁰ The reason of this anti-familial notion in Jesus' traditions, according to Bayet, is Jesus' tendency to be beloved more than parents or even to hate them for the sake of himself.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁶ Albert Bayet, *Les Morales de l'Évangile* (Paris: Rieder, 1927); Albert Bayet, *Akhlāq Al-Injīl: Dirāsah Sociologiyyah*, trans. ʿĀdil Al-ʿAwwah (Damascus: Dār Al-Ḥaṣād, 1998).

⁵⁴⁷ See for example 'Miṣdāqiyyat Al-Kitāb Al-Muqaddas,' Kalimah Sawā Forum, July 11, 2012, accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.kalemasawaa.com/vb/showthread.php?t=18965>; 'Akhlāq Al-Injīl: Dirāsah Sociologiyyah,' Ibn Maryam Website, September 22, 2006, accessed, February 12, <https://ebnmaryam.com/site/play.php?catsmktba=1448>.

⁵⁴⁸ Bayet, *Akhlāq Al-Injīl*, 140.

⁵⁴⁹ Bayet, *Akhlāq Al-Injīl*, 96-97.

⁵⁵⁰ Bayet, *Akhlāq Al-Injīl*, 97-98.

⁵⁵¹ Bayet, *Akhlāq Al-Injīl*, 98.

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From the perspective of the world in front of the teachings of Jesus, Bayet criticises father Lagrange for providing what Bayet considers as lacking interpretation of Jesus' traditions that relativise filial relations that is early Fathers did not see any negative implications in these texts and that they do not contradict the divine obligations.⁵⁵² Bayet also renders the possibility of Jesus' radical commandments to have been directed to an elite group of disciples as lacking textual evidence in the Four Gospels.⁵⁵³

These conclusions by Bayet neglect some exegetical aspects that are highlighted in the present chapter. From the perspective of the world within the text, Bayet neglects that Jesus' first calls of discipleship are directed to his first disciples who are presented in the Four Gospels as 'elite group of disciples'. He also ignores that the first disciples' leave of family is not permanent as they are reported to return with Jesus to Simon's home to take care of his mother-in-law (Mk 1:29-31; Mt. 8:14-15; Lk. 4:38-41). This reunion between Jesus' first disciples with their families makes the literal interpretation of his logion 'let the dead bury their own dead' as less likely and, therefore, it could be interpreted metaphorically (i.e., as a pun) that has no *material* implications. This metaphoric interpretation is supported by the silence of the story about the would-be disciple's response to Jesus' rejection of burying his father. Otherwise, the Gospels' accounts would have recorded his response either in the case of accepting Jesus' commandment (as in the stories of the first disciples) or in the case of his rejection (as in the account of the Rich Man).

Further, and in contrast to Bayet's conclusion, Al-Miskīn considers the literal meaning of Jesus' denial of his disciple to bury his father as Scriptural evidence that an elite group of Jesus' disciples have to show the dichotomy between the 'world' and 'kingdom'. As Al-Miskīn concludes, the Twelve Apostle played this role at the time of Jesus whose role model is inherited by the clergy.

⁵⁵² Bayet, *Akhlāq Al-Injīl*, 124. Bayet does not cite Lagrange's source that includes this explanation.

⁵⁵³ Bayet, *Akhlāq Al-Injīl*, 129-130.

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While this interpretation by Al-Miskīn could be challenged by Jesus' *general* promise of eternal life for those who leave parents (and household), each of the Synoptic accounts has an indication that such leaving of family is not necessarily an obligation. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus' promise includes 'persecution' which implies that leaving family could be an outcome of oppressions against his disciples rather than being their own choice. Likewise, Luke adds 'wife' to the left objects for the sake of discipleship which is not permitted to be left voluntarily in the Gospel of Luke and Matthew modifies household to the plural form (households) which indicates that such leaving is directed to own's properties rather than family members.

From the perspective of the world in front of the text, Al-Miskīn stresses that Jesus promise of eternal life is general for leaving everything for the sake of discipleship, but it has different *material* application from one group of disciples to another. On the one hand, the elite disciples of Jesus are required to literally leave everything for the sake of discipleship and the other disciples should be *emotionally ready* to leave everything for the sake of Jesus.

As for Bayet's assumption that Jesus' commandment to love him more than parents (Mt. 10:37) and his commandment to hate parents for the sake of him (Lk. 14:26) are two separate commandments, it lacks to consider the redaction criticism of the First and the Third Gospels. As outlined earlier, the commandment to love Jesus more than parents in Matthew is a redaction and an interpretation of the 'hate commandment' that is kept by Luke probably from the Q source. Further, such redaction by Matthew is consistent with the connotation of μισεῖν 'to hate' which could mean, according to its use elsewhere in Luke (Lk.16:13), to give priority for one choice over another. Accordingly, both the Matthean and Lucan accounts could mean to give priority to Jesus' commandments even when they are contradicted by family.

From the perspective of the world in front of the text, Al-Miskīn states that the *material* implications of both the Matthean and the Lukan commandments are directed towards one's inner emotions that have to favour Jesus' over parents and other family

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members. Had these emotions have negative implications on one's relationship with kins, it would have been a sin, according to Al-Miskīn, rather than a Christian virtue.

Concerning Bayer's critique of Jesus' attitude towards Mary in the Synoptic Gospels, it neglects the following aspects. Firstly, the story does not tell whether Mary was finally admitted to the house where Jesus was sitting in or not which indicates that Jesus' biological family is not the focus of this story. In additions, the biological family of Jesus, as in the Gospel of Matthew, does not call him, but they only seek to talk to him (Mt. 12:46-47) which decrease the radical scene in Mark. In the same vein, such radical scene is more diminished in the Gospel of Luke as the crowd is what prevents Mary from reaching out to Jesus and the rhetoric question, 'Who are my mother and brothers', is omitted (Lk. 8:19). Al-Miskīn considers the latter account (by Luke) to be the historical narrative of Jesus' attitude towards Mary in the Synoptic Gospels based on his hermeneutics of the unity of the Bible. Further, Al-Miskīn states that Mary is honoured, not only because of her biological relationship to Jesus, but also because of her membership in the new fictive family (Lk. 2:19), and thus Jesus' reference to 'mother' in the redefinition of his true family (Mt. 12:50) would apply to her.

Bayer also neglects that in contrast to the open-endedness of Jesus' interaction with Mary in the Synoptic Gospels, John presents Jesus' encounter with his mother at the opening of the gospel's narrative in arguably more positive terms. The high point of the Cana scene is Jesus' miracle of changing water into wine. By this action, Jesus meets the expectation of his mother to intervene in solving the shortage of the wine and he also keeps his identity hidden until the arrival of his 'hour', in conformity with the will of his Father.

Similarly, Al-Miskīn considers the Johannine double use of γύναι 'woman' as a sign of respect, for it highlights the presence of Mary at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry and in the concluding scene of his earthly life at the cross, where she is honoured and entrusted the Beloved Disciple of Jesus. In the same vein, Al-Miskīn's theological exegesis accentuates the symbolic character of the scene at Cana. Mary as

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a ‘prophet’ who intercedes between Israel, who lacks the fullness of the salvific ‘wine’, and Jesus, who provides the wine ‘of the Eucharist’ on condition that his followers ‘do whatever he tells’ them.

Regarding Jesus’ declaration, in the Gospel of Matthew, that part of his mission is to put children against their parents, it could be interpreted, as explained above, in reference to the Matthean Jesus’ prediction of the division within families (Mt.10:21-23). This division would happen as a consequence of Jesus’ mission, rather than being one of its requirements. Such division, as noted by Al-Miskīn, continues to take place within the contemporary Christian families when the commandments of Jesus are contradicted by the desires of one’s family members.

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Chapter Five:

Promoting Filial Piety in the Teachings of Muhammad

This thesis, as noted above, attempts to promote mutual understanding of the textual tension of the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad about filial relations that avoids the selective, superficial interpretations in both the commonalities and the polemical discourses. To achieve such mutual understanding, it is required, as explained above, to apply the same exegetical approach to address both the texts that promote and relativize filial relations from the perspective of the world within and in front of the text.

In the previous chapters, the hermeneutics of *Organon* 3 has been used as an exegetical approach to analyse the world within and in front of the teachings of Jesus that promote filial piety (Chapter 3) and those relativize filial relations (Chapter 4). The aim of this chapter is to apply the same exegetical approach to analyse the teachings of Muhammad that promote filial piety, from the perspective of the world within the relevant texts in the Qurʾān (Section 5.1) and the Ḥadīth (Section 5.2), as well as their reception by Al-Shaʿrāwī, as a case study of the world in front of the text (Section 5.3).⁵⁵⁴ By doing so, this study will fill the gap in the literature about Islamic ethics which are either not inclusive of the hadith material (such as Diraz work), or they are addressed superficially (as in *Naḍrat Al-Naʿīm*).

At the end of this chapter, I will discuss the relevance of the analysis that will be provided in this chapter in relation to the commonalities and polemical discourses in Christian-Muslim relations (Section 5.4).

⁵⁵⁴ I will postpone my discussion of the text that relativize filial relations of the teachings of Muhammad to Chapter 6 of this thesis.

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5.1 Promoting Filial Piety in the *Qurʾān*

The *Qurʾān* promotes filial piety through different literary genres such as imperatives (Q. 4:36), prohibitions (Q. 17:23), and narratives (Q. 12). In the lines below, I will analyse such references through the lens of the three elements of *Organon* 3: 1) the ethical norm, its authority, and motivation; 2) the hierarchy of the ethical norms; 3) and the moral agency.

5.1.1 Ethical Norm, Its Authority and Motivation

The ethical norm, as defined above, means ‘an ethical pronouncement that tells an individual or a group of people what they ought to do or not do.’⁵⁵⁵ The *Qurʾān* promoted filial piety as an ethical norm in this sense by relating children’s relationship towards their parents mainly based on the obligation of showing of *ihsān* towards parents (Q. 2:83; 6:151; 17:23). The commandment of showing *ihsān* in these verses is directed to *al-insān* (people), as rightly translated by Khattab, which makes this commandment to be directed to children from both genders. However, some translators, such as Taqi Usmani, Yusuf Ali and Sahih International, who make the commandment to be directed to men, which falsely exclude female children from the obligation of doing *ihsān* to their parents.

Further, some translations use literal equivalents to the word *ihsān*: to be kind (Khattab); to do good (Sahih International, Taqi Usmani); to be good (Abdel Haleem; Hammad); and to treat with kindness (Yusuf Ali).⁵⁵⁶ Such lexical denotations do not convey the richness of the meaning of *ihsān* in the *Qurʾān*.⁵⁵⁷ Izutsu rightly notes that the analysis of the semantic use of the word *ihsān* in the *Qurʾān* (12:90; 51:15-19) shows that it primarily refers to two distinct categories of ‘goodness’: intense devotion

⁵⁵⁵ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 43.

⁵⁵⁶ Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863-93), 2:570.

⁵⁵⁷ See Tauseef Ahmad Parray, ‘The Qur’anic Text on Ihsan (Perfection/Excellence) the Third Dimension of Din (Religion),’ *Hamdard Islamicus* 35, no. 3 (2012): 35-55, here 36-37.

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and righteousness towards God, encompassing all actions stemming from it, and acts driven by the virtue of *ḥilm* (patience and forbearance).⁵⁵⁸

These two aspects (i.e., the actions derived by the intense devotion to God that is associated with patience) apply to the *Qurʾānic* commandment to show *iḥsān* towards parents. The *Qurʾān* makes it clear that ‘doing good’ towards parents is God’s order (Q. 2:83; 5:36; 7:151) and God’s *waṣiyyah* (commandment/bequest) (Q. 46:14). The *Qurʾān* stresses that this commandment has been enjoined by God to the previous nations when the *Qurʾān* reminds the Prophet of Islam, in *Sūrat Al-Baqarah*, about the pledge that God took from the Children of Israel: ‘to worship none but God; show *iḥsān* to your parents and kinsfolk, to orphans and the poor; speak good words to all people; keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms’ (Q. 2:83). This covenant is stressed elsewhere in the *Qurʾān* to be binding on Muslims; the *Qurʾān* enlists a number of imperatives (Q. 6:151-153) which, as rightly noted by Günther, to be the *Qurʾān*’s reference to the Decalogue.⁵⁵⁹ These two references (Q. 46:14; 6:151-153) state that showing *iḥsān* towards parents is God’s commandment which is not only binding on Muslims but it is one of the commandments to the previous nations.

In addition to being God’s commandment, showing *iḥsān* (doing what is good to parents) has to be associated with *ḥilm* (patience): that is children are not allowed to show them the slightest form of anger such as saying *uff* to them (Q. 17: 23). *Uff* in Arabic is an interjection that expresses anger or displeasure.⁵⁶⁰ It is similar to ‘ugh’ or ‘fie’ in English (as translated by Khattab and Ghali, respectively).⁵⁶¹ Thus, one’s relationship towards parents is governed by *iḥsān*, which is a complex concept: it literally means to do what is good and being motivated as one of the eternal duties from God towards parents. Further, this duty is not just binding for one or two occasions but involves long companionship with nice patience. So, since *iḥsān* could be one of the

⁵⁵⁸ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾan*, 224.

⁵⁵⁹ Günther, ‘The Ten Commandments and the Qurʾan,’ 35.

⁵⁶⁰ See also Hans Wehr, *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic: Arabic-English. 3rd Revised Edition* (Lebanon: Librairie Du Liban, 1980), 20.

⁵⁶¹ Lane, *Lexicon*, 1:67.

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Arabic terms that has no adequate one-word equivalent in English,⁵⁶² Ghali's statement (to show fairest companionship) could be the closer translation for *iḥsān* for it denotes both goodness and patience.

Such duty towards parents, in the *Qurʾān*, exhibits a number of *material* ethical norms which include personal etiquettes.⁵⁶³ One etiquette requirement towards parents as mentioned above is to avoid saying *uff* to them, which makes any act to chide or scold them necessarily prohibited (Q. 17:23). Instead, the *Qurʾān* requires children to speak to parents respectfully and honourably (Q. 17:23). In addition, children have to respect the privacy of their parents. In *Sūrat Al-Nūr* (Q. 24), children under the age of puberty have to seek permission before entering their parents' rooms during three times (of privacy): before the dawn prayer; when parents lay their garments aside (for a nap); and during the night (after the evening prayer) (Q. 24:58). When children reach puberty, they have to seek permission at all times, just like elder children and non-relative visitors have to do (Q. 24:59).

Besides personal etiquette, the *Qurʾān* mentions a number of financial duties for children towards their parents. The *Qurʾān* records a question directed to the Prophet of Islam about 'what they [people] should spend?', and God's answer is that every good thing spent by someone should be given to parents, close relatives, orphans, the indigent, and the [in need] travellers (Q. 2:215). The reward for giving to those people is implicit, as the *Qurʾān* only declares that Allah is fully aware of whatever good people do (Q. 2:215), and so God will reward them.

In addition to giving parents money during their children's lives, the *Qurʾān* makes parents deserving of a share of their children's wealth after their deaths. In one verse, the *Qurʾān* commands a child who is approaching death to make a bequest for

⁵⁶² For more about this linguistic feature, see Amira D. Kashgary, 'The Paradox of Translating the Untranslatable: Equivalence vs. Non-equivalence in Translating from Arabic into English,' *Journal of King Saud University-Languages and Translation* 23, no. 1 (2011): 47-57.

⁵⁶³ Material ethical norm as defined above by Zimmermann means 'the precise elements are specified and clearly understood'. See Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,' 27.

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his parents in an honourable way (Q. 2:180). Also, the *Qurʾān* stipulates a special share for parents from their children's estate, which is one third for each (if their deceased child has no children); otherwise, each parent gets one sixth if they do have children (Q. 4:11). In both cases (i.e., including parents in the bequest or giving them a defined quota of inheritance), the *Qurʾān* has changed the inheritance law of the pre-Islamic Arabs, which was based on agnatic relationships, where parents used to be deprived from inheritance.⁵⁶⁴

The justification that the *Qurʾān* provides for showing *ihsān* towards parents is reciprocity for their role in the children's lives: parents raise their children since their young (Q. 17:24) and mothers exclusively endure the hardships of pregnancy, delivery and nursing (Q. 31:14 ;46:14). This reciprocity, however, is not a condition to establish children's responsibility towards parents.⁵⁶⁵ In case parents are not fulfilling one or more of these duties, they still deserve to be treated through *ihsān*. For example, families at the time of the early Islam in the Arabian Peninsula used to send their children to the countryside during nursing time, and they used to hire fostering mothers for this purpose.⁵⁶⁶ In other cases, when biological mothers nurse their children, the *Qurʾān* makes them eligible to receive compensation from their husbands for this role (Q. 65:6). In both cases, the *Qurʾān* does not exclude mothers from the obligation of filial duty upon their children.

Accordingly, non-believing parents deserve *ihsān* as well. From a pragmatic perspective, Ibn Al-Zubayr Al-Gharnāṭī rightly notes that there are two types of addressees of the *Qurʾān*'s commandment to show *ihsān* in *Sūrat Al-Aḥqāf* (Q. 33) and *Sūrat Al-ʿAnkabūt* (Q. 29). In the former, children have believing parents and they are required to thank God for his blessing (of Islam) on them and their parents, and then

⁵⁶⁴ See David S. Powers, 'On the Abrogation of the Bequest Verses,' *Arabica* 29, no. 3 (1982): 246–95, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4056186>. See the discussion about the abrogation of the bequest verses in my discussion of Al-Shaʿrāwī's reception of these verses below (Section 5.3).

⁵⁶⁵ For more about the non-conditional ethical responsibility in the *Qurʾān*, see Diraz, *The Moral World of the Quran*, 84–108.

⁵⁶⁶ See for example Muhammad b. Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allah*, trans. Alfred Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 69–73.

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the verse concludes with declaring that the supplicants are Muslims (Q. 46:15).⁵⁶⁷ On the other hand, children in *Sūrat Al-ʿAnkabūt* have non-believing parents who urge them to associate partners with God (Q. 29:8).⁵⁶⁸ In the two cases, the *Qurʾān* stresses the significance of filial piety, regardless of the religion or the attitude of parents. In addition to this significance, filial piety in the *Qurʾān* supersedes other family relations and ethical norms.

5.1.2 The Hierarchy of Filial Piety in the *Qurʾān*

As mentioned above, Zimmermann notes that ethical values could be either *classificatory*, where it is described as valuable (good or right), or it could be *comparative*, when an ethical norm is described as better or more valuable than another.⁵⁶⁹ Both these categories apply to filial piety in the *Qurʾān*. From a *classification* perspective, filial piety, as noted above, is presented as God’s eternal commandment to the previous nations as well as Muslims (Q. 2:83; 7:151).

As a *comparative* ethical norm, filial piety is commanded in four lists of virtues in the *Qurʾān* second to the commandment to worship God, which is the top value in the *Qurʾān* and the main purpose for creating human beings (Q. 51:56), as in Table 1 below.

<i>Qurʾānic</i> referenc es	1	2	3
1. 2:83	‘Worship none but God;	show <i>iḥsān</i> to your parents;	[show <i>iḥsān</i> to your] relatives, orphans and the needy; speak kindly to people; establish prayer; and pay alms-tax.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibn Al-Zubayr Al-Gharnāṭī, *Milāk Al-Taʾwīl Al-Qāṭiʿ Bidhawī Al-ʾIlḥād wa Al-Taʾqīl fī Tawjīh Al-Mutashābih Al-Lafẓ min ʿĀyy Al-Tanzīl* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-ʿIlmiyyah, n. d.), 2:388-389.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibn Al-Zubayr Al-Gharnāṭī, *Milāk Al-Taʾwīl*, 2:387-388.

⁵⁶⁹ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 52-53.

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2.	7:151-152	Do not ascribe anything as a partner to Him;	show <i>iḥsān</i> to your parents;	Do not kill your children for fear of poverty... Do not come near indecencies, openly or secretly. Do not take a 'human' life—made sacred by God.
3.	17:23-34	worship none but Him,	and show <i>iḥsān</i> to your parents...	Give to close relatives their due, as well as the poor and 'needy' travellers. And do not spend wastefully... Do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Surely killing them is a heinous sin. Do not go near adultery. It is truly a shameful deed and an evil way. Do not take a 'human' life...
4.	31:13-19	'do not attribute any partners to God:'	We have commanded people [to show <i>iḥsān</i>] to their parents:	"O my dear son! Establish prayer, encourage what is good and forbid what is evil, and endure patiently whatever befalls you. Surely this is a resolve to aspire to. And do not turn your nose up to people, nor walk pridefully upon the earth. Surely Allah does not like whoever is arrogant, boastful...

Table 1: Filial Piety in the Virtue Lists in the *Qurʾān*

Filial piety in these lists is given presence to kinship relationships and other ethical norms. In the first and the third lists, the commandment to show *iḥsān* towards parents is followed the commandment to show *iḥsān* towards the other relatives and the people in need in the society. The commandments in the second list, as noted above, could be a partial reference to the Decalogue, where observing the Sabbath is omitted. In this partial reference, it is noticeable that the sequence of filial piety changes from being the Fifth Commandment to be the 'Second Commandment' and accordingly it supersedes all the other material ethical norms in the Decalogue: Do not kill, do not commit adultery...etc. As for the fourth virtue lists, filial piety overrides ethical norms that relate to one's relationship with God (to perform prayer), one's relationship with his/her own self (to endure patience during calamities), and one's relationships with the others (to not be arrogant...etc).

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The significance of filial piety in the *Qurʾān* is stressed also as being one of the deeds of God's prophets on one hand, and unfilial behaviour, on the other hand, is presented as a trait of the disbelievers and the wrong doers, as will be explained now.

5.1.3 The Moral Agency in the *Qurʾān*

As noted above by Zimmermann, the image of the New Testament characters could be presented as either role models to be followed or anti models whose character is disgraced.⁵⁷⁰ The same concept applies to the *Qurʾān* which states that the stories of the previous prophets are told to give lessons and guidance for the believers (Q. 12:111).

With regards to filial piety, the *Qurʾān* presents a number of God's prophets as positive role models who fulfil the top two values of the virtue lists mentioned above: they worship God (and call their nations to do so) and they are dutiful towards their parents. For example, Abraham is presented as praying to God, asking Him to protect him and his offspring from worshipping the idols (Q. 14:35). Also, Abraham is honouring his parents through making supplications for them: 'Our Lord, forgive me, my parents, and the believers on the Day of Reckoning' (Q. 14:41, Abdelhaleem).⁵⁷¹

Similarly, Abraham's son, Ishmael, who is also a prophet who receives God's revelation (Q. 2:136), is portrayed as helping his father to establish the Holy House in Mecca (Q. 2:127). The place of the House was in a remote area in the Arabian desert which was not habituated (Q. 22:27). This has made Abraham and Ishmael's task very difficult, and Ismael is presented as obedient to his father although the hard work involved.

On another occasion, Abraham tells his son that it was revealed to him, in a vision, to sacrifice him, which means that Abraham has to sacrifice him in reality (Q.

⁵⁷⁰ Zimmermann, 'The "Implicit Ethics" of New Testament Writings: a Draft,' 414.

⁵⁷¹ There are other aspects that relate to Abraham's supplications for his parents as the *Qurʾān* narrates that Abraham repudiated his father after knowing he is an enemy of God (Q. 19:47; 9:114), as noted in Nasr, *The Study Quran*, 638. This will be discussed in more details in Chapter 6 of this thesis about relativizing filial relations.

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37:102). There is an intra and interreligious debate about the identity of the intended sacrifice. In conformity with the Bible, Al-Ṭabarī considers him to be Isaac in contrast to Ibn Kathīr who declares him to be Ishmael.⁵⁷² What is more important for the discussion here is the ethical implications of the story and the image of the intended sacrifice as a role model.

As a moral agent, the *Qurʾān* presents the intended sacrifice to be a positive role model for his obedience to his father who is fulfilling God's revelation (Q. 37:102). Those authors who see Ismael as the intended sacrifice, such as Ibn Kathīr, consider his obedience to his father as a fulfilment of his promise to help him executing God's commandment to the end without hesitation (Q.19:54-55).⁵⁷³ Such obedience shown by the intended sacrifice is *autonomously* motivated; however he knows from the very beginning that he is going to be sacrificed, he willingly agrees to obey his father to end of the story when he is saved at the last minute, and replaced by an animal sacrifice (Q.19:102).⁵⁷⁴

This story of the survival of Abrahams' intended sacrificed son was known to the Arabs before Islam as a part of their legacy about their father Abraham, as it is recorded in the poetry of Umayyah b. Al-Ṣalt.⁵⁷⁵ However, some Arabs used to offer their sons as human sacrifices to their pagan gods, such as the Tribe of who used to offer regular female sacrifices to the statue Nasr.⁵⁷⁶ Other practices included vowing to slaughter sons for the sake of God and to cast the lots between the intended sacrifice and ten camels until the former would succeed casting the lot.⁵⁷⁷ In contrast to these

⁵⁷² See Ayaz Afsar, 'A Comparative Study of the Intended Sacrifice of Isaac/Ishmael in the Bible and the Qurʾān,' *Islamic Studies* 46, no. 4 (2007): 483-98; Younus Y. Mirza, 'Ishmael as Abraham's Sacrifice: Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathīr on the Intended Victim,' *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 24, no. 3 (2013): 277-298.

⁵⁷³ See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E. B. Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom, eds., *The study Quran* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 1094.

⁵⁷⁴ This is one of the differences between the account of this story in the Quran and the Bible as the latter makes Isaac unaware of God's commandment and wondering 'Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' (Gen. 22:7). See Nasr, *The study Quran*, 1094.

⁵⁷⁵ Sajīr Jamīl Al-Jubīlī, ed., *Dīwān Umayyah Ibn Abī Al-Ṣalt* (Beirut: Sader, 1998), 108-10; Aḥmad Mahmūd Abū Al-Hayjā, 'Al-Qurbān fī Al-Shīr Al-Jāhili' (MA diss., An-Najah National University, 2018), 61.

⁵⁷⁶ Abū Al-Hayjā, 'Al-Qurbān fī Al-Shīr Al-Jāhili,' 58-59.

⁵⁷⁷ In the story of ʿAbd Al-Muṭṭalib, the paternal grandfather of the Prophet, his son ʿAbd Allah was successful against the lots after the number of camels one hundred. See Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad*, 66-68.

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practices, the Qurʾān abrogated these practices and presented the model of Abraham and his intended sacrificed son to stipulate the human sacrifices in Mecca.

Another positive role model that is presented by the Qurʾān is the prophet Joseph who follows the example of his patrilineal ancestors (Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob), to worship God alone and not to associate any partners with Him, and calls all people have to do so (Q. 2:133; 12:38). As for his relationship towards his parents, Joseph did not have the opportunity to live with them for too long because he was abducted (by his brothers) when he was too young and was sold as a slave boy to the governor of Egypt (Q. 12: 7-20). However, in the only two encounters, that the *Qurʾān* records, between Joseph and parents, he shows great respect and obedience towards them. At the beginning of the story, he obeys Jacob's order not to tell any of his brothers about his dream (that eleven stars, the sun and the moon were prostrating before him), lest they plot against him (Q. 12:5). Later, the story develops, and Joseph becomes the Chief Minister of Egypt (Q. 12:54-56), and when his parents visit him in Egypt at the end of the story, he honours them and put them up at his throne (Q. 12:99-100).

Other positive role models for filial piety in the *Qurʾān* are John [the Baptist] and Jesus who are presented as prophets of God (Q. 19:12-13; 19: 30-31) and being *bārr* (adjective of *birr*) for their parents (Q. 19:14; 19:32). The word *bārr* has been translated literally into kind (Khattab, Taqui Usmani, Abdelhaleem, Yusuf Ali), very kind (Fadel Soliman), dutiful (Saheeh International, Mohsin Khan), benign (Ghali).⁵⁷⁸ From the perspective of semantics analysis, Izutsu rightly notes that such translations do not do justice to the meaning of this term, as the *Qurʾān* defines *birr* as: it is not only to turn one's face to East or West in prayer, but *birr* means: 1- to believe in God (and what he asks to be believed in); 2- to give one's wealth despite loving it to the relatives and the needy; 3- to perform rituals (prayer and Zakah); 4- to fulfil one's covenants; 5- and to be patience in all hardships (Q. 2:177).⁵⁷⁹ So, according to this

⁵⁷⁸ See Lane, *Lexicon*, 1:167.

⁵⁷⁹ Izutsu, *Ethico-religious concepts in the Qur'an*, 208.

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definition, *birr*, like *ihsān*, is established on worshipping God, and doing justice towards the others, giving their right preference to one's own feelings such as love for property.

While filial piety, including *ihsān* and *birr* as explained above, is one of the traits of *imān* (faith) and worshipping God, unfilial behaviour is one of the attributes of disbelievers in the *Qur'ān*. The son of Noah is presented as a disbeliever who disobeys his father and refuses to get in the Arch (Q. 11:42). Similarly, saying *uff*, which is one of the signs of being impatient with parents as noted above (Q. 17:23), is also one trait of those who deny the Day of Resurrection and, thus, they are rendered to be losers (Q. 46:18).⁵⁸⁰

However, unfilial behaviour is not necessarily associated with disbelief *per se*, but rather it is still considered to be a major sin, that is open for repentance as in the story of the brothers of Joseph (Q. 12:7-18; 91-98). At the beginning, the brothers of Joseph committed severe disobedience against their father and brother; they deceived their father and accompanied Joseph to a claimed trip, claiming that they will keep and protect him. Although they know that their father will be saddened for the absence of Joseph and he is worried that a wolf would hurt him, they plotted to get rid of Joseph (Q. 12:11-14).⁵⁸¹ They were motivated by their jealousy to Joseph for their father loved him more, and, thus, they conspired either to kill Joseph or to banish him to another land (Q. 12:8-9).

The story portrays that there are levels of evil among the brothers of Joseph but none of them is labelled as a disbeliever. One of them (believed to be Ruben) suggested to save the life of Joseph, and to put him in a dry well so that some caravan might collect him (Q. 12:10).⁵⁸² His brothers accepted this suggestion, fabricated Joseph's death and pretended before their father to be weeping over his loss (Q. 12:15-18). This deception did not convince Jacob who recognized their untruthfulness and the impact

⁵⁸⁰ This aligns with Izutsu's semantic analysis of the moral language of the *Qur'ān* who asserts that vices in the *Qur'ān* are associated with *kufr* (disbelief). See Izutsu, *Ethico-religious concepts in the Qur'an*, 119-177.

⁵⁸¹ Nasr, *The Study Quran*, 593.

⁵⁸² *The Study Quran*, 594.

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of the news on him was so detrimental that he lost his sight out of grieving the loss of his son (Q. 12: 18, 84).⁵⁸³

The rest of this story presents one of the *Qurʾān*'s approaches to encourage filial piety through declaring *ʿuqūq* as a repentable sin. At the end of the story, the brothers of Joseph apologized to him and pledged their father to pray for God's forgiveness to them. (12:91,92, 97,98). Despite their transgressions against Joseph and their father, both of them accepted their apology (Q. 12:92, 98). Joseph's response *ʿlā tathrīb alikum alyawm yaghfir Allah lakum* (Q. 12:92) is open to two interpretations. If it is a supplication, then it means that Joseph says to them 'It is **ok** with you today' and he prays 'may God forgive you' (Khattab, Abdelhaleem). But if it is an indicative sentence, then it would mean that Joseph says 'No problem with you as God will forgive you today' (Ghali, *The Study Qurʾān*). In the two cases, either supplication or indication, this response from Joseph indicates that his brothers could be among who secured God's forgiveness for their repentance. With the *Qurʾān* opens the door open for the people with unfilial behaviour to repent and to be forgiven, it promotes filial piety through encouraging those who fail to be dutiful towards their parents to correct their attitude.

In addition to the *Qurʾān*, the teachings of Muhammad in the *Ḥadīth* traditions promote filial piety as will be discussed now.

5.2 Filial Piety in the *Ḥadīth*

Most of the Six Books of *Ḥadīth* authors dedicate a full chapter for the moral conduct and etiquette, usually under the title *adab* or *ādāb* (literally etiquettes and morality), as well as narrating other hadiths that relate to the required conduct along their collections. Under the heading of *adab*, they quote *ḥadīths* that promote filial piety as an ethical

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⁵⁸³ *The Study Quran*, 597.

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norm, showing its hierarchy and presenting relevant role models and anti-models, as will be explained now through the lens of *Organon* 3.

5.2.1 Ethical Norm, its Authority and Motivation

The first section of Al-Bukhārī's chapter on *adab* in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* is dedicated to encouraging *birr* towards parents. Al-Bukhārī puts the verse from the *Qur'ān* that commands to show *iḥsān* towards parents (Q. 29:8) as the title of this chapter.⁵⁸⁴ This indicates that *iḥsān* serves as a guiding principle of the *ḥadīths* narrated about filial relations.

The *ḥadīths* that follow, in Al-Bukhārī's chapter, show that children have to observe the two elements of *iḥsān* mentioned above: to treat their parents in the best way and to be patient with them. First, Al-Bukhārī dedicates another section in his chapter on *adab* about who is the most deserving of one's good relationship.⁵⁸⁵ In this section, he narrates a *ḥadīth* from Abū Qutaybah to Abū Hurayrah that someone asked the Prophet of Islam about the most deserving person to be best treated by him (the interlocutor) and the Prophet said: 'it should be your mother'. The interlocutor then asked twice who should be the next one and the Prophet confirmed the same answer: 'your mother'. In the fourth time, the Prophet said, 'your father'.⁵⁸⁶

As for obligation to show *ḥilm* (patience) towards parents, it could be understood from the next section in Al-Bukhārī's chapter on *adab* which prohibits children to cause their parents to be insulted.⁵⁸⁷ Under the title [No one is allowed to insult their parents], Al-Bukhārī narrates that the Prophet declared that insulting parents is one of the most heinous sins. In an astonished response, the listeners asked how a person could insult his parents, and the Prophet explained that this could happen in an indirect way: when someone insults the parents of another, the latter would insult the former's parents in

⁵⁸⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:8.

⁵⁸⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:8.

⁵⁸⁶ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:2 (5971); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:1974 (2548).

⁵⁸⁷ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:3.

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return.⁵⁸⁸ Al-Bukhārī narrates another *ḥadīth* that prohibits to insult anyone at all,⁵⁸⁹ but if it so happens that someone would do so, he/she should be patient to consider the dignity of his/her own parents.

In addition to showing *iḥsān* as mentioned above, the *Ḥadīth* state a number of material ethical norms towards parents in their life and after their death. During their life, children have to afford their parents financially. Al-Nasā'ī narrates from Ṭāriq Al-Muḥārībī who entered the Medina while the Prophet was on the pulpit giving a public speech stating that the one who is giving [charity] is better than who is receiving, and everyone is responsible for their mother, then their father, then their sister, then their brother and then the next closest relative.⁵⁹⁰ This financial support could be extended to religious rituals that include financial and physical duties such as pilgrimage. Al-Nasā'ī narrates that the Prophet is giving this permission to children to do *ḥajj* and *ʿumrah* on the behalf of the elder and the ill parents.⁵⁹¹ One's financial duty towards parents could cost children all of their property according to one *Ḥadīth* that is narrated by Ibn Mājah from Jābir b. ʿAbd Allah who witnessed someone asking the Prophet about the case of his father who wants to take all of his property. In response, the Prophet said, 'You and your wealth belong to your father'.⁵⁹²

After the death of one or the two parents, the *Ḥadīth* state that children can still show *birr* for them. Most of the *ḥadīth* material in this regard are in the form of *responsa*, which means they were responses by the Prophet to questions of his companions. In one case that is narrated by Al-Nasā'ī from Ibn ʿAbbās that the husband of Sinān b. Salamah Al-Juhanī to ask the Prophet if his wife can do pilgrimage on the behalf of her dead mother. The Prophet confirmed that doing pilgrimage is similar paying a debt on the behalf a dead parent, which both do count.⁵⁹³

⁵⁸⁸ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:3 (5973); Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 4:312 (1902); cf. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4:336 (5141).

⁵⁸⁹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:15 (6044).

⁵⁹⁰ Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 5:61 (2532).

⁵⁹¹ Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 5:117 (2635, 2637, 2638).

⁵⁹² Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 2:769 (2291).

⁵⁹³ Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 5:116 (2633).

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In addition to pilgrimage and paying parents' debts, children are also able to give charity on the behalf of their dead parents, either their parents had included this charity in their bequest or not. For the former, Al-Nasā'ī narrates from Al-Sharīd b. Suwayd Al-Thaqafī who asked the Prophet if it counts to free a female slave as a fulfilment of his mother's bequest and the Prophet approved him to do so.⁵⁹⁴ For the latter, Al-Nasā'ī narrates from Abū Hurayrah that a man asked the Prophet if he can give charity on the behalf of his dead father however he did not include this in his bequest, and the Prophet approved this too.⁵⁹⁵

In some cases, the Prophet advises on the specific charity that children can do on the behalf of their parents. Al-Nasā'ī narrates that Sa'd b. 'Ubādah asked the Prophet if it is virtuous to give charity (*ṣadaqah*) on the behalf of his dead mother, and the Prophet responded in positive. Ibn 'Ubādah asked, which charity is the better? And the Prophet said, 'to provide free drinking water' and then Sa'd b. 'Ubadah established a *siqāyah* (an office of free water supplier) in Medina.⁵⁹⁶

Further material ethical norms that children can do for the sake of their parents include spiritual actions such as supplications. Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Al-Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah narrate from the Prophet that children's supplications for their parents is one of three deeds that continue to provoke reward for a person after his death: 'ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge and a righteous child who prays for his/her parent'.⁵⁹⁷ Similar to the 'gender misattribution' of translating the addressees of showing *iḥsān* that is noted above, this *ḥadīth* is mistranslated by to restrict the accepted prayers to be from male children (sons), while the *ḥadīth* in Arabic refers to *walad* (a child) in neutral gender form.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁴ Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 6:252 (3653).

⁵⁹⁵ Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 6:251 (3652).

⁵⁹⁶ Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 6:254-255 (3664, 3666).

⁵⁹⁷ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1255 (1631); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 3:117 (2880); Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 6:251 (3651); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 1:88 (241).

⁵⁹⁸ 'Sunan an-Nasa'i, The Book of Wills, Hadith 3651,' Sunnah.com, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://sunnah.com/nasai:3651>.

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One of the supplications that children can do for their dead parents is to ask God's forgiveness for them. Ibn Mājah narrates that Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet states that some people in the Paradise will find that their status will be elevated and when they ask about the reason behind that, they will be told that this is because their children's prayers for forgiveness for their parents.⁵⁹⁹

In additions, children's respect for their dead parents could be extended to the relatives and friends of their parents to honour their memory. Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and Al-Tirmidhī narrate from ʿAbd Allah b. ʿUmar from the Prophet who said, 'the finest act of goodness is that a person should treat kindly the loved ones of his father and their family after the death of his father'.⁶⁰⁰

The motivation for filial piety in the *Ḥadīth*, is the great reward for being dutiful for parents, or otherwise the severe punishment for failing to do so. Ibn Mājah narrates from Abū Umāmah that when someone asked about the rights of parents on their children, the Prophet said, 'they are either your Paradise or your Hell'.⁶⁰¹ This means that one's attitude to his parents could lead him/her either to the Paradise or the Hellfire. This concept is stressed in other *ḥadīths* that stresses that state that observing *birr* could be a medium to enter the Paradise and to get sins forgiven. For the former, Muslim narrates that the Prophet said, 'the one who witnesses either one or both of his/her parents without securing a place in the paradise, let him/her have their nose cleaving to the dust [and hence they are abased]'.⁶⁰² For the latter, Al-Tirmidhī narrates that ʿAbd Allah b. ʿUmar reported that a man told the Prophet that he has committed a heinous sin and he wants to repent. The Prophet asked him to show *birr* towards his mother, and if she is not alive, then he should be dutiful towards his maternal aunt.⁶⁰³

⁵⁹⁹ Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 4:631 (3660).

⁶⁰⁰ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:1979 (2552); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4:337 (5143); Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 4:313 (1903). Cf. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4:336 (5142); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 4:632 (3663).

⁶⁰¹ Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 4:631-632 (3662).

⁶⁰² Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:1979 (2551).

⁶⁰³ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 4:314 (1904).

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Another motivation for observing filial piety in the *Ḥadīth* is to recognize that God's pleasure and anger are potential consequences of the emotions that one causes for parents. Al-Tirmidhī narrates that 'Abd Allah b. 'Amr who reported that the Prophet said, 'God's pleasure is in parent's pleasure, and God's anger is in parent's anger'.⁶⁰⁴ One possible reason that links parents' emotions with God's pleasure and anger is that parents' prayers for (or against) their children are answered. Al-Tirmidhī narrates from Abū Hurayrah from the Prophet who said, 'the supplications of three kinds of people are undoubtedly answered: the oppressed, the traveller, and the supplication of a parent against his/her child'.⁶⁰⁵

5.2.2 The Hierarchy of Filial Piety in the *Ḥadīth*

The hierarchy of filial piety in the *Ḥadīth* is expressed in both *classificatory* and *comparative* forms. From *classificatory* perspective, the *ḥadīth* that is narrated by both Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, that is mentioned above, stresses that parents are the most deserving people of good treatment by their children, without comparing them to other relationships.⁶⁰⁶

Another narration of this *ḥadīth* by Muslim and Abū Dāwūd states that this best treatment due towards parents is superior to one's relationships to the nearest relatives.⁶⁰⁷ This sequence of this 'nearness' is clarified in a *ḥadīth* that is narrated by Abū Dāwūd in which puts the order of one's relatives in this regard as: 'Your mother, your father, your sister, your brother and the slave whom you set free and who is your relative, a due binding (on you), and a tie of relationship which should be joined'.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁴ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 4:310-311 (1899).

⁶⁰⁵ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 4:314 (1905).

⁶⁰⁶ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:8 (5971); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:1974 (2548).

⁶⁰⁷ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:1974 (2548); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4:336 (5139); Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 4:309 (1897); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 4:629 (3658); 4:631 (3661).

⁶⁰⁸ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4:336 (5140).

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In addition to kinship relations, filial piety in the *Ḥadīth* is given preference over marital relationships. Abū Dāwūd narrates that ‘Umar b. Al-Khattāb asked his son ‘Abd Allah to divorce his wife, but ‘Abd Allah refused. Then Umar reported that to the Prophet who asked ‘Abd Allah to obey his father.⁶⁰⁹ In a similar case, Al- Tirmidhī narrates that man asked Abū Al-Dardā about his mother who requested him to divorce his wife. In response, Abū Al-Dardā said, I heard the Prophet who said, ‘parents are the best gate of the Paradise, and it is up to you to waste or secure that entrance’,⁶¹⁰ which means that he has to obey his mother.

Further to the hierarchy of filial relations among kinship and marital relations, as explained above, *ḥadīth* references to virtue lists give priority to filial piety over other ethical norms. Al-Bukhārī narrates that ‘Abd Allah asked the Prophet about the best deeds in Islam, and the Prophet said it is observing prayer on time. ‘Abd Allah asked ‘what is next?’ and the prophet said to do *birr* towards parents. ‘Abd Allah asked, ‘what is next?’ and the prophet said to do *jihād* for the sake of Allah.⁶¹¹

This preference of filial piety over doing *jihād* is stressed in two other occasions. Al-Bukhārī narrates that someone sought the Prophet’s permission to join *jihād*. When the Prophet recognized that interlocutor’s parents are alive, he asked him to go back and to accompany them, and this would be his *jihād*.⁶¹² Muslim narration of this *ḥadīth* makes the interlocutor’s request to do *jihād* and *hijrah* (migration) for the sake of God. In response to this request, the prophet told him that if he were seeking the reward from God, he should go back and live with his parents and to take care of them.⁶¹³ This hierarchy of filial piety over doing *jihād* is missed in Juynboll’s translation of this *ḥadīth* as changes that Prophet’s response to be ‘you may take part [in *jihād*] for their sake’.⁶¹⁴ Juynboll’s mistranslation could be out of confusing the technical meaning of

⁶⁰⁹ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4:335-336 (5138).

⁶¹⁰ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 4:311 (1900); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 4:632 (3663).

⁶¹¹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:2 (5970); Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 1:292 (610-611). Cf. Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 4:310 (1898).

⁶¹² Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:3 (5972).

⁶¹³ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:1975 (2549).

⁶¹⁴ Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Ḥadīth*, 527.

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jihād meant by the interlocutor which is to join the ‘Holy War’, and the lexical meaning of *jihād* (to exert the utmost efforts) which is meant in the repose of the Prophet.⁶¹⁵ This meaning is explicit in Muslim’s narration of this *ḥadīth*, that is mentioned above, in which the Prophet told the interlocutor to *go back* and to be with his parents. If the Prophet’s response would mean to allow the interlocutor to join jihad, as translated by Juynboll, then the question about the parents would be meaningless. Further, in both the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth*, *jihād* is joined for the sake of God, not for the sake of one’s parents.⁶¹⁶

Beside virtue lists, vice lists are used to show the hierarchy of filial relations. Under a section that is entitled ‘[Unfilial Behaviour is one of the most heinous sins], Al-Bukhārī narrates three *ḥadīths*.⁶¹⁷ In the first, he quotes the Prophetic statement that God has forbidden three actions: (unfilial behaviour towards mothers, to demand what is not one’s right and to bury daughters alive.⁶¹⁸ In another *ḥadīth*, the Prophet states that God prohibited unfilial behaviour towards mothers, unrightful giving or taking and to bury daughters alive.⁶¹⁹ Third, the Prophet states that the most heinous sins are to associate partners with God, unfilial behaviour towards parents and to give a forged statement or a false testimony.⁶²⁰ In this regards, Al-Nasāʾī narrates one further *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet makes the latter vice list combined of four heinous deeds, with murder added.⁶²¹ Failure to observe filial piety, in relationship to other ethical norms, could render a person as a negative moral agent as will be discussed now.

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⁶¹⁵ See Lanes, *Lexicon*, 2:473.

⁶¹⁶ See The *Qurʾān* 9:41, 111; 61:11; Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:14 (26); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:88 (83).

⁶¹⁷ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:4.

⁶¹⁸ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:4 (5975).

⁶¹⁹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:4 (5975).

⁶²⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:4 (5976); Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 4:12 (1901).

⁶²¹ Al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, 7:88 (4010).

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5.2.3 The Images of the Moral Agents in the *Ḥadīth*

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim narrate a story about Jurayj that shows that the lack of considering the status of parent's right could lead to God's punishment.⁶²² Jurayj was a monk who was confining himself in his cell and observing his prayer, when his mother called him. Jurayj hesitated to respond to his mother and continued his prayers which upset his mother that she prayed God to punish him: 'My Lord, don't give him death unless he has seen the face of the prostitutes'. The prayers his mother were answered, and one prostitute falsely claimed that she gave birth to Jurayj's illegal son, and the people started to punish Jurayj and to demolish his cell. At this point, Jurayj prayed for God and asked the young infant about his father, and the miracle happened, the boy spoke in the cradle and named his real biological father, after the prayers of Jurayj's mother been answered.⁶²³ Al-Nawawī rightly comments that this *ḥadīth* indicates the importance of being dutiful towards parents, especially the mother, and when virtues contradict, such as volunteer prayer and a mother's call, one has to give preference to the higher virtue.⁶²⁴

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Contra Jurayj, there is a positive role model who is presented as giving preference to his parents over his children and thus he got his prayers answered. Al-Bukhārī narrates that the Prophet tells the story of three people who were blocked in a cave by big a stone that closed its entrance.⁶²⁵ The three of them prayer to God to get them released from there, begging with the best of their deeds. The righteous deed used by one of them is his attitude towards his parents as giving them their dinner every day before his children. Even when he was late one night and his parents were asleep, he waited the whole night standing next to them however his hungry children were crying at his feet. In the morning, he fed his parents first then his children. In consequence, God answered their prayers and released them from there.⁶²⁶

⁶²² Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:63-64 (1206); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:1976 (2550).

⁶²³ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:1976 (2550).

⁶²⁴ Al-Nawawī, *Al-Minhāj*, 8:108.

⁶²⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:3 (5974).

⁶²⁶ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:3 (5974).

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One further positive role model who observes filial piety and thus his prayers are answered is Uways b. ʿĀmir Al-Qarnī. Muslim narrates that ʿUmar b. Al-Kaṭṭāb was searching for him among the pilgrimage delegations coming from Yemen every year because he heard the Prophet's prophesy that Uways will come to Medina and his prayers are being answered for observing *birr* for his mother.⁶²⁷ One year, Umar was able to meet with Uways Al-Qarnī and asked him to pray for him on the Prophet's advice.⁶²⁸

These two role models, Uways Al-Qarnī and the man in the cave, were observing the two *Qurʾānic* elements of *iḥsān* as explained above: to be dutiful towards their parents and to show *ḥilm* (patience) towards them. The man in the cave is taking care of his parents and prioritize feeding his parents every day for very long time. Also, he is showing *ḥilm* (patience) and perseverance that he waited awake till his parents had got up at the dawn and had their food. Similarly, however Uways Al-Qarnī was so poor and of low social status, he kept doing *birr* for his mother and refused leaving her anywhere to get better chances of social and economic life.⁶²⁹

5.3 Al-Shaʿrāwī's Reception of Filial Piety in the Quran and the *Ḥadīth*

In his commentary on the Quran, Al-Shaʿrāwī makes references to some relevant *ḥadīths* that relate to the verses he discusses as part of his hermeneutics of exegesis. In the lines below, I will analyse Al-Shaʿrāwī's reception of the Quranic texts under discussion and his use of the relevant *ḥadīths* as a case study for the world in front of the teachings of Muhammad about filial relations.

To make Al-Shaʿrāwī's reception comparable to the meaning within the text as explained above, I will use the same exegetical approach that has been used, which is

⁶²⁷ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:1968-69 (2542).

⁶²⁸ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:1968-69 (2542).

⁶²⁹ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 4:1968-69 (2542).

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the three elements of *Organon* 3: 1-ethical norm, its authority and motivation; 2-the hierarchy of ethical norm; 3- and the moral agent.

5.3.1 The Ethical Norm, its Authority and Motivation

Al-Shaʿrāwī stresses that *ihsān* has to be the leading concept for children's relationship with their parents. According to him, this commandment is directed to both male and female children and to all people either adherents to religions or not, because God, who is the authority of filial piety, commands filial piety as part of the Decalogue that are communicated in the scriptures of the previous religious nations.⁶³⁰ Further, according to Al-Shaʿrāwī, sound mind would guide people to recognize the obligation of such commandments.⁶³¹

As noted above, these commandments are communicated in the sixth chapter of the Quran (*Sūrat Al-Anʿām*) in the form of prohibitions, except for filial piety is commanded in the form of imperative (Q. 6:151-152). According to Al-Shaʿrāwī, this shift from the prohibition of showing unfilial behaviour to parents to the imperative to do *ihsān* indicates that unfilial behaviour is not logically expected from children at the first place.⁶³² So, children's duty towards parents is not just to avoid misconduct, but rather to show the best conduct towards them which in the form of *ihsān*.⁶³³

To define the meaning of *ihsān*, Al-Shaʿrāwī uses a *ḥadīth* that is narrated by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as an interpretative tradition; he uses the definition of *ihsān* in this *ḥadīth* to explain the connotation of *ihsān* towards parents in Quran.⁶³⁴ In this *ḥadīth*, Jibrīl (Jibrael) asks the Prophet what is *ihsan* and Prophet responses: '*ihsān* is to worship God as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, then remember that God

⁶³⁰ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 7:3989; 14:8549.

⁶³¹ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 7:3989; Nasr, *The Study Quran*, 209.

⁶³² Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 7:3985.

⁶³³ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 7: 3985-3986.

⁶³⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:19 (50); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:36 (8).

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sees you'.⁶³⁵ According to Al-Sha'rāwī, to do *ihsān* in this sense means to reach the highest possible standard of conduct towards parents as *ihsān*, as defined in 'the *Ḥadīth* of Jibril', is the highest devotion level in religion. Accordingly, children have to do more than what is required and to avoid more than what is prohibited towards parents.⁶³⁶ In this explanation, Al-Sha'rāwī refers to two of the five categories of the Islamic law classifications of Muslims' actions: *farḍ* (obligatory), *sunnah* (recommended), *mubāḥ* (permissible), *makrūh* (reprehensible) and *ḥaram* (prohibited).⁶³⁷ While doing what is obligatory and avoiding what is *ḥaram* is expected from every person, to do *ihsān* towards parents means to do what is recommended and to avoid what is reprehended.

Al-Sha'rāwī confirms his explanation of the meaning of *ihsān*, as mentioned above, based on the Quran's reference to two kinds of people who are described as observing *ihsān* in general: those who spend most of the nighttime praying for God (Q. 51:16-18); and those who give charity more than the obligatory percentage of *zakah* (Q. 51:19). The obligatory night prayer (*'ishā'* prayer) takes few minutes and thus the rest of their prayer over the night is some kind of supererogatory prayer. Similarly, the volunteer charity over *zakah* is not mandatory but a recommended action.⁶³⁸ So, children have to keep doing more than the obligatory duties towards their parents and to be more generous, kind and humble towards them as much as possible.⁶³⁹

The *ihsān* in that sense according to Al-Sha'rāwī, requires children to be patient towards their parents and to avoid saying *uff* to any of them, under any circumstances, especially when parents get old. According to Al-Sha'rāwī, the Quran stresses this particular care for the elder parents (Q. 17:23) because they become weak at their old age and need more care from their children, and that is why the Prophet states that the

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⁶³⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:19 (50); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:36 (8).

⁶³⁶ Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr*, 1:429-430.

⁶³⁷ Mohammed Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2005), 278.

⁶³⁸ See Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr*, 4:2379, 4:2212-2213.

⁶³⁹ Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr*, 4:2213.

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one has one or two old parents should take care of them to get his sins forgiven, otherwise he/she will be subject to God's punishment.⁶⁴⁰

One further etiquette due on young children which Al-Sha'rāwī confirms is the obligation to respect parents' privacy during the three times, that are noted above: before the dawn time, during the afternoon nap period and after the night prayer (Q. 24:58). While this attitude has to be observed by children, the responsibility of training children, according to Al-Sha'rāwī, is their parents' responsibility, as children before puberty are not accountable from religious perspective.⁶⁴¹ This responsibility is analogous to the Prophet's commandment to parents to train their children to do the obligatory prayer from the age of seven.⁶⁴²

In addition to respecting the privacy of parents, Al-Sha'rāwī states that children should financially support their parents. In *Sūrat Al-Baqarah*, there is a question about what people should spend [in charity], and the Quran mentions the potential recipients to be one's parents, the next relatives and the weak people of the society (Q. 2:215). While this verse does not define how much children should give their parents, Al-Sha'rāwī uses another verse which tells that people can give charity from surplus of their property (Q. 2:219) as an interpretative tradition.⁶⁴³

Conversely, Al-Sha'rāwī states that a parent can take all their child's property, if they want based on Ibn Mājah's *ḥadīth* that reads: 'You and your wealth belong to your father'.⁶⁴⁴ The connotation of this *ḥadīth*, according to him, is implied in a verse in *Sūrat Al-Nūr* which states that there is no sin on any person to eat from their own houses, their parents', their mothers'...etc, without mentioning children's houses among these categories. Based on the evidence of absence, Al-Sha'rāwī states that the

⁶⁴⁰ Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr*, 14:8456- 8457.

⁶⁴¹ Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr*, 17:10329-30.

⁶⁴² Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1:133 (495); Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr*, 17:10329-30.

⁶⁴³ Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr*, 2:943-946.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 2:769 (2291); Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr*, 19:11659-60.

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children's houses are not mentioned in this verse because they are considered to be one's houses.⁶⁴⁵

This conclusion by Al-Shaʿrāwī, however, is controversial because the meaning of Ibn Mājah's *ḥadīth* could not be taken for granted to give parents the right over the whole property of their child. Al-Ṭaḥāwī states that the meaning of this *ḥadīth* could be similar to Abū Bakr's statement to the Prophet 'I and my property belong to you', which means he is happy to give him the right to use his money as the Prophet were its real owner.⁶⁴⁶ Further, Al-Ṭaḥāwī, states that after a child's death, only one sixth or one third of their property is given to each parent, and the rest is distributed among the other heirs and bequest recipients (Q. 4:11). Had the father have the right over the whole property of his child, no one else could have the right of any share.⁶⁴⁷

One further material ethical norm that the Quran asks children to observe is to make a bequest for their parents (Q. 2:180), but according to Al-Shaʿrāwī, this request has been abrogated by the obligation of dedication a defined quota share for each parent from the estate of their dead child (Q. 4:11).⁶⁴⁸ Such concept of abrogation in the Quran is controversial.⁶⁴⁹ Opponents of abrogation, such as Muhammad Al-Ghazālī, argue that the Quran is the word of God and thus each single commandment has to be valid, as God's wisdom does not change, and his knowledge is ultimate.⁶⁵⁰ In response, Al-Shaʿrāwī argues that abrogation in the Quran does not mean either of these two possibilities (i.e., the change in wisdom or the shortcoming of God's claimed abrogated verses).⁶⁵¹ Rather, abrogation means that God could stipulate one regulation that he initially knows that it will be valid for a period of time, then the new ruling will be more suitable to community of believers afterwards.⁶⁵² Accordingly, the whole

⁶⁴⁵ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 17:10338-39; 19:11660.

⁶⁴⁶ Abū Jaʿfar Al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ Mushkil Al-Āthār* (Beirut: Resalah, 1994), 4:277-298 (1598).

⁶⁴⁷ Al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ Mushkil Al-Āthār*, 4:279-281.

⁶⁴⁸ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 2:756-758.

⁶⁴⁹ See Powers, 'On the Abrogation of the Bequest Verses,' 246-95.

⁶⁵⁰ Muhammad Al-Ghazālī, *Naẓarāt fī Al-Qurʾān* (Cairo: Nahdetmisr, 2005), 194-212.

⁶⁵¹ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 1:509.

⁶⁵² Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 1:509.

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property of the early Arab Muslims, as rightly noted by Al-Shaʿrāwī, used to be given to their children after their death (with no share to parents), and thus the Quran commanded them to give parents part of their children's estate so that the community get used to this new concept.⁶⁵³ Later, when it was established that parents are among the potential heirs, the Quran defines them mandatory quota share.⁶⁵⁴ Further, Al-Shaʿrāwī states the commandment to make a bequest could still apply in case of non-believing parents who are not eligible heirs.⁶⁵⁵

Al-Shaʿrāwī's view, in this regard, is doing more justice to Quran's reference to the defined quota share for parents. The verse in *Sūrat Al-Nisā* which defines parents' share of inheritance considers two possibilities: 1- the dead child would have children, and then each parent would inherit one sixth; 2- otherwise, each parent would inherit one third (Q. 4:11). This defined way of distributing inheritance indicates that such balance between heirs is intended. If an heir, a parent in this case, is allowed to get an additional share in the form of a bequest, then one parent can take more than the other (while the Quran makes them equal). Also, each of them could get one third of the estate even if the dead person has a child (which the Quran only defines to be one sixth).

In addition to the children's duties towards their parents during their life, Al-Shaʿrāwī acknowledges that there are potential duties on children after their parents' death. In his comment on the Quran's commandment to show *iḥsān* towards parents in *Sūrat Al-Isrā* (Q. 13:23), Al-Shaʿrāwī states that children are still able to show *iḥsān* towards their parents through praying God for their forgiveness, to fulfil their commitments, and to keep good relations with their relatives and friends.⁶⁵⁶ These material ethical norms are part of a *ḥadīth* that is narrated by Al-Bayhaqī, which Al-Shaʿrāwī uses as valid interpretation of God's commandment to show *iḥsān* to

⁶⁵³ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*; 1:515-516; 13:8214-15.

⁶⁵⁴ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*; 1:515-516; 13:8214-15.

⁶⁵⁵ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*; 2:758.

⁶⁵⁶ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*; 14:8457- 8458.

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parents.⁶⁵⁷ One further *ḥadīth* that Al-Shaʿrāwī uses to interpret the connotation of *iḥsān* in this regard is the Prophet's honour and respect for the relatives and friends of his dead wife Khadījah.⁶⁵⁸ According to Al-Shaʿrāwī, one's relationship with their parents is analogous to the Prophet's attitude towards Khadījah and thus children have to show the same respect and honour towards their parents' relatives and friends.⁶⁵⁹

As for the children's attitude towards their unbelieving parents, Al-Shaʿrāwī confirms that they deserve to be well treated as the Quran commands to show *iḥsān* for them even if they force their children to associate partners with God in worship (Q. 31:15).⁶⁶⁰ In this regards, Al-Shaʿrāwī uses the *ḥadīth* that is narrated by Al-Bukhari in which the Prophet gave Asmāʾ to welcome her mother in her home and to treat her very well, which is part of the *iḥsān* required towards parents.⁶⁶¹

Observing ihsan towards parents, as stated by Al-Shaʿrāwī, is unconditional. As for the verses that justifies showing ihsan for parents because of their role towards children since their young (Q. 17:24; 31:14; 46:14), they extend the obligation of *iḥsān* to anyone who takes care of children in the case of the absence of their parents. The stress given in the Quran to the role of mothers (Q. 31:14 ;46:14) could be understood as a reminder of their role, especially in the social context where children see the role of their fathers, who earn the living of families, while the difficult role of mothers (fetal period, birth and nursing) happens during children's infantile amnesia.⁶⁶² For this reason, Al-Shaʿrāwī uses these verses that stress the role of mother as an exegetical tradition to explain the Prophetic *ḥadīths* which declare the good relationship with one's mother to be superior within the hierarchy of filial piety. When children might give preference to their father for his more noticeable role towards them, the Quran and

⁶⁵⁷ Abū Bakr Al-Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab Al-Imān* (Ryad: Rushd, 2003), 10:335 (7585).

⁶⁵⁸ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:1888 (2435); 4:1889 (2437).

⁶⁵⁹ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 14: 8458.

⁶⁶⁰ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 14:8458.

⁶⁶¹ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 14:8458.

⁶⁶² Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 4:2215.

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the *Ḥadīth* require them to consider the role of their mother that could have been unrecognized by them.⁶⁶³

5.3.2 The Hierarchy of Filial Piety according to Al-Shaʿrāwī

Al-Shaʿrāwī's interpretation of the texts of the Quran and the *Ḥadīth* texts under discussion shows that he considers filial piety of great importance from both the *classificatory* and *comparative* perspectives in the sense that is explained above. From *classificatory* perspective, filial piety is given high significance because *ihsan* towards parents is made obligatory as being God's *waṣīyyah*. Al-Shaʿrāwī differentiates between the word *waṣṣā* which means to give a major commandment that regulate all the aspects of life and *sharraʿa* which mean to legislate rules for specific situations.⁶⁶⁴ Accordingly, filial piety is included in the Ten Commandments that are meant to regulate the whole aspects of life for Muslims and the other religious nations.⁶⁶⁵

From *comparative* perspective, the occurrence of filial piety next to the commandment to worship in in a number of virtue lists indicates, according to Al-Shaʿrāwī, that faith in Islam is not just a verbal declaration of belief but it has to be manifested through practical deeds, where filial piety comes first.⁶⁶⁶

5.3.3 The Image of Moral Agents according to Al-Shaʿrāwī

Positive role models in the Quran are those who believe in God and do righteous deeds (Q. 103:3) including filial piety, as rightly noted by Al-Shaʿrāwī.⁶⁶⁷ This applies to a

⁶⁶³ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 4:2215. Here Al-Shaʿrāwī refers to the *ḥadīth* recorded by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, mentioned above, when someone asked the Prophet of Islam about the most deserving person to be best treated by him (the interlocutor). The Prophet said: 'it should be your mother'. The interlocutor then asked twice who should be the next one and the Prophet confirmed the same answer: 'your mother'. In the fourth time, the Prophet said, 'your father' (Al-Bukhārī 5971; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2548).

⁶⁶⁴ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 7:3989.

⁶⁶⁵ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 7:3989.

⁶⁶⁶ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 14:8449.

⁶⁶⁷ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 14:8449

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number of prophets in the Quran whose stories are told in the Quran as guidance for the believers.⁶⁶⁸

With regards filial piety, Al-Shaʿrāwī confirms that Abraham, Ismael, Joseph, John and Jesus are role models. In his exegesis on the story of Abraham and his intended sacrificed son, who is Ishmael according to Al-Shaʿrāwī, the son obeying his father only because this is God's commandment (Q. 37:102), not just the desire of his father.⁶⁶⁹

Further, Al-Shaʿrāwī mentions some aspects that relate to the stories of the prophets which are not clearly mentioned in the Quran. For example, in the story of the intended sacrifice (between Abraham and his son), Al-Shaʿrāwī suggests that the son was fully obedient to his father that he asked his father to lay him down to avoid eye contact with him to make his task to fulfil the commandment of God easier (Q. 37:103).⁶⁷⁰ Further, in the story of Joseph, Al-Shaʿrāwī uses the evidence of silence to note one aspect of Joseph's filial piety: Joseph did not narrate to his father the hardships he had faced before meeting him at the end of the story, to avoid saddening his heart.⁶⁷¹

In additions, Al-Shaʿrāwī concludes from the story of John that raising a child by his/her parents should not be a condition for showing *ihsān* towards them. John, as a role model prophet, declares that he is observing *birr* towards his parents (Q. 19:14) however he was born when they were too old, and they did not have the capacity to care well of him as parents of average age would have done.⁶⁷² Similarly, Jesus who speaks in the cradle declares that he will be observing *birr* towards his mother Mary to honour her name from the false accusations said about her chastity.⁶⁷³

For contemporary role models, Al-Shaʿrāwī mentions that someone dropped food on the clothes of his son who was not upset and said: 'may God feed you as you

⁶⁶⁸ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*; 12:7140-7148.

⁶⁶⁹ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*; 5: 2671; 20: 12800.

⁶⁷⁰ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*; 21:12801.

⁶⁷¹ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*; 12:7081.

⁶⁷² Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*; 15:9045-46.

⁶⁷³ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*; 15:9076.

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have fed me' which is a clear observance of *ḥilm* (patience) towards parents.⁶⁷⁴ Also, Al-Shaʿrāwī mentions the story of a person who used to wallow under the feet of his mother, who asked him to stop out of empathy towards him. The son asked his mother to let him enjoy his humbleness for her which could lead to enter the Paradise.⁶⁷⁵

However Al-Shaʿrāwī's exegesis is one of the biggest commentaries on the Quran in modern Egypt, the references to the positive role models in the *Ḥadīth* that are mentioned above, are absent in Al-Shaʿrāwī's exegesis on the *Qurʾān*, obviously because his plan is to provide a commentary on the Quran, not provide exclusive analysis of the relevant *ḥadīths*.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an analysis of the texts that promote filial piety in the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth* and their reception by Al-Shaʿrāwī which fulfils the third exegetical task of this study. In the lines below, I will show how this analysis could provide an 'understanding' of the texts under discussion in relation to the commonalities discourse where these texts are mainly employed such as in Günther's 'The Ten Commandments in the Bible and the *Qurʾān*'.⁶⁷⁶

While Günther rightly notes that stressing filial piety is one of the similarities between the Decalogue and the *Qurʾān*'s lists of virtues (Q. 2:83-84; 6:151-3; 17:22-39),⁶⁷⁷ he neglects two differences in the latter. Firstly, the *Qurʾān* commands *iḥsān* to be the paradigm for observing filial piety which has certain material implications: to show the highest level of goodness and kindness towards parents and to be patient during the long company with them till their very old age. This notion of *iḥsān* is also echoed in the *Ḥadīth* literature, particularly in Al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* who entitles the relevant chapter about relationship towards parents with the Qurʾānic

⁶⁷⁴ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 14:8461.

⁶⁷⁵ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 14:8461.

⁶⁷⁶ Günther, 'The Ten Commandments and the Qur'an,' 28-58.

⁶⁷⁷ Günther, 'The Ten Commandments and the Qur'an,' 29-30, 44-46.

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commandment of *iḥsān*. Such material implication of *iḥsān* is also stressed by Al-Shaʿrāwī, but he interprets its meaning through the language of the Islamic jurisprudence: to do more than what is obligatory (including the recommended actions), and to avoid more what is prohibited (including the reprehended actions).

Secondly, the *Qurʾān* presents filial piety in a different hierarchy other than the Bible; while it is located fifth in the Decalogue, the *Qurʾān* lists filial piety second to worshipping God, superseding other kinship and family relations (Q. 6:151; 17:23; 46:15; 29:7-9). Similarly, unfilial behaviour in the *Ḥadīth* traditions is presented in the lists of vices second to associating partners with God, (Kh. 5976; T. 1901). This hierarchy of filial piety is confirmed by Al-Shaʿrāwī from a theological perspective: faith is composed of both creed and practical deeds that prove faith claims, and filial piety comes first at the top of the latter.

In additions, Günther avoids referencing to other aspects of filial piety in the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth*, probably because of his focus on the Ten Commandments that appear in the form of the lists of virtues.⁶⁷⁸ Among these aspects is the *Qurʾānic* prohibition of the minimum expressions of anger and content against parents, not to mention scolding or insulting them. Instead, parents have to be addressed in an honourable way. Likewise, the *Ḥadīth* prohibits children to insult the parents of anyone else, to avoid having their parents insulted back. Further, the *Qurʾān* commands children to respect the privacy of their parents (Q. 24:58-59), but the responsibility of training young children to observe such etiquette falls on the shoulders of their parents, according to Al-Shaʿrāwī, based on the legal rule: puberty is a condition for accountability.

Furthermore, other *material* ethical norms regarding filial piety in the *Qurʾān* would include financial duties on children towards their parents. Children have to spend their money for [the needs of] their parents (Q. 2:215) which is confirmed by a

⁶⁷⁸ Günther, 'The Ten Commandments and the Qurʾan,' 44.

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ḥadīth in Al-Nasā'ī's *Sunan* (2532). In this regard, Al-Sha'rāwī states that parents can benefit from the surplus of their children's properties based on a verse from *Sūrat Al-Baqarah* (Q. 2:219).

Moreover, the *Qur'ān* requires children to bequest part of their estate to their parents (Q. 2:180), but this commandment is abrogated according to Al-Sha'rāwī by the later *Qur'ānic* texts that assign defined shares of inheritance to parents (one third/one sixth) (Q. 4:12). However, Al-Sha'rāwī states that this commandment of bequest is not abrogated concerning non-believing parents, because they are not eligible to the defined shares of inheritance.

In the same vein, the *Ḥadīth* traditions stipulate a number of material ethical norms that could be observed towards parents: 1- to do pilgrimage on their behalf (N. 2633); to give charity on their behalf, such as offering free drinking water (N. 3653, 3652, 3664, 3666); to honour their memory through showing respect towards their relatives and friends (T. 1904) and to pray for them (T. 3651). The latter ethical norm could be relativised if parents were non-believers as suggested by other texts in the *Qur'ān* (Q. 9:113) as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

In addition to these ethical norms, there are other aspects of filial piety that relate to the moral agency in the *Qur'ān* and the *Ḥadīth* that are also absent in Günther's commonalities discourse. In the *Qur'ān*, there are a number of God's prophets who are presented as positive role models for they worship God and observe filial piety: Ismael helps his father to build the House in Mecca which was unhabituated area (Q. 2:127; 22:27); Abraham's intended sacrificed son obeys his father and is ready to be sacrificed as a fulfilment of God's commandment (Q. 37:102); Joseph obeys his father to keep his night vision secret from his brothers and he also honours and respects his parents and puts them up at his throne (Q. 12:99-100); John [the Baptist] and Jesus are presented as observing filial piety (Q. 19:14; 19:32).

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On the other hand, unfilial behaviour is associated in the *Qurʾān* with two unbelieving characters: the son of Noah, who disobeys his father and refuses to get into the Arch (Q. 11:42); and the one who speak unrespectfully to his parents and denies the Day of Resurrection (Q. 46:18). While unfilial behaviour is associated with disbelief in these examples, the story of Joseph reveals that undutiful children to their parents could repent. The brothers of Joseph are presented as negative role models at the beginning of the story for their attitude towards Joseph and their father, but later they become good characters, ask their father for forgiveness and declared to be forgiven (Q. 12:7-18; 91-98).

In the *Ḥadīth* traditions, Jurayj is presented as an anti-model for his failure to observe the hierarchy of filial piety in his action of giving preference to supererogatory prayers, at the cost of responding to his mother's call (Kh. 1206; M. 2550). Contra Jurayj, one *ḥadīth* tradition presents a positive role model who gives preference to his parents over his children, and thus his supplications were answered when he was blocked in a cave (Kh. 5974). Another role model whose supplications are accepted for his filial behaviour is Uways Al-Qarnī who gained his reputation because of the Prophet's prophecy about him and ʿUmar b. Al-Khaṭṭāb's keen to meet with him and to ask Uways Al-Qarnī to pray for him (M. 2542).

From the perspective of world in front of the text, Al-Shaʿrāwī confirms the 'role model' character of the prophets, mentioned in the *Qurʾān*, and identifies some implicit aspects of their filial piety: Joseph did not tell his father about the hardships he faced before meeting with him to avoid saddening his heart (Q. 12:100); the young Jesus declares in the cradle his commitment to observe *birr* towards his mother which is a model for unconditional filial; and the intended sacrificed son of Abraham, who is Ishmael according to Al-Shaʿrāwī, observed fully obedience that could have avoided eye contact with his father. Either the intended sacrifice was Ishmael, as argued by Ibn Kathīr and Al-Shaʿrāwī, or he was Isaac, as indicated by Al-Ṭabarī, provides the example of absolute obedience to parents when their orders are consistent with the

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commandments of God (Q. 37:102). Otherwise, obedience of parents is relativised, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

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Chapter Six:

The Teachings of Muhammad That Relativize Filial Relations

In addition to the teachings of Muhammad that promote filial piety, that have been discussed in the previous chapter, there are other set of texts that relativize filial relations in the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth*. This chapter will provide an analysis of these texts to undertake the fourth task of the comparative exegesis that is proposed to be conducted in this study. The aim of this chapter is to fill in the gap in the literature about the interpretation of these texts from the perspective of the world within and in front of the text as a step forward to promote mutual understanding of the textual tension about filial relations in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad about filial piety that makes up the shortcomings of the polemical and commonalities discourses.

To ensure that such mutual understanding is achieved, this study is using the same exegetical approach, that is the hermeneutics of *Organon* 3, to interpret both the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad that both promote or relativize filial relations from the perspective of the world within and in front of the text. So, in the lines below, I will continue using the hermeneutics of *Organon* 3 to provide an analysis of the texts that relativize filial relations in the *Qurʾān* (Section 6.1) and the *Ḥadīth* (Section 6.2), from the perspective of the world within the text as well as their reception by Al-Shaʿrāwī, as a case study for the world in front of the text (Section 6.3). By doing so, this chapter will fill in the gap in literature about the texts under discussion. As noted above, *Nadrat Al-Naʿīm*, the most extensive encyclopaedia about Islamic ethics, as well as Diraz's leading work about the ethics in the *Qurʾān*, both virtually neglect the reference to the texts that relativize filial relations in their relevant sections about attitude towards parents which are about filial piety. Finally, I will use the hermeneutics of *Organon* 3 to mark the impact of the discussion that will be provided in this chapter on the polemical literature, as in the work by Mark Gabriel (Section 6.4).

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As with my discussion of the texts that *relativize* filial relations in the teachings of Jesus, I will merge the first two elements of *Organon* 3 as the ethical norm embedded in these texts (element 1) overlaps with the hierarchy of the ethical norms (element 2).

6.1 Relativizing Filial Relations in the *Qurʾān*

In addition to the texts that prioritize filial piety over other ethical norms, that are discussed above (Section 5.1.2), there are other texts in the *Qurʾān* that relativize filial relations for the sake of God and the Prophet (Q. 4: 135; 9:24, 113; 29:8; 31:15; 58:22). Further, the *Qurʾān* presents some moral agents whose images (either positive or negative) are defined based on their response to these ethical norms (Q. 60:4; 43:33), as will be discussed below.

6.1.1 Ethical Norm, its Authority and Motivation

These texts that relativize filial relations in the *Qurʾān* indicate five ethical norms: 1) to give just testimony against parents (Q. 4:135); 2) to love parents less than God and his Prophet (Q. 9:24; 58:22); 3) to disobey them when their commandments contradict God's (Q. 29:8; 31:15); 4) not to boast about them (during pilgrimage) (Q. 2:200); 5) and not to pray for forgiveness on their behalf if they are declared to be deserving of the Hell (Q. 9:113).

6.1.1.1 Just Testimony against Parents

In *jāhiliyyah*, loyalty to kinship relations was superior to the virtue of justice as indicated in the Arabic pre-Islamic proverb '*unsur Akhāk Zālīma aw Mazlūm*' (Defend your brother [or friend] whether they are victims or a transgressors). This statement was first said by Jundub b. Al-ʿAnbar who asked his friend Saʿd b. Zayd to release him after the former had been **captivated** on a rape attempt to a slave girl from the Tribe of

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Banū ʿĀmir.⁶⁷⁹ Later, this meaning continued to be quoted in the Jāhili literature to stress the significance of kinship relations and its superiority to justice.⁶⁸⁰

This norm has been challenged by the *Qurʾānic* commandment in *Sūrat Al-Nisāʾ* to observe *qisṭ* (justice) and to be *shuhadāʾ* for God even if this would be against oneself, parents or kins (Q. 4:135). According to this *Qurʾānic* commandment, justice against parents (and the other mentioned categories) should be accompanied by being *shuhadāʾ* for God which is open to two interpretations. First, it could mean to observe justice when making *shahādah* (testimony) even when it could be against oneself, parents or relatives. According to this interpretation, this verse indicates a *material* ethical norm as one specific action is required, which is to give just testimony against parents, and it is a *comparative* ethical norm because this just testimony is declared to be the right of God which should supersede duty towards parents and kins.⁶⁸¹

Second, the statement *shuhadaʾ li Allah* could mean, as noted by Ibn ʿAṭīyah, to testify the oneness of God and thus the meaning of this verse would be to command observing *qisṭ* (justice) while declaring the oneness of God, even if this would be against the interests of parents.⁶⁸² According to this interpretation, observing *qisṭ* is a *comparative, formal* ethical norm as justice is presented as superior to filial relations, but without indicating specific actions required.

The latter interpretation is weakened by the fact that this commandment is directed to ‘*yā ayyuhā al-ladhīna āmanū*’, which are those who already believe in God and testify to His oneness, and thus the commandment to observe *shahādah* here should be juridical rather than theological.⁶⁸³ In additions, the interpretation of testimony here,

⁶⁷⁹ Abū Al-Faḍl Aḥmad Al-Maydānī, *Majmaʿ Al-Amthāl* (Beirut: Dār Al-Maʿrifah, 2004), 2:334; Abū Hilāl Al-ʿAskarī, *Jamharat Al-Amthāl* (Beirut: Dār Al-Fikr, 1988), 1:58.

⁶⁸⁰ One example in this regard is Qurayṭ b. Unayf Al-Tamīmī who said praising the Tribe of Māzin: ‘They do not ask their brother for evidence when asks them to support him’ (Abū ʿAlī Al-Marzūqī Al-Aṣfahānī, *Sharḥ Dīwān Al-Ḥamāsah Li Abī Tammām* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2003), 97).

⁶⁸¹ Abd Al-ʿAzīz Al-Karam, ed., *Dīwān Amir Al-Murminīn ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib* (Beirut: Muʾassasat Al-Kutub Al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1988), 142.

⁶⁸² Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾan-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾan*, 209-211.

⁶⁸³ Abū Muhammad b. ʿAtīyah, *Al-Muḥarrar Al-Wajīz fī Tafṣīr Al-Kitāb Al-ʿAzīz* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2001), 2:122.

⁶⁸³ Abū Hayyān Al-Andalusī, *Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ fī Al-Tafṣīr* (Beirut: Dār Al-Fikr, 1999), 4:94.

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in the juridical meaning, is consistent with context of the *Qurʾānic* discourse in *Sūrat Al-Nisāʾ*, where this commandment occurs, which is about giving rightful testimony even against the ‘in group’ relations (Q. 4:105:113).⁶⁸⁴ Furthermore, the *Qurʾānic* commandment to be just when giving testimony against the interest of close relatives could be meant to address the conduct of some early Muslims who continued to follow the *jāhilī* practice of giving biased testimony for the sake of their kins.⁶⁸⁵

This ethical norm (to give just testimony even if against the interest of parents) is concluded with a *teleological* motivation in a conditional form: if you *talwuw* or *tuʿriḍū*, God is fully aware of what you do [and thus he will compensate you accordingly] (Q. 4:135). This concluding statement is a warning against two practices that could undermine giving a just testimony. The first is *talwuw* which is derived from the root word (*lawā*) which means to twist or to distort the testimony through changing it for the sake of one’s parents.⁶⁸⁶ The second is *tuʿriḍū* from the root word (*ʿaraḍa*) which means to *turn away* from giving the testimony when it could be against the interest of one’s parents.⁶⁸⁷

Lawā which is the root word of ‘*talwuw*’ has another meaning which is to turn one’s neck from **someone**. According to this meaning, this verse would constitute a *material* ethical that is directed to a judge not to turn his/her neck away from one litigant to the other which is a figurative speech that prohibits issuing biased judgement.

One further meaning of *talwuw* is indicated in the recitation of Ḥamza and Ibn ʿĀmir who read *talwuw* into *talū* from the root word ‘*wilāyah*’ which means to perform or to take over.⁶⁸⁸ The *teleological* motivation in this verse, according to this recitation, will be twofold: if children perform a just testimony against their parents they will be

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⁶⁸⁴ Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṣin Al-Ghayb (Al-Tafsīr Al-Kabīr)* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ Al-Turāth Al-ʿArabī, 1999), 11: 241; Abū Ḥayyān Al-Andalusī, *Al-Baḥr Al-Muhīṭ*, 4:94.

⁶⁸⁵ Jalāl Al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr Al-Manthūr fī Al-Tafsīr bi Al-Maʾthūr* (Beirut: Dār Al-Fikr, 2011), 2:714-715.

⁶⁸⁶ Lane, *Lexicon*, 7:3015.

⁶⁸⁷ Lane, *Lexicon*, 5:2005.

⁶⁸⁸ ʿAbd Al-Laṭīf Al-Khaṭīb, *Muṣṣaḥḥ Al-Qirʾān* (Damascus: Dār Saʿd Al-Dīn, 2002), 2:173-174; Lane, *Lexicon*, 8:3060.

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rewarded and if they refrain from doing so they will be punished.⁶⁸⁹ Most of the English transitions use the first meaning of *talwuw* (to distort testimony by witnesses) and the other potential meanings are not conveyed which is one of the challenges of translating the scriptures, as rightly noted by Rachel Godfrey.⁶⁹⁰

The *Qurʾān* indicates that one obstacle for justice when it is against parents is *al-hawā* (self-desire) at the cost of fulfilling God's commandments (Q. 4:135), and thus the *Qurʾān* commands elsewhere to manage this self-desire and to love parents less than God, as will be discussed now.

6.1.1.2 Relativizing Love towards Parents

There are two texts in the *Qurʾān* that relativize loving parents to the love of God and the Prophet (Q. 8:24; 58:22). The first text is a conditional sentence, in *Sūrat Al-Tawbah*, which states that if one's parents, children, spouse, tribe, property, business and households were '*aḥabb*' to anyone *than* God, His Messenger (Muhammad) and doing *jihād* for the sake of God, then they should expect God to bring (His punishment) [to them] (Q. 8:24). The word '*aḥabb*' is a comparative adjective that clearly indicates the hierarchy of loving God, the Prophet and performing *jihād* over emotions towards parents and the other mentioned categories. This commandment to love God and the Prophet more than parents constitutes a *formal* ethical norm because it has no specific actions required. But to love them less than performing *jihād* could have a *material* implication that is to relativize filial love to joining wars for the sake of God.⁶⁹¹

The motivation of both these *formal* and *material* ethical norms is *teleological* as this verse in *Sūrat Al-Tawab* is concluded with a threat for those who fail to love God, the Prophet and *jihād* more than parents; that is to wait for God to bring his decree

⁶⁸⁹ Ibn ʿAṭīyyah, *Al-Muḥarrar Al-Wajīz*, 2:123-124; Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ Al-Ghayb*, 11:242; Nāṣir Al-Dīn Al-Baydāwī, *Anwār Al-Tanzīl wā Asrār Al-Taʾwīl* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ Al-Turāth Al-ʿArabi, 1998), 2:102; Abū Al-Qāsim Jār Allah Al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr Al-Kashshāf ʿan Haqāʾiq Ghawāmiḍ Al-Tanzīl wa ʿUyūn Al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh Al-Taʾwīl* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kitāb Al-ʿArabi, 1986), 1:575.

⁶⁹⁰ See Rachel Godfrey, 'Scriptural Reasoning,' in *Mapping Faith: Theologies of Migration and Community*, ed. Lia Shimada (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2020), 104-113, here 109-110.

⁶⁹¹ See Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān*, 60.

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which is used in the *Qurʾān* to implicitly refer to upcoming punishment (Q. 2:109).⁶⁹² This punishment is also implied in the concluding statement ‘God does not guide the *fasiqīn* (the wrongdoers)’ as the vice of *fisq* is declared elsewhere in the *Qurʾān* as a reason for God’s punishment (Q. 29:34).⁶⁹³

The other occurrence of the notion of relativizing filial emotions for the sake of God and the Prophet could be found in *Sūrat Al-Mujādalah* (Q. 58:22) in a negative, indicative sentence that reads: ‘You will not find a group of people who believe in God and the Day of Judgement would show *mawaddah* (affection) to those who act in opposition towards God and the His Messenger (Muhammad) including their parents, siblings and kins (Q. 58:22). The negative indicative form is one style of negative imperative in the *Qurʾān* (Q. 9:120) which denotes the prohibition of showing *mawaddah* towards parents (who would act in opposition towards God and His Messenger).⁶⁹⁴ According to the lexical meaning of *mawaddah*, the prohibition in this verse indicates a *formal* ethical norm as it does not require specific actions.⁶⁹⁵

However, this lexical meaning does not convey adequately the connotation of *mawaddah* in *Sūrat Al-Mjadahah* as this verse occurs in the context of criticizing the act of those who show loyalty to those who act against God (Q. 58: 14-15). Later in the *Qurʾānic* narrative, *Mawaddah* towards non-believing parents (and kins) is explained, in *Sūrat Al-Mumtaḥanah*, as encompassing two ethical norms. The first is a permissible *formal* ethical norm which is to show *birr* (filial piety) and *qist* (justice) towards parent and kins on condition they are neither fighting Muslims because of their religion nor they are involved in expelling Muslims from their homeland (Q. 60:7-8). Otherwise,

⁶⁹² Muḥyī Al-Dīn Darwīsh, *Iʿrāb Al-Qurʾān wa Bayānuh* (Damascus: Dār Al-Yamāmah, 1994), 4:77; Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jamīʿ li Ahkām Al-Qurʾān (Tafsīr Al-Qurṭubī)* (Cairo: Dār Al-Kutub Al-Maṣriyyah, 1964), 8:95; Abū Ḥayyān, *Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ*, 5:392.

⁶⁹³ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾan*, 161.

⁶⁹⁴ Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, 4:496-97; Al-Baydāwī, *Anwār Al-Tanzīl*, 5:196-97.

⁶⁹⁵ Lane, *Lexicon*, 8:370; Nicolas Sinai, *Key Terms of the Qurʾan: A Critical Dictionary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 336-337, 717.

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the *Qurʾān* states a *material* ethical norm that is to prohibit showing loyalty towards them (Q. 60:9).

So, the *Qurʾān* prohibits *mawwadah*, not only in the lexical meaning of having affection towards parents, but also to prohibit children to show loyalty for their parents when they are opposing God and the Prophet. The motivation of this prohibition is a multiplied *teleological* reward: God will write faith in their hearts; will support them with His Spirit; they will inherit eternal paradise with rivers running beneath it; God will be pleased with them; they are declared to be the party of God; and they are promised to be successful (Q. 58:22).

However the *Qurʾān* prohibits such *mawwadah* towards parents who oppose God and the Prophet, but there are two references in the *Qurʾān* that indicate that children have to accompany their parents in a rightful way even when they observe *jihād* against their children (Q. 29:8; 31:15), as will be discussed now.

6.1.1.3 Disobeying Parents in the Qurʾān

The *Qurʾān* declares that if parents perform *jihād* (*wa in jāhadāka*) against their children to associate partners with God, they have to disobey them in this regard and to accompany them in a rightful way (Q. 31:15). The word *jāhadāk* from the noun *jihād* is stereotyped to mean to fight or to launch a holy war.⁶⁹⁶ However, *jihād* could mean to strive or to spend too much effort to fulfil something such as to turn someone's children away from monotheism, as indicated in this verse (Q. 31:15).⁶⁹⁷

The *Qurʾānic* commandment to disobey parents when they strive against their children to associate partners with God is a *material* ethical norm that constituted a shift in the authority of the Arabic virtues whose authority used to be tribalism before Islam as expressed in Durayd b. Al-Ṣummaḥ's poetry: 'I am from [the Tribe of]

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⁶⁹⁶ See Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁶⁹⁷ Lane, *Lexicon*, 2:474; Sinai, *Key Terms*, 198-199.

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Ghaziyyah and I will follow it either in a rightful or an erroneous way'.⁶⁹⁸ The *Qurʾān*, on the other hand, makes the authority to be of God as it commands to disobey parents, which are the locus of blood relations, when they contradict the commandment of God.

While children have to disobey their parents' multiple requests to associate partners with God, the *Qurʾān* commands children, as in *Sūrat Luqmān*, to accompany them 'ṣāhibhumā' in a rightful way (Q. 31:15). The commandment ṣāhibhumā indicates a *material* ethical norm that is to live with parents in the same household, and this should be done in rightful way which is a *formal* ethical norm.⁶⁹⁹ These two ethical norms could have been applicable to the Meccan context, to which *Sūrat Luqmān* belongs, where some early Muslims converted to Islam while their parents did not.⁷⁰⁰ However, this *material* ethical norm (to live with non-believing parents) changed for the sake of the discourse of *hijrah* which required Muslims to migrate to Medina (Q. 9: 20, 72; 4:97), but treating non-believing parents kindly continued to be obligatory in the Medinian discourse as in *Sūrat Al-ʿAnkabūt* (Q. 29:8). Both these commandments in *Sūrat Luqmān* and *Sūrat Al-ʿAnkabūt* are *teleological* ethical norms as the *Qurʾān* stresses that parents and their children are all returning back to God, [after their death] and He will tell them all what they have been doing [and thus He will compensate them accordingly] (Q. 29:8; 31:15).

Like the *Qurʾān*'s shift of the authority of ethical norms from tribalism to God, the *Qurʾān* also commands to replace boasting about fathers and lineage during pilgrimage with remembering His name, as will be discussed now.

6.1.1.4 Boasting about Fathers during Pilgrimage

There were economic and literary forums that used to be held in Mecca during the season of pilgrimage, such as *Sūq ʿUkāz* (*ʿUkāz* Market), where Arabs used to exchange

⁶⁹⁸ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān*, 55; Al-ʿAskarī, *Jamharat Al-Amthāl*, 1:195.

⁶⁹⁹ Lane, *Lexicon*, 4:1625.

⁷⁰⁰ Abū Jaʿfar Al-Naḥḥās, *Maʿānī Al-Qurʾān* (Mecca: Jāmiʿat Umm Al-Qurā, 1988), 5:227; Abū Jaʿfar Muhammad b. Jarīr Al-Tabarī, *Jāmiʿ Al-Bayān ʿan Tāʾwīl Āy Al-Qurʾān* (Giza: Dār Hajr, 2001), 18: 554.

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goods and recite poetry.⁷⁰¹ Boasting about fathers, and forefathers, used to be a central theme in the *jāhili* poetry in general, and it was a common theme of the poetry competitions during *Sūq ʿUkāz*. One example was a famous poetic competition between Al-Khansāʾ and Hind bint ʿUtbah who were boasting about their fathers ʿAmr b. Al-Ḥārith and ʿUtbah b. Rabīʿah, respectively.⁷⁰²

This notion of boasting about fathers and noble lineage was relativized by the *Qurʾān* that states, in *Sūrat Al-Ḥujurāt*, that all people belong to the same origin (Adam and Eve) and what should really matter is piety and good deeds (Q. 49:13). This meaning is echoed in ~~an~~ the early Islamic poetry that reads:

All people are equal; their father is Adam and their mother is Eve,

They have the same souls and spirits and they are all created from bones and limbs,

If anyone would like to boast about the origin of their lineage, they have to boast about being descendants of mud and water.⁷⁰³

In line with this new criterion of honour, the *Qurʾān* commands to replace boasting about father with a *material* ethical norm that is to mention the name of God and to pray for Him for prosperity in this world and the hereafter (Q. 2:200-201). However, the *Qurʾān* commands elsewhere, in *Sūrat Al-Tawbah*, that children cannot pray for forgiveness for their non-believing parents (Q. 9:113), as will be discussed now.

6.1.1.5 Not to Pray for Forgiveness for Non-believing Parents

As noted above (Section 5.1.1), one of the requirements of filial piety is that children have to pray for mercy and forgiveness for their parents (Q. 71:28; 17:24). However,

⁷⁰¹ Nāṣir b. Saʿd Al-Rashīd, *Sūq ʿUkāz fī Al-Jāhiliyyah wa Al-Islām: Tārīkhuh wā Nashātātuh wā Mawqīʿuh* (Cairo: Dār Al-Anṣār, 1977), 47-78.

⁷⁰² Abū Al-Farag Al-Aṣḥānī, *Al-Aghānī* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ Al-Turāth Al-ʿArabī, 1994), 4:401-402; Al-Rashīd, *Sūq ʿUkāz fī Al-Jāhiliyyah wa Al-Islām*, 70-72.

⁷⁰³ Al-Karam, *Dīwān ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*, 7.

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this could be qualified by a negative past sentence in *Sūrat Al-Tawbah* that reads: ‘*mā kān lī Al-Nabī wa Al-Dhīn Āmanū An Yastughfirū Lī Al-Mushrikīn wa law kānū Ulī Qurbā min ba‘d mā tabayyana lahum Annhum Aṣḥāb Al-Jahīm*’ (Q. 9:113) which literally means (it was not for the Prophet and the believers to seek forgiveness for the polytheists even if they were their relatives after it has become clear for them that they are inhabitants of the Hell).⁷⁰⁴ The grammatical structure of this sentence it is open to two interpretations. First, according to the Baṣrī grammar school, this negative past indicative form in the *Qurʾān* denotes an informative rather than an imperative sense, as in *Sūrat Āl Imran* (Q. 3:145) and *Sūrat Yūnus* (Q. 10:100), and thus it does not indicate an ethical norm here in *Sūrat Al-Tawbah* (Q. 9:113).⁷⁰⁵

On the other hand, the Kūfī grammarians note that the negative past indicative form is used elsewhere in the *Qurʾān* to constitute a negative imperative, as in *Sūrat Āl Imrān* (Q. 3:161), and thus the verse under discussion indicates a *material* ethical norm for the Prophet and the believers no to seek forgiveness for their parents.⁷⁰⁶ This interpretation is more likely because the context of *Sūrat Al-Tawbah*, where this verse occurs, is about defining the relationship between the early Muslims, on the one hand, the nonbelieving parents (Q. 9:22-23) as well as the disbelievers in general (Q. 9:4-6, 12-14), on the other. Further, the addressee in the verse under discussion is *al-Nabiyy* (the Prophet), with the definitive article *Al* (the) which is used in the *Qurʾān* only to refer to the Prophet Muhammad (Q. 33:6, 30, 38, 45, 50, 53, 56, 59; 66:1, 3, 8-9).⁷⁰⁷ This means that the tense of this sentence is not meant to be informative of the past as suggested by the Baṣrī grammarians, but to have a present implications (to the Prophet and his followers) as noted by the Kūfī’s. The ethical implication on the Prophet, according to the *Qurʾān* will be not to seek forgiveness for Abū Lahab, his paternal

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⁷⁰⁴ See Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾan*, 60.

⁷⁰⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ Al-Bayān*, 12:24.

⁷⁰⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ Al-Bayān*, 12:24.

⁷⁰⁷ Muhammad Fuʾād ʿAbd Al-Bāqī, *Al-Muʿjam Al-Mufahras li Al-Fāz Al-Qurʾān Al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār Al-Kutub Al-Maʿsiyyah, 1945), 686-7.

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uncle, and his wife (Q. 111:3), as the only contemporary people to the Prophet, who are named, are to be inhabitant of the Hell.⁷⁰⁸

While the relationship between the Prophet and Abū Lahab is not child-parent relationship, the *Qurʾān* provides the example of the Prophet Abraham as a role model for dealing with non-believing parents and praying for forgiveness on their behalf, as will be discussed now.

6.1.2 The Moral Agency in the *Qurʾān*

The *Qurʾān* presents Abraham as a positive role model who successfully relativizes filial relations for the sake of God. He and his followers are called *uswah* for they disassociated themselves from their people and whatever they worship other than God (Q. 60:4). The lexical meaning of *uswah* is synonymous to *Qudwah* which both mean ‘an example, an exemplar, a pattern, an object of imitation or a person by whom one takes example...whether good or bad, pleasing or hurtful’.⁷⁰⁹ In the *Qurʾān*, the word *uswah* is used only in reference to positive role models (Q. 33:21; 60:4, 6) while *qudwah* could indicate both positive and negative moral agents (Q. 6:90; 43:23, respectively).⁷¹⁰

Abraham’s image as a positive role model includes his criticism of his father (Āzar) for worshiping idols which it is evident misguidance (Q. 6:74). This evident misguidance is explained by Abraham to his father as these idols could not be his God for they are powerless (Q. 19:42). In response to Abraham, his father threatened to stone him, but Abraham continued to talk to his father politely and promised to pray for God’s forgiveness on the behalf of him (Q. 19:47; 26:86; 60:4). When God tells

⁷⁰⁸ See Ibn ʿAṭīyyah, *Al-Muḥarrar*, 3:90. For the story of Abū Lahab and his wife see Hammad’s thematic exegesis on *Surat al-Masad*: Ahmad Zaki Hammad, *Father of the Flame: Commentary and Vocabulary Reference of Surat al-Masad* (Somerset: Quranic Literacy Institute, 1997).

⁷⁰⁹ Lane, *Lexicon*, 1:60.

⁷¹⁰ Usamah ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz ʿAṭīyyah Bāshah, ‘Al-Qudwah wa Al-Uwwah fī Al-Qurʾān Al-Karīm: Dirāsah Tafsīriyyah,’ *Al-Majallah Al-ʿIlmiyyah Li Kuliyyat Usūl Al-Dīn wa Al-Daʿwah Bi Al-Zaqāʾiq* 35, no. 3 (2023): 81-144, here 107-123; Sinai, *Key Terms of the Qurʾan*, 526; Abū Al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Idrīs Al-Qarāfī, *Anwār Al-Burūq fī Anwār Al-Furūq* (Beirut: ʿĀlam Al-Kutub, n.d.) 2:134.

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Abraham not to pray for his father's forgiveness, because he is an open opponent to the religion of God, Abrahm obeys God's commandment despite his love and passion towards his father (Q. 9:113-114). By sticking to monotheism and resisting the social pressure of his family and society, Abrahm deserves to be called *ṣiddīq* (the most, eminent truthful person) which is another title for the positive role models in the *Qurʾān* (Q. 9:119; 4:69).⁷¹¹

In contrast to Abraham and his followers, the *Qurʾān* presents a number of negative moral agents who blindly follow the religion of their people and take their fathers as *qudwah* in the negative sense of role models (Q. 43:33).⁷¹² Those negative moral agents, who reject the message of God because of the custom of their father include a number of previous nations: ʿĀd, the people of the Prophet Hūd, (Q. 7:65-70); Madyan, the people of the Prophet Shuʿayb (Q. 11:84-95); and the peoples of the Prophets Moses, Noah and Ṣāliḥ (Q. 14:5-10). Like these nations, the *Qurʾān* presents the pagan Meccans as negative moral agents for refusing the message of the Prophet of Islam, as well as committing immoral actions, just because it is the inheritance of their fathers (Q. 11:109; Q. 6:148; Q. 7:28).

This notion of relativizing filial relations as well as defining the image of the moral agents based on their response to this notion is also reinforced in the *Ḥadīth* traditions, as will be discussed now.

6.2 Relativizing Filial Relations in the *Ḥadīth*

In additions to the *Ḥadīth* traditions that promote filial piety as discussed above (Section 5.2.2), filial relations are relativized in a number of occasions as will be discussed in the lines below.

⁷¹¹ Lane, *Lexicon*, 4:1668; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾan*, 93-94.

⁷¹² See Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾan*, 45.

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6.2.1 Ethical Norm, its Authority and Motivation

In the *Ḥadīth* traditions, there are two ethical norms that relativize filial relations: 1) to love parents less than God and the Prophet; 2) and the prohibition to boast about parents or to swear by their names.

6.2.1.1 Love Parents less than God and the Prophet

There is a prophetic tradition which states that no one believes until they love the Prophet more than their parents, children and all people.⁷¹³ The apparent meaning of this *ḥadīth* could be understood to negate faith altogether for those who would not love the Prophet more than their parents and the other mentioned categories.⁷¹⁴ This interpretation neglects that the negation form in Arabic could be used to deny the perfection of the negated subject, rather than to abrogate its connotation altogether as in the poem of ʿAbd Allah b. Jadʿān Al-Nahdī, the *jāhilī* poet, who said: ‘I am affectionate to ḥijāz and whole heartedly attached to Najd, and thus *I do not live nor die*’.⁷¹⁵ This verse by Ibn Jadʿān could not be interpreted literally as non-life and non-death could not be simultaneously accompanied, but it does mean that he does not live perfectly.⁷¹⁶

Likewise, the statement ‘no one believes’ in this *ḥadīth* could mean that faith would not be perfect until one would love the Prophet *more* than parents (and the other mentioned categories). This interpretation is supported by the fact that the essential condition of being a Muslim is defined in the *Ḥadīth* traditions to testify that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger as well as to perform prayer

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⁷¹³ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:12 (15); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:67 (44); Al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, 8:114 (513); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 1:26 (67).

⁷¹⁴ This meaning is echoed in a number of online English translations. See ‘Mishkat al-Masabih: Faith, Hadith 7,’ Sunnah.com, accessed January 10, 2024, <https://sunnah.com/mishkat:7>; ‘Sahih Muslim: The Book of Faith, Hadith 44b,’ Sunnah.com, accessed January 10, 2024, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:44b>; ‘Sahih al-Bukhari: Belief, Hadith 14,’ Sunnah.com, accessed January 10, 2024, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:14>; ‘Sunan an-Nasa’i: The Book of Faith and Its Signs, Hadith 5013,’ Sunnah.com, accessed January 10, 2024, <https://sunnah.com/nasai:5013>.

⁷¹⁵ Abū Ḥayyān ʿAlī b. Muhammad Al-Tawḥīdī, *Al-Baṣāʾir wa Al-Dhakhāʾir* (Beirut: Sader, 1998), 8:55.

⁷¹⁶ For more about this linguistic phenomenon (negation abrogates perfection) in the *Qurʾān*, the *Ḥadīth* and the Arabic, see Abū Manṣūr Al-Thaʿālibī, *Fiqh Al-Lughah wa Sirr Al-ʿArabiyyah* (Beirut: Iḥyāʾ Al-Turāth Al-ʿArabī, 2002), 235; Abū Al-Ḥusayn Ahmad b. Fāris, *Al-Ṣāhibī fī Fiqh Al-Lughah Al-ʿArabiyyah wa Masāʾiliha wa Sunan Al-ʿArab fī Kalāmihā* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1997), 199-200.

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and to observe the obligatory fast during the month of Ramadān, and for the rich, eligible people to pay the obligatory *Zakāh* (alms giving) and to do pilgrimage once in the lifetime.⁷¹⁷ Other essential requirements that are attached to the concept of *imān* (faith) is to believe in God, His Angels, His Messengers and the Books He revealed to them, His Decree and the Day of Judgement.⁷¹⁸ Since the commandment to love the Prophet is not included in all these traditions (about the essential conditions of Islam and *imān*), it could be interpreted as a part of the perfection of faith.⁷¹⁹

The type of this ethical norm (to love the Prophet more than parents) is *formal* and its motivation is *deontological* because it does not indicate a particular action to be required and it does not assign a compensation in consequence of its application. However, there is a *teleological* motivation that is promised by the Prophet for those who love God and His messenger more than anything else which is to gain the sweetness of faith.⁷²⁰

Like the *Qurʾān*, the *Ḥadīth* traditions declare such faith to be the new criterion of honour, instead of the *jāhili* tribalism, as will be discussed now.

6.2.1.2 Prohibition of Boasting about Fathers and Swearing by their Names

As noted above, the *Qurʾān* declares, in *Sūrat Al-Ḥujurāt*, all people to be equal given that their origin is the same, [that is Adam and Eve], and what would really matter is their piety and fear of God (Q. 49.13). This verse is quoted in a *ḥadīth* that is narrated by Al-Tirmidhī with a comment by the Prophet to state that God prohibits the arrogance of *jāhiliyyah* and its boasting about fathers, as people are classified by God into two categories: either pious believers or unprosperous sinners.⁷²¹

Commented [GB16]: But direct references to 'Eve' or Ḥawwā' are not contained in the surahs.

⁷¹⁷ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:11 (8); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:42 (16); Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 4:301 (2609); Al-Nasāʾī, *Al-Mujtabā*, 8:107 (5001); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 1:24 (63); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4:223 (4695).

⁷¹⁸ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:19 (50); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:36 (8); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 1:24 (63); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4:223 (4695); Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 4:302 (2610).

⁷¹⁹ In conformity with this interpretation, Al-Bukhārī cites this *ḥadīth* in a section in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* that is entitled: 'To love the Prophet is *Part of Faith*' (Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:12. Stress is mine).

⁷²⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:12 (16).

⁷²¹ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 5:242 (3270); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4:331 (5116).

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This prohibition is a *formal* ethical norm because it does define specific actions that would be prohibited, but it could be understood from the *jāhili* poetry where arrogance and boasting about fathers was common as in the poem that reads:

Tell Abā Masma^c a message from me that is transferred from one town to town to mildly reprove him as reproof revives the life [of relationships] between people,

You [Abū Masma^c] have allowed some people to enter [your house] before me while they do not deserve to proceed me [in any way],

If the tombs [of my fathers] and the tombs [of their fathers], are considered, I would have been considered more honourable and would be more far from the position of disgrace [unlike them],

So, I have decided to shift my request from your door to others [as you do not give me my rightful status].⁷²²

This poet considers himself more deserving than the others, merely because of the social status of his father and forefathers. This notion is abrogated by the *Qur'ānic* verse in *Sūrat Al-Hujurat* and the Prophet's comment on it to declare that the new criterion of honour and social status will be people's deeds, rather than their dead forefathers.

To stress this ethical norm, the Prophetic tradition states that God is the authority who presents a *teleological* sanction for those who would be arrogant or boast about their fathers; which is that they will be less valuable before God than a beetle. This compensation matches with an Islamic ethics, which is 'the compensation matches the nature of the deed',⁷²³ as the person who commits arrogance and seeks to get a status

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⁷²² Abū 'Alī Al-Aṣḥānī, *Sharḥ Dīwān Al-Ḥamāsah* (Bierut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003), 787.

⁷²³ For this rule in the *Ḥadīth* traditions, see Sumayyah 'Alī Laban, 'Bulūgh Al-Amal min Ṣuwar Al-Jazā' min Jins Al-'Amal fī Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyyah,' *Al-Farā'id fī Al-Buhūth Al-Islāmiyyah wa Al-'Arabiyyah* 23, no. 1 (2005): 467-546.

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above what he/she deserves through boasting about their fathers, they would get a lower status than what they are.

One of the practices of boasting about parents in *jāhiliyyah*, that is relativized by the *Ḥadīth* traditions, is to swear by them as in the poem of Al-Muhalhal b. Rabīʿah, the *jāhilī* poet, who swore by his father that he did not accept blood money for the murder of his brother, but he, and his people, avenged his murder through an intense fight that left many of their rivals severely killed.⁷²⁴ This practice, of swearing by fathers, is reported to have continued among the new Muslim society as in the story of ʿUmar of ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb who was heard by the Prophet swearing by his father. The prophet told ʿUmar that this practice is prohibited by God who alone should be the subject of oath from then forward.⁷²⁵

This prohibition is a *material, deontological* ethical norm for it requires a specific negative action (not to swear by fathers), without defining a particular compensation for doing so. This prohibition was justified by the Prophet that swearing by fathers used to be a practice of Quraysh [during their *jāhiliyyah*] and thus it should be departed by the new Muslim society. In response, ʿUmar of ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb declared that since he had received this commandment from the Prophet, he never swore by his father or quoted someone who did.⁷²⁶

Like ʿUmar b. Al-Khaṭṭāb, the *Ḥadīth* traditions present other moral agents whose images are defined according to their response to the commandments of God and the Prophet regarding relativizing filial relations, as will be discussed now.

6.2.2 The Moral Agency in the *Ḥadīth*

The *Ḥadīth* traditions present Abū Bakr, the companion of the Prophet, as a positive role model who loved the Prophet more than himself and his father. First, he left his

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⁷²⁴ Talāl Ḥarb, *Sharḥ Wa Taqdīm Dīwān Muhalhal Ibn Rabīʿah* (Beirut: Al-Dār Al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 1993) 41, verses 27-29.

⁷²⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 5:42 (3836); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1267 (1646); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 3:222 (3248); Al-Nasāʾī, *Al-Sunan Al-Kubrā*, 4:432 (4687).

⁷²⁶ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:132 (6647).

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father (Abū Quhāfah) and his daughter Asmā⁷²⁷ to migrate with the Prophet from Mecca to Medina.⁷²⁷ Later, in the story of the conversion of his father to Islam, Abū Bakr told the Prophet that he wished that Abū Tālib, the paternal uncle of the Prophet, would have been the one who accepted Islam more than his father because this would have been more pleasant to the Prophet.⁷²⁸

On the other hand, Abū Tālib is presented in the *Ḥadīth* traditions as a negative moral agent who recognized that the truthfulness of the message of the Prophet but refused to follow him to keep adopting paganism, the religion of his fathers. The Prophet asked Abū Tālib a number of times in his last illness to testify that there is no God but Allah, but Abū Tālib's last statement was 'I am following the religion of 'Abd Al-Muṭṭalib [his father]'.⁷²⁹

As a positive role model, the Prophet promised Abū Tālib to pray for forgiveness for him unless God would forbid him to do so which already happened and the *Qur'ān* prohibited the Prophet to pray for forgiveness for the unbelieving kins after they are known to be inhabitants of the Hell (Q. 9:113), and thus the Prophet obeyed such commandment.⁷³⁰

According to Al-Nasā'ī, the Prophet also obeyed this commandment once again to the case of his mother, when he sought God's permission to visit the tomb of his mother and to pray for her forgiveness, but God permitted the former and disallowed the latter. Al-Nasā'ī indicates that the reason of this lack of permission is that the mother of the Prophet had died as a nonbeliever as indicated in Al-Nasā'ī's heading of the section where he cites this *ḥadīth*: '[About Visiting the Tomb of an Unbeliever]'.⁷³¹

⁷²⁷ Sulaymān b. Aḥmad Al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabīr* (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, 1983), 24:88; Abū 'Abd Allāh Al-Ḥākim, *Al-Mustadrak 'ala Al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, 1990), 3:6; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad* (Beirut: Resalah, 2001), 44:519-520.

⁷²⁸ Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Amr Al-Bazzār, *Al-Baḥr Al-Zakḥkhār Al-Ma'rūf bi Musnad Al-Bazzār* (Medina: Maktabat Al-'Ulūm Wa Al-Ḥikam, 1988-2009), 12:296; Abū Al-Qāsim 'Alī b. Al-Ḥasan Ibn 'Asākir, *Tarīkh Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār Al-Fikr, 1995), 66:326-327.

⁷²⁹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:95 (1360); 5:52 (3884).

⁷³⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 6:69 (4675).

⁷³¹ Al-Nasā'ī, *Al-Mujtabā*, 4:90 (2034); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:671 (976).

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This indication is absent in the title of the section where this *ḥadīth* is cited in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* who puts it as: '[About the Prophet's Seeking Permission to Pray for Forgiveness for His Mother]'.⁷³² However, Muslim cites another *ḥadīth* that declares that the father of the Prophet to be in the Hell, but without suggesting any ethical norm regarding seeking forgiveness for him.⁷³³

The assumption that the parents of the Prophet were non-believers (and thus the Prophet was prevented from praying for forgiveness for them) is challenged by Al-Suyūṭī who rightly argues that the parents of the Prophet were living in the interval time between the Prophethood of two prophets (Jesus and Muhammad) and thus the *Qurʾānic* verse that would apply to them is 'And never We would punish [any people] until We send a messenger [to them in advance]' (Q. 17:15).⁷³⁴ In the same line, the Prophet's statement about his father in the Hell would be a reference to his uncle, probably Abū Lahab who was declared to be an inhabitant of the Hell (Q. 111:1-3). This conclusion by Al-Suyūṭī is rightly based on the possibility of using the word *abb* (father) in Arabic to refer to one's uncle (Q. 12:38).⁷³⁵

One further evidence on the salvation of the Prophet's parents is a poem that is reported to have been said by Āminah, the mother of the Prophet, in her last illness which reads:

If my night vision has come true...you [Muhammad] will be a messenger from God to the peoples...and you will revive the religion of your father Abraham...so I ask you in the name of God not to have loyalty to the idols with the people [of Mecca].⁷³⁶

According to this poetry, the mother of the Prophet, as well as his father, could have been adopting *ḥanīfiyyah*, the religion of Abraham, that had survived in Mecca during

⁷³² Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:671.

⁷³³ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:191 (203).

⁷³⁴ Jalāl Al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī, *Masālik Al-Ḥunafā fī Wālidayn Al-Muṣṭafā* (Cairo: Dār Al-Amīn, 1993), 15-18.

⁷³⁵ Al-Suyūṭī, *Masālik Al-Ḥunafā*, 52.

⁷³⁶ Al-Suyūṭī, *Masālik Al-Ḥunafā*, 70-71.

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the interval time between Jesus and Muhammad. According to this interpretation, the Prophet was prevented from seeking forgiveness for his mother because she was not liable to reckoning in the first place or to declare the superiority of God's commandments through the example of the Prophet, as noted rightly by Maḥmūd Al-Subkī.⁷³⁷

The detailed discussion about the salvation of the parents of the Prophet is beyond the scope of this study, but what relates to the discussion here is the image of the Prophet as a moral agent who is presented, in all cases, as a positive role model who seeks to visit the tomb of his mother and who wants to pray for forgiveness on her behalf until he is prevented by God. As for the application of the ethical norm (to pray for forgiveness on the behalf of parents) to Muslims beyond the case of the Prophet, it will be discussed in the next section of this chapter which is about the reception of the texts under discussion by Al-Sha'rāwī.

6.3 Al-Sha'rāwī's Reception of the Texts that Relativize Filial Relations

As noted above (Section 5.3), Al-Sha'rāwī uses *Ḥadīth* traditions as one of his hermeneutical tools to interpret the *Qur'ān*. Thus, in the lines below I will analyse Al-Sha'rāwī's commentary on the *Qur'ānic* texts under discussion, and his reference to the *Ḥadīth* traditions, as a case study for the world in front.

6.3.1 The Ethical Norm, its Hierarchy, Authority and Motivation

As demonstrated above, the *Qur'ān* indicates five ethical norms relativizing filial relations: 1) to give just testimony against parents (Q. 4:135); 2) to love parents less than God and his Prophet (Q. 9:24; 58:22); 3) to disobey them when their commandments contradict God's (Q. 29:8; 31:15); 4) not to boast about parents (during pilgrimage) (Q. 2:200); 5) and not to pray for forgiveness on their behalf if they are

⁷³⁷ Maḥmūd Khattāb Al-Subkī, *Al-Manhal Al-Adhb Al-Mawrūd fī Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Al-Istiḳāmah, 1933), 9:93-94.

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declared to be deserving of the Hell (Q. 9:113).⁷³⁸ The second and the fourth of these ethical norms are confirmed by the *Ḥadīth* traditions and the latter is extended to indicate the prohibition of swearing by parents.⁷³⁹ In what follows, I will analyse Al-Shaʿrāwī's comments on these ethical norms and their application to the world in front of the text.

6.3.1.1 Just Testimony against Parents

As clarified above, the *Qurʾān* directs a commandment in *Sūrat Al-Nisāʾ* to 'those who believe' to observe *qisṭ* (justice) and to be *shuhadāʾ* for God even at the cost of parents (Q. 4:135). Based on addressing the believers in this verse, Al-Shaʿrāwī interprets the commandment to be *shuhadāʾ* to mean the legal meaning of this word, which is testimony (even against parents), rather than the theological meaning of testifying that there is no God but Allah. This interpretation by Al-Shaʿrāwī is rightly based on the distinction between the *Qurʾānic* commandments addressed to '*yā ayyuha al-ladhīn āmanū*' (the believers) and those directed to '*yā ayyuha al-nās*' (all people), as the former basically denote detailed legislative issues and the latter denotes universal instructions such as the commandment to worship God (Q. 2:21).⁷⁴⁰

To define the *material* implication of this commandment, Al-Shaʿrāwī rightly applies two hermeneutical tools of interpretation. Firstly, he applies the hermeneutics of *ʿIbarat Al-Naṣṣ* (the explicit meaning of the text) 'which is based on the words and sentences of the text',⁷⁴¹ to confirm the explicit meaning of the text which is the obligation of giving testimony even against parents. Secondly, he applies what could be *Ishārat Al-Naṣṣ* (the alluded meaning of the text) which is 'a rationally concomitant meaning which is obtained through further investigation of the signs that might be detectable therein'.⁷⁴² Based on *Ishārat Al-Naṣṣ*, Al-Shaʿrāwī concludes another

⁷³⁸ See Section 6.1.1 above.

⁷³⁹ See Section 6.2.1 above.

⁷⁴⁰ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 1:185; 4: 2356.

⁷⁴¹ See Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 118.

⁷⁴² Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 119.

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‘implied’ *material* ethical norm that is children have to give testimony against powerful and influential people even when they know that their parents could be harmed in consequence of this testimony.⁷⁴³

Like *‘Ibārat Al-Naṣṣ, Ishārat Al-Naṣṣ* is authoritative, as noted by Hashim Kamali, ‘unless there is explicit evidence that indicates otherwise’.⁷⁴⁴ Based on this rule, Al-Shaʿrāwī’s *implicit* interpretation of the text under discussion could be challenged because there is another verse in the *Qurʾān* that command witnesses not to abstain when they are summoned to observe testimony... and no harm should afflict them (Q. 2:282). This verse could indicate that when potential direct harm could afflict witnesses (or indirectly through their families), then it could be an excuse for them not to observe testimony.

In all cases, Al-Shaʿrāwī confirms that failure to observe testimony (when it is direct or indirect) against parents would make a witness liable to the *teleological* sanction mentioned in the verse under discussion: ‘if you *talwuww* or *tuʿriḍū*, verily God is fully aware of what you do [and thus he compensates you accordingly]’ (Q. 4:135).⁷⁴⁵ Based on his use of the recitation of Ḥafṣ from ʿĀṣim, which is the common recitation in Egypt, Al-Shaʿrāwī rightly interprets *talwuww* to mean to distort the testimony and *tuʿriḍū* to mean to abstain from observing it.⁷⁴⁶ However, this excludes the implied meaning, noted above, in Ḥamza’s and Ibn ʿĀmir’s recitation of *talwuww* into *talū*, which promises a reward for those who *do* the testimony at any cost.

6.3.1.2 Loveless parents/Do not show Mawaddah towards Them

As noted above, the *Qurʾān* commands children, in *Sūrat Al-Tawbah*, to love parents less than God and the Prophet (Q. 9:24) and the *Ḥadīth* traditions state one’s faith would not be perfect unless they love God and the Prophet more than themselves their

⁷⁴³ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 5: 2709.

⁷⁴⁴ Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 120.

⁷⁴⁵ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 5: 2711.

⁷⁴⁶ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 5: 2711.

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parents and anything else. These two texts, as noted above, indicate a *formal* ethical norm because they do not require specific actions of this love. In his interpretation of these texts, Al-Shaʿrāwī rightly notes that the *formal* meaning of these texts needs to be qualified because love as an abstract emotion is beyond people to control, and thus, they are not able to define its level towards their parents on the one hand, and God and the Prophet on the other.⁷⁴⁷

Thus, to qualify the meaning of these text, Al-Shaʿrāwī cites a tradition from the genre of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation) which tells that this verse was revealed to address a group of Muslims who were living in Mecca and did not obey God's commandment to migrate to Medina to join the Prophet because of their love towards their unbelieving parents, relatives and properties.⁷⁴⁸ Accordingly, Al-Shaʿrāwī rightly concludes that the love commanded in these texts refers to what he calls 'the logical love' which regulates the actions of people and that demands a material ethical norm that is to give priority to the commandments of God and the Prophet over anyone and anything else.⁷⁴⁹

Likewise, Al-Shaʿrāwī uses another tradition from the genre of *asbāb al-nuzūl* to qualify the meaning of *mawaddah* that is prohibited by the *Qurʾān*, in *Sūrat Al-Mujādalah*, towards non-believing kins (Q. 58:22) and explained, in *Sūrat Al-Mumtaḥanah*, to mean loyalty (Q. 60:9). According to Al-Shaʿrāwī, the meaning of the prohibited loyalty, is to support the non-believing kins, as in the story of Ḥaṭīb b. Abū Baltaʿah, who leaked the information about the imminent expedition by the Muslim army to Mecca. When Ḥaṭīb b. Abū Baltaʿah's action was revealed to the Prophet, he justified this treachery that he was sure that this information would not affect the result of the war against the pagan Meccans, as he believed in the divine support for the Muslims. He explained his purpose that he only wanted to do a favour to the pagan

⁷⁴⁷ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 3:1419.

⁷⁴⁸ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 8: 4988-89. See Abū Al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb Nuzūl Al-Qurʾān* (Dammam: Dār Al-Iṣlāḥ, 1992), 245.

⁷⁴⁹ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 8: 4986.

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Meccans as a means to protect his Muslim relatives in Mecca, who were not able to migrate to Medina. The story continues to show that the Prophet pardoned him due to his precedent involvement in the battle of Badr and the *Qurʾānic* commandment has been revealed to declare that loyalty to the enemies of Muslims is not allowed or justified for any reason.⁷⁵⁰

By quoting another *asbāb al-nuzūl* tradition, Al-Shaʿrāwī notes that early Muslims responded strictly to these commandments that they thought all communications with their non-believing kins are prohibited, as in the story of Asmāʾ bint Abū Bakr who asked the Prophet if it was permissible for her to admit her (non-believing) mother in her house in Medina, when she came to visit her daughter. The Prophet responded positively, and the *Qurʾān* was revealed to declare that *birr* (filial piety) and *qisṭ* (justice) towards non-believing kins are permissible so long as they are not involved in wars against Muslims or forcing them to leave their homes (Q. 60:8).⁷⁵¹

Based on this tradition, Al-Shaʿrāwī interprets *birr* here to mean responding positively to parents after they request (as in the case of Asmāʾ with her mother) and *qisṭ* to mean providing them with their need before they ask.⁷⁵² This interpretation of *qisṭ* is established on one of the lexical meanings of the word *qisṭ* which is to divide one thing into parts or *aqṣāṭ* (instalments). Based on this lexical meaning, Al-Shaʿrāwī states that this verse would recommend a *material* ethical norm that is to give parents recurrent gifts (such as in the case of paying in instalments) without waiting them to ask to avoid them the embarrassment of asking.⁷⁵³

This interpretation by Al-Shaʿrāwī could be challenged from two perspectives. Firstly, *birr* in relation to filial piety, as noted above (Section 5.1.3), is defined by the *Qurʾān* to mean giving parents and kins what they could need, without indicating that this giving would be in response to their request (Q. 2:177), and this meaning is

⁷⁵⁰ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 24:15116-18; Al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb Nuzūl Al-Qurʾān*, 221-222.

⁷⁵¹ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 2:1173-74.

⁷⁵² Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 24:15127-28.

⁷⁵³ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 24:15127-28.

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confirmed by Al-Shaʿrāwī himself in his commentary on *Sūrat Al-Baqarah*.⁷⁵⁴ Secondly, the interpretation of the verb *tuqsiṭū* to be derived from the noun *aqṣāṭ* (instalments) is controversial, as the verb from the noun *aqṣāṭ* should be *tuqassiṭū*, but *tuqsiṭū* should be from the noun *qisṭ*, which means justice, as mentioned above (Section 6.1.1).⁷⁵⁵ Therefore, the commanded *qisṭ* here, in *Sūrat Al-Mumtaḥana* (Q. 60:8), would mean to do justice towards parents without further *material* implications defined in this verse.

However, Al-Shaʿrāwī's indication about the recommendation of the *material* ethical norm to fulfil parents' needs before they ask could be rightly applied to the *Qurʾānic* commandment, in *Sūrat Luqmān* (Q. 31:15), as will be discussed now.

6.3.1.3 Disobedience of Parents

As noted above, when either parent strives against their children to make them associate partners with God, the *Qurʾān* commands them, in *Sūrat Luqmān*, to observe two *material* ethical norms: to disobey them and to accompany them (*ṣāḥibhumā*) in a rightful way (Q. 31:15). In his commentary on this verse, Al-Shaʿrāwī confirms these two *material* ethical norms with further explanation of their implications. Disobedience towards parents in the case they coerce their children to associate partners with God could be understood, as rightly noted by Al-Shaʿrāwī, in the light of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* tradition that is relevant to this verse which is the story of the mother of Saʿd b. Abū Waqqāṣ. She vowed to starve until he forsakes Islam and converts back to paganism, and the *Qurʾān* was revealed to command Saʿd b. Abū Waqqāṣ to disobey his mother, which means to refuse her request to convert to paganism and to avoid being emotionally blackmailed by her.⁷⁵⁶

As for the second *material* ethical norm required in this verse, it is based on the commandment *ṣāḥibhuma* which could mean, given the Meccan context of this verse,

⁷⁵⁴ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 2:735.

⁷⁵⁵ See Lane, *Lexicon*, 6:2522-23.

⁷⁵⁶ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 19: 11647-48.

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to keep company of them by living with them in the same household in a rightful way, as noted above. In his commentary on this verse, Al-Shaʿrāwī extends the meaning of this commandment to be applicable to all parents in all times based on the general meaning of *ṣāhibhuma*, which means to treat them kindly in a rightful way, as if they were their *ṣāhibs* i.e., friends. This would suggest, according to Al-Shaʿrāwī, to fulfil their needs before they would ask, so that they would avoid the embarrassment of asking as ‘rightful friends’ would do.⁷⁵⁷ This model of friendship recalls the role model of Muṭarrāf b. Al-Shikhkhīr, who used to ask his friends to write down his requests for him to avoid embarrassment of telling them face to face.⁷⁵⁸

This rightful company would not include, as confirmed by Al-Shaʿrāwī, boasting about parents or swearing by their names, as will be discussed now.

6.3.1.4 Boasting about Fathers and Swearing by Their Names

As demonstrated above, the *Qurʾān* prohibits the *jāhilī* actions of boasting about fathers during pilgrimage and commands this practice to be replaced with remembering the name of God (Q. 2:200). This prohibition is extended in the *Ḥadīth* traditions to include all times and places, and it is also extended to include swearing by parents.⁷⁵⁹ Al-Shaʿrāwī confirms these two ethical norms to be applied to his contemporary time, but he qualifies the prohibition of swearing by parents according to one’s **intention**.

If someone swears by either of his/her parents in an assertive way, then the prohibition indicated in the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth* would be applied to the swearer in this case.⁷⁶⁰ Nevertheless, if they use the form of oath (by my/your father/mother) to indicate the meaning of begging, this would be permissible based on the recitation of Ḥamza of the first verse of *Sūrat Al-Nisāʾ*: ‘*Wattaqū Allah alladhī tasāʿalūna bihī wa al-arḥāma*’ into ‘*wa ittqū Allah alladhī tasāʿalūna bihī wa al-arḥāmī*’ (Q. 4:1).⁷⁶¹ The

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⁷⁵⁷ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 19: 11650.

⁷⁵⁸ See Abū Nuʿaym Al-Aṣḥānī, *Ḥilyat Al-Awliyāʾ wa Tabaqat Al-Aṣfiyāʾ* (Cairo: Dār Al-Saʿādah, 1974), 2:210.

⁷⁵⁹ See section 6.2.1 above.

⁷⁶⁰ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 20: 12733-34.

⁷⁶¹ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 20:12734; Al-Khaṭīb, *Muʿjam Al-Qiraʾāt*, 5:605-606.

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former recitation would mean ‘and fear God with whom you ask and fear [the rights] of you kins [by fulfilling them]’. Ḥamza’s recitation, on the other hand, would mean as rightly noted by Al-Shaʿrāwī: ‘fear God whom you use His name and the names of your kins for asking (begging)’.⁷⁶² This conclusion by Al-Shaʿrāwī is rightly consistent with a hermeneutical tool of interpreting the Islamic scripture which is to qualify the meaning of one text by another. In this case, the prohibition to swear by parents is qualified by the recitation of Ḥamza, of the first verse of *Sūrat Al-Nisāʾ*, to restrict the prohibition to the intention of assertive oaths and to exclude the oaths meant for begging.

Al-Shaʿrāwī uses this hermeneutical tool again to exclude non-believing parents from the *Qurʾānic* commandment to pray for mercy and forgiveness (Q. 17:24; 71:28), by the prohibition, in *Sūrat Al-Tawbah* (Q 9:113), as will be discussed now.

6.1.1.5 Not to Pray for Forgiveness for Non-believing Parents

As noted above, the *Qurʾān* commands to pray for God to bestow his mercy on one’s parents in reciprocity for their raising them when they were young (Q. 17:24). This commandment is qualified according to Al-Shaʿrāwī by the *Qurʾānic* prohibition, in *Sūrat Al-Tawbah*, that is directed to the Prophet and his followers to seek forgiveness for non-believing kins when it has become clear to them that they will be inhabitants of Hell (Q. 9:113).⁷⁶³ The qualifying sentence in this verse ‘when it has become clear to them that they will be inhabitants of Hell’ applies to the non-believing parents, according to Al-Shaʿrāwī, in two cases: when they insist on disbelief in God and when they die as non-believers.⁷⁶⁴

The first case mentioned by Al-Shaʿrāwī here is controversial, as it contradicts the action of the Prophet, who prayed for the non-believers who were fighting him in the Battle of Uhud to be forgiven, although they hurt him and his forehead was

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⁷⁶² Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 20:12734; Al-Khaṭīb, *Muʿjam Al-Qiraʾāt*, 5:605-6.

⁷⁶³ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 4:2216

⁷⁶⁴ ‘Tafsīr Al-Shiekh Al-Shaʿrāwī,’ YouTube, accessed January 12, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skta5HTDnAs&t=199s>.

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bleeding.⁷⁶⁵ Further, insisting on disbelief does not render a person to be an inhabitant of Hell given that repentance is declared by the *Qurʾān* to be available for everyone until they die (Q. 4:17-18), which is confirmed by Al-Shaʿrāwī himself in his *Tafsīr*.⁷⁶⁶ Probably for this reason, this case is omitted from the print version of his *Tafsīr*, which only keeps the second case i.e., to seek forgiveness for parents who die as non-believers.⁷⁶⁷

Like the believing parents, the non-believing ones, should have been included in the *Qurʾānic* commandment for children, in *Sūrat Al-Isrāʾ*, to pray for their [dead] parents, saying: ‘My Lord! Be merciful to them [my parents] as they raised me when I was young’ (Q. 17:24, Khattab), because all parents, regardless of their belief, could fulfil their duty of raising their young children.⁷⁶⁸ However, Al-Shaʿrāwī notes that non-believing parents are excluded from this commandment for a number of reasons. Firstly, according to Al-Shaʿrāwī they could raise their children physically, but they have no role to play in building their spirituality and their commitment to God, which is the most important element in Islamic upbringing.⁷⁶⁹ Secondly, this supplication is banned just to teach Muslims that the relationship with God supersedes the relationships with parents which is the locus of human relations.⁷⁷⁰

Further, Al-Shaʿrāwī rightly notes that the *Qurʾān* presents Abraham and Muhammad as positive role models for obeying God’s commandment not to seek forgiveness of their non-believing kins, as will be discussed now.

6.3.2 The Moral Agency

As noted above, the *Qurʾān* commands the Prophet and the believers not to seek forgiveness for their non-believing relatives (Q. 9:113). Al-Shaʿrāwī confirms this

⁷⁶⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:175 (3477); Aḥmad b. Ḥajar Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath Al-Bārī: Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār Al-Maʿrifah, 1959), 7/372.

⁷⁶⁶ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 4:2068-79.

⁷⁶⁷ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 9:5529.

⁷⁶⁸ See Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 9:5528.

⁷⁶⁹ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 4:2216.

⁷⁷⁰ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 9: 5528.

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commandment to apply to the believers regarding their non-believing relatives. However, he considers this commandment to the Prophet to be ‘hypothetical’ which means that if the Prophet’s father and forefathers had been non-believers, he would not have had prayed for forgiveness on their behalf.⁷⁷¹ This interpretation by Al-Shaʿrāwī is based on his presupposition that lineage of the Prophet up to Adam are believers. This view by Al-Shaʿrāwī is based on a *ḥadīth* that states that the paternal and maternal lineage of the Prophet is pure and thus they should have had been believers based on the *Qurʾānic* verse, in *Sūrat Al-Tawbah*, that declares polytheists to be [spiritually] ‘filth’ (Q. 9:28).⁷⁷²

This conclusion by Al-Shaʿrāwī based on this *ḥadīth* could be challenged because the context of this *ḥadīth* is about the purity of the lineage of the Prophet in terms of legal marriages, which is void of the ‘filth’ of illegal sexual relations.⁷⁷³ Further, the *Qurʾānic* prohibition for Abraham to seek forgiveness for the polytheist Āzar, who is defined by the *Qurʾān* as the father of Abraham, as both Abraham and his father are among the lineage of the Prophet (Q. 2:133). In response to this possibility, Al-Shaʿrāwī interprets the word *Abb* (father) which is used in reference to the relationship between Āzar and Abraham to mean ‘paternal uncle’ based on its use elsewhere in the *Qurʾān* by Jacob to refer to Isaac, Abraham and Ishmael (Q. 2:133), and the latter was Jacob’s paternal uncle.

As explained above, the discussion of the salvation of the parents of the Prophet and his lineage is beyond the scope of this study, but based on these conclusions by Al-Shaʿrāwī, he probably does not refer to the prohibition of the Prophet to seek forgiveness on behalf of his mother and Abū Ṭālib from his *Tafsīr*. Regardless of the salvific destination of the lineage of the Prophet and Abū Ṭālib, the Prophet is presented

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⁷⁷¹ Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 9:5528

⁷⁷² Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr*, 9: 5535.

⁷⁷³ See Abū Nuʿaym Al-Aṣḥānī, *Dalāʾil Al-Nubuwwah* (Beirut: Dār Al-Nafāʾis, 1986), 1:57 (15).

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as a positive role model who relativizes his emotions towards his mother and uncle for the sake of God in real situations, not hypothetical ones as suggested by Al-Shaʿrāwī.

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6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an analysis of the teachings of Muhammad that relativise filial relations (from the perspective of the world within and in front of the text) to fulfil the fourth exegetical task proposed in this study. In so doing, this chapter has fulfilled the gap in the literature about this set of texts which are virtually ignored in the literature about Islamic ethics and interfaith dialogue. Given some of these texts are usually used in the context of the inter-religious polemics of the ethical teaching of the Prophet of Islam, I will highlight in the lines below how the discussion provided above could relate to such polemical discourses.

Amon the texts that are discussed in the present chapter, Mark Gabriel criticises the morality of the Prophet of Islam for not seeking forgiveness for his mother and for not allowing loyalty with non-believing family members. This conclusion by Gabriel ignores the authority of the Prophet of Islam as human prophet who is acting according to the commandments of God (Q. 18:110), even if they were against his own desire (to seek forgiveness for his mother). It also ignores the possibility of the salvation of the mother of the Prophet, as argued by Al-Shaʿrāwī, which is a potential reason for not getting the permission to seek forgiveness for her. Even if withholding the consent from the Prophet to seek forgiveness for his mother because she was a non-believer, this could be understood as an example to obey God's commandments even if they were against one's desire. The *Qurʾān* commands children to show the utmost respect and obedience towards their non-believing parents except when they command to leave Islam, otherwise they have to only disobey this request by parents, but to keep dealing with them in the best manner.

Contrary to Gabriel's conclusion that loyalty towards non-believing parents is a general requirement, the discussion above has shown that such loyalty is prohibited when parents are involved in violence against their children and the Muslim community including fighting them or expelling them from their homes. Otherwise,

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the *Qurʾān* permits such loyalty and the *Ḥadīth* encourages the early Muslims such as Amsāʾ bint Abū Bakr to welcome her non-believing mother and to treat her good.

Further, Gabriel's conclusion neglects that the relativisation of filial relations in the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth* for the sake of higher ethical norms is not exclusive to non-believing parents. Unlike the Arabic tribal ethical code that stands for kin relations even they were wrong doers, the *Qurʾān* prohibits to distort or to abstain from giving just testimonies for the sake of one's parents as well as the other family members (Q. 4:135). In the same vein, Al-Shaʿrāwī extends this ethical norm to be applied to testimonies that could impact innocent parents indirectly, but this could be challenged by the *Qurʾānic* permission to abstain from giving testimonies when a harm could afflict the witnesses (Q. 2:282).

Moreover, the *Qurʾān* shifts honour criteria to be faith centric as it prohibited to boast about the achievements of forefathers during pilgrimage and to be replaced by remembering the name of God. The *Ḥadīth* traditions extend this prohibition to all times and places and to other practices to include swearing by parents. This general prohibition to swear by parents is confined by Al-Shaʿrāwī to the assertive oaths and excludes the oaths for beginning based on Ḥamza's recitation (of the first verse in *Sūrat Al-Nisāʾ*) (Q. 4:1).

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Chapter Seven:

Comparative Exegesis and the Practice of Scriptural Reasoning

This thesis has provided an account of the selective and/or superficial use of the sacred books in certain Christian and Muslim communities, whose aim is either to stress certain commonalities between the ethical messages of both traditions or to support polemical discourses regarding the Scripture-based morality of the ‘other’ (Chapter 1). On the one hand, those focusing on commonalities limit their attention to texts that promote ethical notions shared by Muslim and Christian traditions, but without including all such ‘promoting’ texts or considering the theological implications of those texts for the ‘other’ community. On the other hand, polemical discourses focus on texts that relativise a given ethical concept and, consequently, they neglect the interpretative potential of these texts, particularly when viewed from the perspective of the world *within* and *in front* of the text in each respective tradition.

This study also proposed that the practice of Scriptural Reasoning (SR), particularly in an academic context, has the capacity to overcome such limitations because the overarching aim of SR is to promote mutual understanding of the Scriptures in the context of interreligious dialogue. In addition to its function as a text-based form of interfaith dialogue, SR sessions can, particularly in an academic context, facilitate such mutual understanding because of the diverse religious and cultural backgrounds of its participants; such participants are able to engage in scriptural interpretation from the perspective of the world within and also in front of the text. This study has, nevertheless, also highlighted the fact that current practices of SR tend to lack a unified approach; such an approach is necessary to ensure that the same hermeneutical principles and standards are applied to the two religious traditions under consideration, both in terms of selecting and also interpreting the relevant scriptural texts. This is an essential pre-condition when striving for mutual understanding between interpreters. This study has therefore argued that a more unified - and unifying – approach can be achieved with the aid of well-established critical methods,

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particularly in the field of biblical studies, for the purpose of engaging in comparative exegesis of ancient texts.

This study has sought to fulfil two main objectives: first, to develop an effective approach for engaging in comparative exegesis of Christian and Muslim scriptures and, secondly, to use this approach to systemize and consolidate the practice of SR for the sake of promoting mutual understanding by adherents of both religious traditions.

In order to achieve the first of these objectives, this study (Chapter 1) has used the hermeneutics of comparison, with particular reference to ancient texts, to set the following parameters for the work of comparative exegesis: 1) decisions on *what to compare* (which, in this study, has focused on filial relations in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad as a case study for exploring textual tension in their respective traditions); 2) decisions on *how to approach* the selected texts for comparison (in this case, through the paradigm of the ‘remembered’ Jesus and Muhammad); 3) decisions on *how to categorize* the texts selected for comparison (that is, those that promote filial piety and those that relativise filial relations); 4) and decisions on *defining the scope of interpreters* (in this case, the exegesis of Al-Miskīn and Al-Shaʿrāwī on the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad respectively).

To apply the same standards of scriptural interpretation to the Muslim and Christian traditions under consideration, this study has used a modified version of Ruben Zimmermann’s *Organon* of ‘implicit ethics’ (described in this study as *Organon* 3) to compare and contrast the ‘promoting’ and ‘relativising’ teachings of Jesus and Muhammad on filial relations, and this from the perspectives of the world within and also in front of the text (Chapter 2). The hermeneutics of *Organon* 3 has so far been employed in this study to undertake four exegetical tasks that involve an examination of 1) the teachings of Jesus that promote filial piety (Chapter 3); 2) the teachings of Jesus that relativise filial relations (Chapter 4); 3) the teachings of Muhammad that promote filial piety (Chapter 5); 4) and the teachings of Muhammad that relativise filial relations (Chapter 6). The fifth, and remaining, exegetical task is to compare these

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various interpretations of the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad on the topic of filial relations.

The aim of the present chapter, therefore, is to accomplish the second objective as outlined above, which is to systemize the practice of SR by developing a model for preparing SR sessions and by formulating an exegetical approach that will support the actual practice of SR. For this purpose I will, first, use the hermeneutics of comparison to ensure that the same standards are applied to both Muslim and Christian traditions when it comes to selecting the textual material that will form the basis of the SR sessions (Section 7.1). Then, secondly, I will use the hermeneutics of *Organon* 3 to fulfil the comparative exegetical task that is required when conducting the actual praxis of SR (Section 7.2). At the end of the present chapter, I will identify certain opportunities provided by this study, but also some of its limitations together with recommendations for future studies (Section 7.3).

7.1 Preparing SR Sessions

It is significant to note that the existing (and published) guidelines for practicing SR do not outline the requisite criteria for preparing SR sessions.⁷⁷⁴ Rather, they only note that organisers of SR sessions should choose a single theme or figure that can be discussed during a single SR session or over a number of consecutive sessions. One notable exception, in this regard, is the website of the Rose Castle Foundation, which provides SR ‘text packs’ regarding certain common themes and figures drawn from the sacred texts of the three Abrahamic religions, such as Abraham’s hospitality or the theme parent-child relationships.⁷⁷⁵ However, while these texts packs identify relevant scriptural texts from each tradition, they do not formulate specific criteria regarding the process of selecting those texts.

⁷⁷⁴ See especially Kepnes, ‘A Handbook’, 382; Higton and Muers, *The Text in Play*, 93.

⁷⁷⁵ ‘Text Packs’, Scriptural Reasoning, n.d., <http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/text-packs.html> (accessed February 25, 2024).

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Building on the approach adopted in this study, it can be proposed that SR organisers could use the hermeneutics of comparison (HCAT) to set the parameters for comparative exegesis and discussion. This would ensure that SR practitioners compare ‘like with the like’ in each tradition, that is, in terms of identifying what to compare, how to select texts for comparison, how to categorize the selected texts, and in determining the scope of possible comparisons of the (later) reception of the scriptural texts in question.

7.1.1 What to Compare

As noted at the outset of this study, Christian-Muslim comparisons of the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad can be used (only) for the identification of commonalities or, alternatively, for the purpose of polemically motivated discourses. However, the character of such comparisons are not usually discussed in the context of SR sessions, probably because of the tendency among SR organisers to focus on commonly esteemed figures in Abrahamic religions, such as Abraham, Noah and Joseph. This is understandable to some degree, as SR sessions are usually undertaken by representatives from the three Abrahamic traditions; focusing on ‘shared’ figures secures a positive, and thus less challenging, basis for mutual discussion. In addition, it has to be acknowledged that the relevant scriptural texts are, in their entirety, too large in scope and complexity for them to be discussed in or two SR sessions.

Given their significance for Christian-Muslim relations and the frequent use (and abuse) of their teachings in different faith communities, this study proposes that organisers should consider including Jesus and Muhammad themselves as the focal point of discussion in SR sessions. In light of the wide-ranging traditions attributed to both figures, SR participants could be encouraged to focus on one particular theme drawn from the teaching of Muhammad and Jesus and then use that theme as a case study for facilitating a shared understanding of how to deal with textual tension (such as in the case of filial relations) in their teachings.

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7.1.2 Selecting Relevant Texts for Comparison/Reasoning

After choosing one theme drawn from the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, SR organisers, like scholars in comparative exegesis, are likely to face the similar challenge of needing to apply the same critical standards of selecting the relevant textual expressions, in each tradition, of the theme in question. For example, the Rose Castle text pack about parent-child relationships, which is highly relevant given the central topic of this study, only includes one reference to the *Qurʾān* (Q. 31:12-19) as a parallel to the texts selected from the Jewish Bible (Gen. 22:1-19) and the Christian Bible (Lk. 15:11-24).⁷⁷⁶ While the *Qurʾān* is undoubtedly the locus of the Islamic Scriptures, it does lack any reference to the *Ḥadīth* traditions, which form the other component of Islamic Scriptures.⁷⁷⁷

The absence of *Ḥadīth* traditions from the Rose Castle preparatory material may, implicitly, be the outcome of Western scepticism about the historicity of these traditions, something that would be challenged from an Islamic perspective.⁷⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the absence of *Ḥadīth* traditions does go against one of the central principles of SR, as rightly observed by Kepnes:

SR attempts to articulate and preserve the separate identities of each of the three religions as it builds a dialogue that is attuned to the pressing ethical issues of the contemporary world...Beginning with scriptures and following scriptural forms of reasoning, gives SR a way of preserving forms of religious expression that are unique to each of the three traditions.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁶ 'Parent-child Relationships', Scriptural Reasoning, http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/uploads/8/0/7/8/80786736/parent-child_relationships.pdf (accessed February 25, 2024).

⁷⁷⁷ See Chapter 4 (section 1.4.2) above.

⁷⁷⁸ See Chapter 4 (section 1.4.2).

⁷⁷⁹ Kepnes, 'A Handbook for Scriptural Reasoning', 372-373.

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Consequently, this study recommends that SR organisers use the paradigm of the ‘remembered’ Jesus and Muhammad when selecting texts from their teachings that centre on filial relations SR. This mnemonic perspective on Jesus and Muhammad focuses on the teachings of both founding figures in their *scriptural* forms.

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7.1.3 Categorizing the Texts Selected for Comparison/Reasoning

Since the overarching aim of the proposed SR sessions is to promote mutual understanding of the different religious traditions, including the textual tensions inherent in some of those traditions, this study proposes that SR organisers categorize the texts in question into the two sets of the texts that promote filial piety and those that relativise filial relations. By doing so, SR organisers can address, but also ultimately avoid, the limitations of polemically motivated discourses, that usually neglect the inclusion of texts promoting filial piety, and the polemical discourses themselves, since they usually avoid the relativising texts. This would enable SR organisers to avoid two further shortcomings, as attested in the Rose Castle text pack regarding parent-child relationships: it does not include texts that promote filial piety and it avoids those texts that relativise filial relations. Organisers would then be able to identify the scope of the *reception* of these texts to be discussed in the SR sessions.

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7.1.4 Setting the Scope of Reception/Commentaries

SR organisers usually choose traditional or recently published commentaries for consultation during the sessions; this is to enable practitioners to explore certain aspects of the plain sense of texts (such as their lexical meaning) or to highlight the their reception in one or more religious communities.⁷⁸⁰ However, as this is not always the case,⁷⁸¹ this study proposes that SR organisers identify analogous exegetical commentaries drawn from each respective tradition to ensure that reception-focussed comparisons are drawn from ‘like-with-like’ interpretations.

⁷⁸⁰ See Moyaert, ‘Scriptural Reasoning as Inter-religious Dialogue’, 67.

⁷⁸¹ See Ochs, *Religion without Violence*, 28-29.

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Al-Miskīn and Al-Shaʿrāwī have been selected in this thesis because they are contemporary exegetes belonging to the same (Egyptian) social context and can be considered representatives of their respective traditions.⁷⁸² Therefore, their exegeses of the texts under discussion are used as an example of how textual *reception* can play a more prominent and influential role in the actual praxis of SR sessions.

7.2 Systemizing the Praxis of SR Sessions

An SR session normally begins by allowing participants from the different represented traditions to comment on the ‘the plain sense’ of the scriptural texts from the perspective of their own tradition and then to allow other participants to comment on the same texts. This process can then be repeated in reverse order.⁷⁸³ The plain sense, as explained by David Ford, amounts to an exploration of the original meaning of the text in literal and metaphorical terms.⁷⁸⁴ Afterwards, SR participants are given the opportunity to go back and forth between the ‘plain sense’ of texts and their received meanings, either as presented in traditional commentaries and/or as discussed by the SR participants themselves.⁷⁸⁵

In such cases of SR praxis, there are no specific (hermeneutical) rules for interpreting the texts under discussion, that is, either from the perspective of the world within and/or the world in front of the text. It is left of each SR participant to use their own method and terminology of interpretation. However, based on his long experience of SR praxis, Peter Ochs observes the following pattern of interpretation that is usually applied by SR participants:

Interpretation is the means through which those who read or hear perceive different types and levels of meaning. They [SR participants] may, for example, distinguish intended meaning from received meaning ... They may also identify

⁷⁸² See further Section 1.4.4.

⁷⁸³ See Higon and Muers, *The Text in Play*, 93.

⁷⁸⁴ Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love*, 84.

⁷⁸⁵ See Higon and Muers, *The Text in Play*, 93; Ochs, *Religion without Violence*, 27.

Commented [CW27]: what does this mean?

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performative meanings—meanings that direct readers and listeners to do something—and distinguish many kinds, from physical actions to contemplative and interpretive behaviors, and many modalities, from subtle hints to interrogatives to commands.⁷⁸⁶

According to Ochs's account, the intended meaning and received meaning refer to interpretation from the perspective of the world within and in front of the text, respectively. What Ochs calls the *contemplative* and the *performative* meanings can, accordingly, be systematized with the aid of the wide-ranging terminology of *Organon* 3. The *contemplative* ethical meaning of texts in each tradition (that is, both their plain sense and received meanings) can be explored and given expression with support drawn from four aspects of *Organon* 3: the formal ethical norm, the authority and also the motivation of ethical norms, as well the incentives of moral agency. The formal ethical norm, as defined earlier in this thesis, refers to an 'ought to do' statement without reference to what needs to be done, that is, without specific *performative* implications.⁷⁸⁷ Likewise, the authority of the ethical norm has no inherently *performative* aspects but refers to what justifies its *normativity*; in addition, the motivation for an ethical norm conveys the goal that could be reached if that norm is fulfilled.⁷⁸⁸ The same can be said about motivation of the ethical norm and the incentive of moral agents. The former refers to the question of whether there is a goal to be reached when fulfilling an ethical norm (*teleological*) or whether this is not the case (*deontological*).⁷⁸⁹ The latter indicates whether the moral agent is fulfilling an ethical norm for its own sake (*autonomous*) or for the sake of an external purpose (*heteronomous*).⁷⁹⁰

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The *performative*-ethical meaning or significance of scriptural texts can, nevertheless, be found in the following three aspects of *Organon* 3: the *material* and *comparative* ethical norms, and also moral agency. *Material* ethical norms refer to

⁷⁸⁶ Ochs, *Religion without Violence*, 56.

⁷⁸⁷ Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically', 27.

⁷⁸⁸ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 65; Zimmermann, 'How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically', 31-32.

⁷⁸⁹ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 43.

⁷⁹⁰ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 75-76.

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those texts with *performative* meanings in that specific actions need to be fulfilled.⁷⁹¹ This also applies to *comparative* ethical norms for they indicate that the application of a specific ethical norm has to be given priority over other ethical norms.⁷⁹² As for moral agents, they are presented in scriptural texts to convey a *performative* meaning which is to *follow* the role model offered by positive characters and to *avoid* the anti-model provided by negative characters.⁷⁹³

All these aspects of *Organon 3* can be expressed in clear and direct language or by means of subtle hints. Table 3 summarizes significant overlap between the SR pattern of interpretation, observed by Ochs, and individual elements of *Organon 3*.

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	SR	<i>Organon 3</i>
Level of interpretation	Plain sense/intended meaning	World within the text/original meaning of the text
	Commentary/Received meaning	World in front of the text/reception history
The meaning of the text	Contemplative meaning	Formal ethical norm, the authority and the motivations of ethical norms, and the incentives of the moral agents
	Performative meaning	Material and the comparative ethical norms, and the images of the moral agents
The level of the meaning of the text	Direct commands	Clear ethical norm/hierarchy of ethical norms/moral agency
	Subtle hints	Implicit ethical norm/hierarchy of ethical norms/moral agency

Table 3: The overlap between the SR interpretation and *Organon 3*

⁷⁹¹ Zimmermann, ‘How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically’, 27.
⁷⁹² Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 53.
⁷⁹³ Zimmermann, ‘The ‘Implicit Ethics’ of New Testament Writings: a Draft, 414.

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Given this overlap with recurrent SR interpretative patterns, I propose that the hermeneutics of *Organon 3* can be used to systematize the actual practice of SR sessions. The aim is not so much to seek consensus on questions of interpretation, since agreement of this kind is not a pre-condition of SR praxis:

Scriptural Reasoning is a practice that is structurally sceptical, in a low key way, on the question if consensus on important issues is likely to be found. The discovery of common ground and the generation of consensus are possible outcomes, but they are not necessary conditions.⁷⁹⁴

Rather, this proposed approach would enable SR participants to identify together what they are looking for in the texts under discussion and how the language of *Organon 3* can also enable them to give expression to their *own* interpretations of these texts.

7.2.1 The Ethical Norm, its Authority and Motivation

If one categorizes scriptural texts about filial relations into those that promote and those that relativize texts, SR participants may accordingly be assisted to identify textual aspects that could otherwise be ignored if the focus was on commonalities or even stark differences. In other words, SR participants would be encouraged to acknowledge that both religious traditions indeed *share* the notions of promoting and relativising filial relations, with the result – particularly where filial relations are relativized – that the one is not compelled to denigrate the other tradition.

SR participants can observe, moreover, that the two corpora of sacred texts do in fact share a single *contemplative* meaning, and that is their shared recognition of validity of the Fifth Commandment of the Decalogue as a *formal* ethical norm (see Mk 10:19 par.; Q. 6:151-152). Nevertheless, SR participants may also note that a focus on commonalities alone has the potential to overlook the *performative* meaning of *iḥsān*,

⁷⁹⁴ Adams, 'Scriptural Reasoning and Interfaith Hermeneutics', 76.

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when associated with filial piety, in both the *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth*: to maintain the highest level of goodness, kindness and patience towards parents over a long period of time. It can also be observed that the received meaning of *iḥsān* offered by Al-Shaʿrāwī interprets the *performative* meaning of *iḥsān* in legal terms; ethical actions are defined as obligatory and recommended deeds so that *iḥsān* can indeed encompass both.

Focusing on commonalities can also lead to one overlooking a *contemplative*, and potentially controversial, aspect of filial piety in the Islamic and Christian Scriptures, and that is the authoritative role of Jesus. From the perspective of the plain sense of Jesus traditions, he is presented as a teacher of wisdom who interprets the Law from a twofold perspective: he confirms the importance of the Fifth Commandment among the socio-ethical commandments, but he also relaxes other Decalogue commandments, including sabbath observance (Mk 10:17-19 par.). From the perspective of the received meaning of the text, Al-Miskīn confirms that the socio-ethical commandments quoted by Jesus form an essential part of Coptic Orthodox ethics, although he stresses that what underpins Jesus' authority of Jesus is not only his role as a teacher of wisdom but as a divine agent. This particular aspect of Coptic Orthodox theology would be deemed controversial according to the Islamic Scriptures, which hold Jesus to be a human prophet (Q. 19:22-40).

SR participants would also note another, often overlooked, *performative* aspect of filial piety in both religious traditions, namely the *material* ethical norm not to insult one's parents. In addition to citing the Fifth Commandment during his controversy with the Pharisees (Mk 7:10 par.), Jesus highlights the Levitical prohibition to insult one's parents, otherwise one would be liable to the *teleological* punishment of being 'put to death' (Lev. 20:9; Mk 7:10 par.). This *material* ethical norm aligns with the teachings of Muhammad, which prohibits the slightest action of disrespectful speech towards one's parents (Q. 17:23) as well as indirectly insulting parents by insulting the parents of others (Kh. 5973).

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The *Qurʾān* and the *Ḥadīth* call for additional *material* ethical norms in the case of living parents, namely to provide them with financial assistance (Q. 2:215; N. 2532) and to respect their privacy (Q. 24:58-59). The *Ḥadīth* traditions, moreover, indicate that children should express filial piety towards their dead parents by honouring their memory (M. 2552 par.), by paying their debts (N. 2633), and by doing pilgrimage and giving charity on their behalf (N. 2635, 3664).

One further *performative* aspect of filial piety that can be identified in the teachings of Muhammad is the *Qurʾānic* commandment to bequest a part of one's property to parents (Q. 2:180). The received meaning of this commandment by Al-Shaʿrāwī may, in this regard, have *material* implications for Christian-Muslim relations; he restricts its application to non-Muslim parents, since Muslim parents may only receive an allotted share of the inheritance (Q. 4:11).

Commented [CW30]: You will need to explain this to me. Not clear at present!

7.2.2 The Hierarchy of Ethical Norms

SR participants can note the *performative* aspect of filial piety in the teachings of both Jesus and Muhammad in terms of hierarchical order. In Jesus traditions, filial piety is ranked above the socio-ethical commandments of the Decalogue, Jewish laws relating to ritual washing and also the *korban* vows (Mk 7:8-12 par.; Mk 10:17-31 par.). In the *Qurʾānic* lists of virtues, filial piety comes second after the commandment to worship the one God; this is given precedence over all social and human relations (Q. 2:83; 6:151-152).

Another *performative* aspect relating to the hierarchy of filial relations can also be noted, one that could again be ignored if one focuses only on commonalities: the relativisation of filial relations for the sake of discipleship (Jesus) and for the sake of the commandment of God and the Prophet (Muhammad). With regard to Jesus, polemical discourses claim that he undermines filial relations by promising the kingdom to those who leave their parents (and family members) for his (Mk 10:28-31) and by calling those who follow him to hate their parents (Lk. 14:26). Likewise,

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polemical discourses about the teachings of Muhammad criticise him for prohibiting loyalty to non-Muslim relatives and for denying forgiveness to his mother.

SR participants would be confronted with the fact that discourses of this kind neglect aspects of Jesus' teaching from the perspective of its plain sense and also its reception in moral theology. While Jesus' promise of the kingdom for the abandonment of family members is expressed in general terms (Mk 10:29-30), some textual evidence could undermine this conclusion. First, there are three *subtle hints* to indicate that Jesus' promise of the kingdom is not presented as a general incentive *per se*, but as compensation to disciples who are estranged from family members. The Gospel of Mark includes 'persecution' in the promised reward for leaving one's parents, which indicates that this is not regarded as a voluntary action (10:30). Matthew's redactional modification of an abandoned 'house' (Mark) to the plural 'houses' refers to children's properties rather than their families (19:29). In addition, Luke includes 'wife' in the list of the family members to be abandoned for the sake of discipleship (18:29); this suggests that they are not meant to be abandoned voluntarily, given that the Lukan Jesus does not permit optional divorce (16:18). Secondly, on one occasion Jesus gives a *direct commandment* to his first disciples to leave their father and follow him (Mk 1:20 par.), and yet later Jesus and his group return to the house of one of his first disciples (Simon) to take care of his mother-in-law (Mk 1:29-31).

Likewise, some of Muhammad's relativising teachings on filial relations are linked to perfection. For example, the literal meaning of an indicative statement in the *Ḥadīth* tradition (*lā yu'min aḥadukum*) negates belief for those who do not love God and the Prophet more than their parents (Kh. 15 par.). However, the linguistic form of this statement (a negative simple present tense) refers, in classical Arabic and *jāzili* poetry, to the actions of perfection (of elite believers) rather than to the basic requirements of faith.

As for the polemically motivated view that Jesus' command to love him more than one's parents (Mt. 10:37) and to hate them for the sake of discipleship (Lk. 14:26)

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are anti-familial, this ignores two of their significant *performative* aspects. First, Luke's underlying Greek word for 'hate' (μισεῖν) is used for rejection rather than for hatred (Lk.16:13; 14:26). It also neglects the fact that Jesus' command in Matthew (to love Jesus more than one's parents) is a redactional interpretation of the 'hate/reject' commandment. Hence, the *performative* meaning of Luke's commandment and its Matthean interpretation could point to the *material* ethical norm of giving priority to Jesus' commandments **when they are contradicted by parents** and thus the latter must be rejected. Al-Miskīn proposes that the commandment to hate one's parents reflect the emotional conflict experienced by those who are told that their love for Jesus should supersede their love for parents.

Commented [MOU31]: what does this mean?

SR participants can, similarly, be alerted to the fact that the commandments to love God and the Prophet more than parents (Q. 9:24; 58:22; Kh. 15) are to be interpreted in terms of giving priority to **their commandments over parents**. It also highlights the fact that Al-Sha'rāwī's *performative* received meaning is based on a legal rule that limits the ethical liability to one's practical actions, which are motivated by what he calls 'the logical love'. Accordingly, 'psychological love' is not intended by such commandments as it is beyond the control of children.

Commented [MOU32]: what does this mean?

The *Qur'ān* and the *Ḥadīth* also contain some *performative* aspects whereby filial relations are relativised to the commandments of God and the Prophet. This includes the *Qur'ānic material* ethical norm to offer righteous testimonies even if they conflict with the interest of one's parents (Q. 4:135). There are other *material* ethical norms that may have *performative* implications for Christian-Muslim relations within the family. The *Qur'ān* commands that one should disobey non-Muslim parents; this only applies when parents require them to leave Islam, otherwise they are to be honoured (Q. 29:8; 31:15). The *Qur'ān* also prohibits seeking forgiveness for non-Muslim parents after their death after it has been recognized that they are inhabitants of Hell (Q. 9:113). This may be relevant to the image of the Prophet's attitude towards

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his parents, particularly his attitude of not seeking forgiveness for her (as discussed below).

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7.2.3 Moral Agency

Imitating Jesus and Muhammad as role models is clearly required according to gospel traditions (Lk. 10:37) and the *Qurʾān* (Q. 3:31), respectively. However, certain aspects of their role as moral agents are used negatively in polemical discourses to designate them as *anti-models*, particularly when it comes to Jesus' attitude towards his mother and Muhammad's attitude towards his dead mother. In particular Jesus, as presented in the four canonical gospels, is subjected to critique for his action of keeping his mother at the door (Mk 3:31-35) and for his 'harsh' response when she asks him to intervene to solve the problem of wine shortage (Jn 2:4). To subject these traditions to criticism is to overlook certain factors. First, SR participants are encouraged to observe that Jesus' encounter with Mary in the Synoptic accounts has no *performative* elements, as the story does not develop any *material* ethical norms. The accounts do not indicate whether Mary and Jesus' brothers are allowed or disallowed from entering the house where Jesus is teaching. It can also be noted that Luke contains the *explicit remark* that it is the crowds who are responsible for preventing Mary from reaching Jesus (Lk. 8:19).

With regard to the received meaning of these Synoptic stories, SR participants can observe that Al-Miskīn, based on his presuppositions about the unity of the Bible, states that the crowd serves as the barrier between Jesus and his mother, even though it is only mentioned by Luke. Al-Miskīn also proposes that Mary is included in Jesus' new family not in her capacity as his biological mother but as the one who 'treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart' (Lk. 2:19).

In relation to Jesus' encounter with his mother at the beginning of John's Gospel, SR participants are able to note that, despite Jesus' apparently harsh response to his mother's request for him to provide wine during the wedding at Cana, the story's

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performative component reveals his obedience to her request through the performance of a miracle (2:6-9). In addition, the underlying Greek address for ‘woman’ (γύναι) does not necessarily have negative connotations. In the Johannine crucifixion scene, Jesus uses the same word (γύναι) in the context of respecting his mother and entrusting her care to the Beloved Disciple (19:26). As far as the received meaning of this story is concerned, Al-Miskīn underlines the symbolic character of the wedding at Cana wedding, which implicitly points to Mary’s intercessory role between Jesus (as bridegroom) and Israel’s running out of wine (salvation).

Likewise, SR participants can note that polemical interpretations of Muhammad’s attitude towards his mother, that is, refusing to pray for her forgiveness (N. 2034; M. 976), ignore certain important interpretative aspects of the world within and also the world in front of the text. From the perspective of the former, Muhammad is presented as a positive moral agent who *autonomously* visits his mother’s tomb and yet a prayer for her forgiveness is not permitted by God (N. 2034; M. 976). It can be highlighted that Muhammad’s authority (and identity) is as a human prophet rather than a divine agent who can forgive sinners (Q. 18:110). The Prophet’s appeal to pray for his mother’s forgiveness may, as indicated by Al-Shaʿrāwī, be due to her assured salvation.

Nevertheless, polemically motivated discourses also neglect the numerous moral agents that are present in the teachings promoting filial piety offered by Jesus and Muhammad. With regard to the plain sense of Jesus traditions, the Rich Man is explicitly presented (by Mark) as a positive role model for his observance of socio-ethical commandment since his youth (Mk 10:20-21). This textual feature is omitted by Matthew and Luke, probably because of the Rich Man’s rejection of discipleship. It is, however, affirmed by Al-Miskīn on the basis of his hermeneutical conviction regarding the unity of the Bible.

Unlike the rich man, Jesus traditions explicitly present the Pharisees as negative moral agents because they give preference to oral tradition about ritual purity and

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because of their abuse of *korban* vows at the cost of their filial duties (Mk 7:10-13). In contrast to the Pharisees, Jesus' disciples are implicitly presented as positive role models for the observance of filial piety; otherwise, Jesus would not have criticised the Pharisees for breaking the Fifth Commandment in response to the Pharisees' criticism of his disciples for eating with 'profane hands'.

SR participants can likewise note the presence of several moral agents as negative characters in Ḥadīth traditions as negative characters; these include Jurayj, whose unfilial conduct rendered him to trials (Kh. 1206). However, a positive role model in Ḥadīth traditions is one who observes filial piety and whose prayers are accepted when he is blocked in the cave (Kh. 5974).

Similarly, the *Qurʾān* presents a number of God's prophets as role models for their observance of filial piety: Abraham (Q. 14:41), Ishmael (Q. 2:127), Abraham's intended sacrifice of either Ishmael or Isaac (Q. 37:102), Joseph (Q. 12:100), John [the Baptist] (Q. 19:14) and Jesus (Q. 19:32). Among those moral agents, Jesus is of particular significance because his attitude towards his mother represents a striking point of contact between the New Testament (Jn 19:26-27) and the *Qurʾān* (Q. 19:32). However, it can also be noted in the context of SR sessions that this potential claim to commonality is limited to the *performative* aspect of Jesus' attitude towards his mother, namely in respecting and taking care of her. The potentially symbolic significance of Jesus' attitude towards Mary on the cross (thus marking the commencement of the *Church*), as argued by Al-Miskīn, undermines such a claim to commonality. Furthermore, the notion of Jesus' death on a cross is controversial according to the *Qurʾānic* account of Jesus (Q. 4:157).

In contrast to the image of God's prophets, the *Qurʾān* associates unfilial conduct with negative characters, including the son of Noah (Q. 11:42-43) and the one who disobey parents and denies the Day of Resurrection (Q. 46:17).

Commented [MOU34]: meaning?

Commented [GB35]: Who? Maybe explain the context?

Commented [MOU36]: sons?

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7.3 Future Opportunities as well as Limitations of the Approach Proposed in this Study

This study has outlined a new approach to how SR can prepare for and undertake comparative-exegetical tasks, giving particular attention to filial relations as a case of textual tension in the teachings of both Jesus and Muhammad. The proposed approach aims to promote the mutual understanding of Muslim and Christian Scriptures by applying the same standards when it comes to selecting and interpreting the relevant texts, and this from the perspective of the world within and in front of the text. For the sake of achieving this aim, this study employed the hermeneutics of comparing ancient texts (HCAT) as a paradigm to set the parameters of the comparative exegesis provided in this thesis and to systemize the preparatory task of potential SR. Further, this study has developed Zimmermann's *Organon* of 'implicit ethics' into what I called *Organon* 3 to conduct the exegetical tasks of the comparative exegesis and which also be applied to the actual praxis of SR.

Commented [MOU37]: You don't need all of this. You have already given an outline at the beginning of the chapter.

This approach, it has been argued, affords a number of opportunities for future research as far as Christian-Muslim relations are concerned. The hermeneutics of comparison could be used, for example, for the purpose of producing a comparative-thematic dictionary of the ethical concepts shared by the Christian and Islamic Scriptures. A dictionary of this kind would be used as a helpful resource for conducting comparative exegesis on the ethical messages of both Scriptures. In addition, the proposed approach can form the basis of potential 'text packs' that would facilitate the task of preparing SR sessions that focus on ethical questions in both sets of tradition. The hermeneutics of *Organon* 3, moreover, can facilitate Christian-Muslim comparative exegesis and SR for the sake of promoting mutual understanding of the two traditions.

Commented [MOU38]: rephrase this - try to offer something more concrete.

This is not to deny that the proposed approach does have certain limitations. First, it is an approach designed primarily for the benefit of SR sessions in an academic context where there is likely to be marked diversity among the participants. For this

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reason, the technical nature of *Organon 3* would prove to be challenging if it were used as a framework for SR sessions held in civic institutions (i.e., the worship places). A less technical version of this approach to reflect the varied contexts in which SR practices are held.

Commented [MOU39]: say something a bit more specific here - rather than 'less technical'

Furthermore, due to its limited scope, this study has only been able to consider one case of *reception* in each tradition in relation to the world in front of the texts in question. Further case studies drawn from different cultures and denominations should inevitably be considered over time.

The thesis, moreover, has limited its focus to two major religious traditions, Christianity and Islam, leaving aside Judaism, the other religion that usually features in SR sessions, and also the Chinese traditions (Buddhism and Taoism) that have more recently been introduced to SR practice. Future studies should therefore apply and/or to develop the proposed approach in a way that would accommodate comparative exegesis and SR practice in relation to all of these traditions.

Commented [GB40]: I still feel that more attention could be paid to the diversity of complexities of interpretations within Islamic frameworks, which rarely present as a unity due to multiple factors. The ideal does not necessarily match the reality at ground level. It would be interesting to test out the practicalities of this thesis - maybe that could also be a projected outcome?

Finally, social scientists may find the hermeneutics of *Organon 3* to serve as an useful tool for designing questionnaires and/or interviews that aim to measure the SR participants' 'understanding' of their own Scripture and also the Scripture(s) of others. Such data could be collected before and after SR sessions to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach in promoting the mutual understanding of Scriptures.