# Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*: From Benedict's *Rule* to More's *Utopia*

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*Thou shall love. But can love be commanded? That is one of the key questions that troubled Kierkegaard in the* Works of Love*. We learn from Saint Paul that 'no human being will be justified … by* works of the law*' (Romans 3:20), but what about the* works of love*? The law of love turns love into a duty. The worry about using the language of law to demand love is that it turns love from a free act to a commanded, and therefore compelled, act. The law of love is love bound by law. This paper examines how this puzzle about law and love is resolved in Kierkegaard's* Works of Love*, Benedict's* Rule*, and More's* Utopia*.*

Thou shall love. But can love be commanded? That is one of the key questions that troubled Kierkegaard in the *Works of Love.*[1] We learn from Saint Paul that 'no human being will be justified … by *works of the law*',[2] but what about the *works of love*? The law of love turns love into a duty. The worry about using the language of law to demand love is that it turns love from a free act to a commanded, and therefore compelled, act. However, this worry is, according to Kierkegaard, unfounded. The worry stems from a mistaken view that 'it is the law which restricts freedom', when the truth is 'just the other way: without law, freedom simply does not exist, and it is the law which gives freedom'.[3] If law is not a constraint on freedom but is the source of freedom, then love according to law does not detract from love being a free act. On this reckoning of law and love, 'there is no more conflict between law and love than there is between the sum and those numbers whose sum it is'.[4] The law of love is love bound by law: 'law is the plan, love the fulfilment'.[5] Love according to law is the most secure kind of love because it is not subject to individual whim. Not only is it the most secure kind of love, it is also the freest because it is no longer held hostage to emotions. 'Thou shall love' means I must love you regardless. That love is not even dependent on you loving me back. This love is free even of the beloved.

Kierkegaard compares the love of neighbour, as commanded in the Bible, to the love of one's friends. I love my friends because they are *my* friends. My friends are people whom I feel a special affinity to and express a special preference for. Aristotle thinks of a friend as a 'second self',[6] so the love of friend is really an extension of self-love. One chooses one's friends, although one should be careful not to overstate the extent of choice here. Friendship is often fortuitous. Friends are sometimes thrown together by the sheer force of circumstances. Be that as it may, one can readily admit the free choice that is involved in the selection of friends and in the love of them. The love of neighbour is at the polar opposite of the love of friends. One does not choose one's neighbour. 'The love commandment enjoins us to love the neighbour, who is not a particular individual for whom one feels some sort of emotional attachment; it is

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, tr David Swenson and Lillian Swenson (Princeton University Press, 1946).

[2] Letter to the Romans 3:20 (Revised Standard Version) (emphasis added).

[3] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* (n 1) 32.

[4] Ibid 86.

[5] Ibid 85.

[6] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr H Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934) 1170b: 'the virtuous man feels towards his friend in the same way as he feels towards himself (for his friend is a second self)'.



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simply the one who happens to present herself to you as in need of assistance … where it could be *any* person.'[7] Neighbour is anyone who is nearby. The love of neighbour goes against all our natural inclination. We love our friends *because* of our natural inclination, while the love commandment demands that we love our neighbours *despite* our natural inclination. Not only can the love of neighbour be commanded; it must be commanded. It is not something that we do naturally or spontaneously. If it is to feature at all in our practical reasoning, it must take on the form of a duty prescribed by law. The distinction between the love of friends and the love of neighbour illustrates neatly the distinction that Kierkegaard draws in the *Works of Love* between preferential love and commanded love. Preferential love is emotional, while the commanded love of neighbour is ethical. The former is normal (it is what we do naturally), while the latter is normative (it is what we do following a posited norm). Unlike the selective and exclusive nature of preferential love, the commanded love of neighbour is egalitarian and inclusive. Its inclusivity tends towards universality to encompass everyone.

Kierkegaard's theory of law in the *Works of Love* is illuminating, but it is scant on how law can actually work to command love. He has not told us how to operationalise this principle in a social setting. Law is a form of social ordering of interpersonal relations, and so is love. Therefore, if Kierkegaard's theory is to work, it must work in a social setting. It might be an individual attitude that one takes personally, but even then, it must be an individual attitude that one takes personally *towards others* in a social setting. As it turns out, this way of thinking about the value of commanded love — of love according to law — goes back a long way. We find it in Benedict's *Rule*,[8] and later, in More's *Utopia*.[9] Unlike Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, Benedict's *Rule* and More's *Utopia* actually lay out a blueprint of how it will work at a social level. They have an operational aspect. Benedict's *Rule* lays down the law for a cloistered community. The monastery is a foretaste of the kingdom of God here on earth, with an alternative vision of social order and communal relations. That alternative vision, writ large, becomes More's *Utopia*. That vision is expanded from a cloistered community to encompass an entire society, albeit on a secluded island. The commanded love of neighbour is central to More's *Utopia*. It is what makes it utopian. That love encompasses everyone in that society. One does not choose one's neighbour in *Utopia*. There is no choice. One must love whoever is there. Benedict's *Rule* has been actualised in the real world, while More's *Utopia* remains a work of literary imagination. This paper will examine how the law of love was first conceptualised in Benedict's *Rule* and More's *Utopia*, before it was subsequently theorised by Kierkegaard.

## I. BENEDICT'S ***RULE***[10]

When Saint Benedict wrote his *Rule* in 529 AD, after the sack of Rome in 410, it must have looked like the end of civilisation. The Roman empire was in decay, and the future looked bleak. As the world descended into the Dark Ages, the monks made a strategic retreat from the world. The monks left the world to the barbarians and cloistered themselves behind the walls of the monastery. Within the monastery, they dedicated themselves to God and made a commitment to one another to set up a new form of moral order, as the Dark Ages descended

[7] Robert Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation: Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) 209.
[8] St Benedict, *Rule of Benedict*, ed and tr Carolinne White (Penguin, 2008) ('*Rule*').
[9] Thomas More, *Utopia*, tr Clarence Miller (Yale University Press, 2014).
[10] Parts of this section are drawn from Joshua Neoh, *Law, Love and Freedom* (Cambridge University Press, 2019) ch 4. The interested reader should refer to this text for a fuller account of the emergence of monasticism and the configuration of values that monasticism brings together.

upon Europe. The utopianism of monasticism was a form of radical protest against the existing order of the world: 'Monks withdrew from the world to show how they imagined a perfectly Christian life should be,' as an earthly sign of the heavenly kingdom.[11] The early monastic code writers — from Saint Augustine to Saint Benedict — were the authors of the first rules that provided 'comprehensive rationalisations of behaviour and attitudes'.[12] The monastery became an institutionalised proto-utopia. These rules created a form of life, with its own form of moral order. Obedience to authority was a central feature of this new form of moral order. They saw themselves as creating the ideal Christian community here on earth. They created a separate world within the walls of the monastery. They provided those in the City of Man with a glimpse of the City of God.

The *Rule of Benedict* asserts its own supremacy, when it prescribes that 'everyone should take the *Rule* as his guide in all circumstances, no one must deviate from it rashly', including the abbot, who 'must be guided by fear of God and observe the *Rule* in all his actions'.[13] The *Rule* requires a total commitment to communitarianism. The monks possess nothing individually. The vow of poverty dispossesses them of their external goods, and the vow of obedience dispossesses them of their internal will. Thenceforth, whatever they own, they own in common, and whatever they will, they will in common. Monks create their own legal structure in the monastery. Their entire existence is regulated by the monastic code. The monastic code contains an 'imposing mass of punctilious precepts and ascetic techniques, of cloisters and horologia, of solitary temptations and choral liturgies, of fraternal exhortations and ferocious punishments'.[14] It dictates, sometimes in fine detail, what to wear and what to eat, when to speak and when to keep silent, what prayers to say and what thoughts to think. Every hour of existence is regulated, such that a monk's entire existence is given up to what the Church calls the Liturgy of the Hours. The prescribed prayers throughout the day and night constitute the Divine Office, which transports the monks to a higher time than the secular time of the world. Unlike the rest of the world that lives in secular time (the *saeculum*), the monks live in sacred time, for every moment of the monk's life is sacralised by its submission to the monastic code. Obedience to authority, entrenched in the impersonal code and embodied in the person of the abbot, is total. The monastic code claims to regulate, not only single acts and events, but the entire existence of an individual.[15] Their form of life is created by the rule of law.

The monastic code not only reshapes the monk's life, but it also reshapes his sense of time. The monk's time, structured symbolically, 'no longer matches with the one that regulates the universe of ordinary life'.[16] In the words of Paul, the monks are 'redeeming the time, because the days are evil'.[17] The monastic community is to be a perfect union in perfect time. At the heart of it is the division between physical work and spiritual prayer. When the hermits first went out to the desert, they thought that they could devote themselves totally to prayer alone. They initially, and naively, 'thought that they did not need to work,' for 'God would provide for their survival,' but the early Desert Fathers soon realised that 'they could not live as angels

[11] Enzo Pace, 'Seguy and the Monastic Utopia' in Isabelle Jonveaux, Enzo Pace, and Stefania Palmisano (eds), *Sociology and Monasticism* (Brill, 2014) 277, 279.
[12] Salvatore Abbruzzese, 'Monastic Asceticism and Everyday Life' in Isabelle Jonveaux, Enzo Pace, and Stefania Palmisano (eds), *Sociology and Monasticism* (Brill, 2014) 3, 10.
[13] St Benedict (n 8) ch 3.
[14] Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, tr Adam Kotsko (Stanford University Press, 2013) xi.
[15] Ibid 26.
[16] Abbruzzese (n 12) 7.
[17] Letter to the Ephesians 5:16 (Revised Standard Version).

and that work was a necessity for their material or biological survival'.[18] Consequently, time for prayer and time for work — *ora et labora* — were both institutionalised in the monastic rules when the first monasteries were founded. Although work responded to certain material necessities, it is also presented as a moral demand that aids the task of contemplation. Work is needed to control the desires of the flesh. The monks aim to achieve a total control of their natural impulses by living a methodical life, which involves the routinisation and rationalisation of work and prayer. The routine of work and the rhythm of prayer, as defined by the rules, constitute the regular life of the monks. Monastic rules introduce regulation, and hence bring regularity, into the lives of the monks.

The goal of this law-based form of communal life is grand: love as union, or more precisely, communion. Through this lawful form of life, the monks seek to be of 'one mind and one heart,' horizontally with each other and vertically with God. Augustine places tremendous emphasis on the quality of single-mindedness in the monastery, where monks have 'chosen to dwell with one accord in fellowship together under the same roof, to have *one soul and one heart* unto God'.[19] The *Rule of Benedict* is a rule of law, but at the heart of it is love. It is a law of love. As the Prologue proclaims, the restrictions contained therein are 'aimed at the correction of errors and the preservation of love'. 'With the inexpressible sweetness of love, we shall run along the path of God's commandments.'[20] In the chapter on the 'Tools of Good Works', the *Rule* says: 'Do not act in anger or harbour a grudge. Do not allow deceit to lurk in your heart, and do not make peace if it is not genuine. Do not abandon love.'[21] The monks might initially obey the abbot out of fear, but the goal is for fear eventually to give way to love, so that obedience will be out of love.[22] Reciprocally, the abbot should 'strive to be loved rather than feared'; even when the abbot is disciplining the monks, he should dispense punishment 'sensibly and with love'.[23]

The union of love is achieved through the authority of law, for it is law that creates the common life for the monks which makes communion possible. The other word for monasticism, *cenoby*, expresses this goal perfectly. *Cenoby* originates from the term *koinos bios*, which literally means the common life. The perfection that the monks seek is not individual perfection, but the formation of a perfect community. Monasticism provides us with a model of what a 'total communitarian life' would look like.[24] It offers us a glimpse of another world, with a different form of social organisation.[25] The monastic community has always been anomalous amidst the wider community, but 'in that anomaly resided its special function': its existence as an alternative mode of social ordering 'proclaims a challenge to all other forms of social existence' amidst the society of the fallen.[26] By setting themselves apart from the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of the polity, they create a separate and parallel community to that of the family and the state, but better, for theirs is a more perfect communion.

[18] Isabelle Jonveaux, 'Redefinition of the Role of Monks in Modern Society: Economy as Monastic Opportunity' in Isabelle Jonveaux, Enzo Pace and Stefania Palmisano (eds), *Sociology and Monasticism* (Brill, 2014) 71, 72.
[19] Augustine *Select Letters*, tr James Baxter (Harvard University Press, 1930) No 49, 377 (emphasis added).
[20] St Benedict (n 8) Prologue.
[21] Ibid ch 4.
[22] Ibid ch 7.
[23] Ibid ch 64.
[24] Agamben (n 14) 9.
[25] Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (Harvard University Press, 2014) 99.
[26] RA Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 1990) 81, 159.

## II. More's *Utopia*[27]

Is it possible for the monastic ideal to be turned into a political ideal? The features that are carried over from a monastic community to a political community cannot, for example, include celibacy for all. A requirement of celibacy for all would lead to the community disappearing within a generation — it would be a community to end all communities. Therefore, the transformation of a monastic community into a political community would call for the transposition of the values from a monastic community to a political community, without carrying over every single feature from the former to the latter. There is no real-world illustration of that transformation, so we have to turn to literary imagination to see what that kind of world might look like. For that, there is no better literary source than More's *Utopia*.

Benedict wished for the monastic community to be shining lights of civility amidst the darkness and barbarism that had descended upon the world.[28] These new forms of community would first, be a critique of the world, and then, be a model for the world. That wish is eminently Utopian, for that is precisely what Utopos did. Utopos, who founded Utopia, 'brought its crude and rustic mob to a level of culture and humanity beyond almost all other mortals', so much so that 'the neighbouring peoples (who at first ridiculed the project as silly) were overwhelmed with wonder and fear'.[29] Utopia is supposed to be a true *commonwealth* that is 'not only the best but also the only kind worthy of the name'.[30] Utopia, which is a model for the lesser mortals, is itself modelled on the monastery. For More, 'the ideal commonwealth was that represented by the monastery'.[31] More attributed to the Utopians many of the details of monastic life that he had learned from his time living with the Carthusian monks at the London Charterhouse.[32] The form of life of the Utopians mirrors the 'life in common', which is 'practised among the most genuine Christian communities,' ie monastic communities.[33] In the monastic tradition, 'sharing the same table, the same meals, taking part in the same manual or intellectual work, having access to the same specific tradition, using the same furniture and the same buildings' eliminates the need for private property.[34] When those features are transposed from the monastic community to a political community in Utopia, the hope is that, where there is no private property, everyone will dedicate themselves to the public good instead of private accumulation. Where everything belongs to everyone, 'no one is a pauper or a beggar there, and though no one has anything, all are rich': 'For what greater wealth can there be than to be completely spared any anxiety and to live with a joyful and tranquil frame of mind.'[35]

In the monastery and in Utopia, where everything is shared and held in common, there is no mine and thine. There is only ours. What is mine and thine is for you and me individually, whereas what is ours is for us jointly. In such a situation, Kierkegaard argues that the supreme virtue is love, not justice. Justice, at least in its distributive dimension, aims to distribute things

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[27] This section elaborates on an idea that was first presented in Joshua Neoh, 'Law and Love in Monasticism' in Zachary Calo, Joshua Neoh and A Keith Thompson (eds), *Christianity, Ethics and the Law: The Concept of Love in Christian Legal Thought* (Routledge, 2022) 79.
[28] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013) 245.
[29] More (n 9) 53.
[30] Ibid 122.
[31] Miguel Martinez Lopez, 'Utopian Happiness, Thomas More's Utopia and the Medieval Monastic Ideal' (2001) 8 *The Grove: Studies on Medieval English Language and Literature* 189, 197.
[32] PA Duhamel, 'Mediaevalism of More's *Utopia*' in RS Sylvester and GP Marc'hadour (eds), *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More* (Archon Books, 1977) 234.
[33] More (n 9) 117.
[34] Jean Seguy, 'A Sociology of Imagined Societies: Monasticism and Utopia' in Isabelle Jonveaux, Enzo Pace and Stefania Palmisano (eds), *Sociology and Monasticism* (Brill, 2014) 304.
[35] More (n 9) 130.

between the parties. Justice weighs and divides, and 'decides what each one has a right to call his own'.[36] However, if everything is ours, and nothing is mine or thine, then there would be nothing to distribute. There is no distributive work for justice to do. Ours replace own. In love, there is you and me, but no mine and thine, which is what makes love so counterintuitive. Claiming something as mine is the most intuitive thing for humans to do. One just has to observe the interaction between little children and their toys to hear their vociferous exclamation: this is mine! Because love is so counterintuitive, it has to be commanded. What makes me a thief is if I disregard what is thine (by making it mine), but what makes me a lover is if I disregard what is mine (by making it ours). A thief takes, whereas a lover gives. One is selfish, the other selfless. Greed is so natural that it has to be prohibited, whereas love is so counterintuitive that it has to be commanded. 'The more completely the difference of mine and thine disappears … the more perfect is the love.'[37]

Love is institutionalised in Utopia through the mechanism of law. The full title of Book 2, in which More describes in exquisite detail the form of life in Utopia, is: 'The End of the Afternoon Discourse of Raphael Hythloday about the *Laws and Institutions* of the Little-known Island of Utopia.'[38] More was later canonised as the Patron Saint of Lawyers. Like in Utopia, monastic life too is constituted by law. The *Rule of Benedict* makes the abbot the master of the monastery, but the abbot is not above the rule of law, for the abbot himself is subject to the *Rule*, along with all the other monks.[39] All are subject to the rule of law. The communal life, both of the monks and the Utopians, is 'embedded in a network of superior-inferior relationships,' in which the junior member must obey the senior member of the community, and everyone must obey the law.[40] Rules are enforced within a strict hierarchical structure of authority. Obedience to one's immediate superior and ultimately to the law is absolutely central. 'Pride must be eliminated at any cost by imposing obedience.'[41] Fallen human nature needs to have legal restraints to prevent it from falling even further. 'The only thing which could keep people from sin was a meticulously designed set of rules and regulations, constant supervision, and harsh punishment.'[42] The monastic disciplinary method, which is writ large in *Utopia*, prescribes major punishments even for minor infractions of the law.[43] This better-world in the monastery and on the island of Utopia is 'bounded on all sides by rules and regulations'.[44] It is only when human nature is kept in check by law that love can flourish.

Wootton argues that '*Utopia*, even though it contained no explicit representation of friendship, was a book about friendship,' for 'More regarded friendship to be the underlying, if concealed, subject-matter of Utopia'.[45] Wootton further argues that More had been inspired by Erasmus, who wrote that 'between friends all is common', and 'all citizens after all are one another's friends'.[46] However, this way of thinking raises its own conceptual problems. Recall the Kierkegaardian distinction that was raised earlier in this paper between friends and neighbours:

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[36] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* (n 1) 215.
[37] Ibid.
[38] More (n 9) 135 (emphasis added).
[39] Seguy (n 34) 313.
[40] Lyman Tower Sargent, 'More's *Utopia*: An Interpretation of Its Social Theory' (1984) 5(2) *History of Political Thought* 195, 202.
[41] Lopez (n 31) 202.
[42] Sargent (n 40) 209.
[43] Ibid 202.
[44] Ibid 206.
[45] David Wootton, 'Friendship Portrayed: A New Account of *Utopia*' (1998) 45(1) *History Workshop Journal* 28, 39.
[46] Edward J Surtz, *The Praise of Pleasure: Philosophy, Education, and Communism in More's Utopia* (Harvard University Press, 1957) 173, quoting Erasmus's *Apophthegmata* (1531); Wootton (n 46) 42.

friendship is selective, while the category of neighbour is universal. Treating everyone as one's friend would distort the very idea of friendship and conflate it with the category of the neighbour. In eliding the distinction between neighbour and friend, we will end up losing the distinctive concept of friendship. If everyone is everyone's friend, then the status of a friend would lose its special significance and signal attribute. Wootton's solution to this problem is to say that '*Utopia* portrays the spiritual identity of friendship in general, not of a particular group of friends'.[47] On Wootton's reading, *Utopia* is about the nature of friendship, but not about friends, because the exclusivity and selectivity of friends is missing in *Utopia*.

The better Kierkegaardian response would be to say that *Utopia* is about the love of neighbour, not the love of friends. A neighbour is anyone who is nearby. There is no choice in who is one's neighbour. The indiscriminateness in neighbourly relations cannot be imported into friendship. If there is no choice and no selection at all in friendship, then there are no friends. Universal friendship cancels out friends. The love of friends is naturally preferential (I naturally prefer my friends over strangers), in contrast to, the love of neighbour which is neither natural nor preferential (I must love even a stranger who happens to be nearby). The love of friends cannot be universal, whereas the love of neighbour, must be universal. The former is normal (it is what we do naturally), while the latter is normative (it is what we do following a posited norm). The love of neighbour has to be commanded through a norm, that is, it has to be brought about by law, which is how *Utopia* universalises the love of neighbour. No one is identified individually in *Utopia* — no Utopian is identified singly by name in the text — except for Utopos, the founder. They have but one shared identity: everyone is everyone's neighbour. The universalisation of the love of neighbour in Utopia is even more radical than monasticism, which is limited to a group of men, who have to be first admitted into the cloister. In preserving the cloister, there is inevitably a kind of selection process for the admission of novices. To be sure, an individual monk does not get to choose who his fellow monks are and must love whoever has been admitted, so in that regard, it counts as the love of neighbour but it still falls short of the universal love of neighbour in *Utopia*.

## III. Thou Shall Love

Through the two preceding sections, I hope to have shown, or at least indicated, how Benedict's *Rule* which inspired More's *Utopia*, provides a sketch of the ways in which Kierkegaard's idea of commanded love — of love according to law — can be operationalised in a communal setting, either that of a religious community (in the case of Benedict's *Rule*) or that of a political community (in the case of More's *Utopia*). Benedict's *Rule* and More's *Utopia* give love an institutional form. Given the close connection that I have drawn between Kierkegaard's idea of commanded love and monasticism, some readers might be surprised to learn that Kierkegaard himself was rather critical of the monastic movement, which he thought encapsulated what was wrong with the religiosity of the Middle Ages. As this paper started with Kierkegaard, this paper will also end with Kierkegaard. This final section will isolate the source of Kierkegaard's objection to monasticism and respond to that objection. In response, this section will show that, first, the objection is not directed at the notion of commanded love that this paper has argued is central to monasticism, and second, the monastic ideal can be stripped of its monkish garb in a way that avoids the objection and preserves the ideal. Thinking through these issues will illuminate the relevance and significance of the monastic ideal in the present age. One can embrace the monastic ideal of commanded love without becoming a monk, which was what More imagined for *Utopia*.

[47] Wootton (n 45) 43.

Kierkegaard's objection to monasticism is twofold. First, the retreat into a monastery is an abstraction from the concrete realities of life. Second, it gives religiosity, which ought to be inward, an outward expression. Let me deal with each of these objections in turn. The first objection ties in with Kierkegaard's philosophy of the self in *Sickness unto Death*.[48] The self, according to Kierkegaard, is a synthesis of the finite and the infinite. We are temporal beings with a consciousness of the eternal. The challenge of selfhood is to hold these two components, or points of view, together. The error of monasticism lies in its suggestion that 'that there was something in the finite world which could not be thought together with, or existentially held together with the thought of God', which leads it to 'break with the finite'.[49] This attempt to break with the finite goes against the very core of the Kierkegaardian idea of selfhood and represents an abdication of the task of being a self. Only God is infinite. We humans, unlike God, must come to terms with our finitude, and not escape it. We need to pursue our relationship to our absolute telos — the eternal God — from within our finite condition. 'The task is therefore to exercise myself in the relationship to the absolute telos so as always to have it with me, while remaining in the relativities of life'; 'the maximum of attainment is simultaneously to sustain an absolute relationship to the absolute end, and a relative relationship to relative ends.'[50] The relativities of life are the realities of life that confront the majority of humans, which the monk seeks to circumvent by literally 'cloistering' themselves. From the cloister, the monk abstracts from the realities of life. In regarding the realities of human life abstractly, the monk is in effect disregarding human life itself. The monk's 'inhumanity towards man is at the same time presumption towards God'.[51]

If the first objection is against the abstraction of monasticism, then the second objection is against the outwardness of monasticism, in a very particular Kierkegaardian sense of outwardness. Religiosity is an inward movement of the heart, for which 'there must be no distinctive outwardness as a direct expression'.[52] One's inner life should not be apparent in one's outward garb. There is no need to dress differently as a monk does. By living and dressing differently from the rest of the population, monasticism 'created for itself a conspicuous expression in a distinct and special outwardness'.[53] A truly religious person would never seek to draw attention to themselves. The true religious person would be inwardly extraordinary but outwardly ordinary. The error of the monk is that he gets the whole thing back to front: he seeks to look outwardly extraordinary. His outer robes might simply hide an inner hollowness. In the words of Kierkegaard: 'Just as the criterion of God's omnipresence consists in His being invisible, so the criterion of true religiosity is its invisibility, ie there is nothing outwardly to be seen. The god that can be pointed out is an idol, and the religiosity that makes an outward show is an imperfect form of religiosity.'[54]

Note that neither of these two objections — of abstraction and outwardness — undermine the notion of commanded love, of love according to law, which this paper has argued lies at the heart of the monastic ideal. One can avoid the abstraction by not removing oneself from ordinary life in the world. One can avoid the outwardness by not donning any distinctive garb. One can remove the abstraction and the outwardness, and keep the idea of commanded love

[48] Søren Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, tr Alastair Hannay (Penguin, 1989).
[49] Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, tr David Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton University Press, 1941) 422.
[50] Ibid 365, 371.
[51] Søren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way*, tr Walter Lowrie (Princeton University Press, 1945) 169.
[52] Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (n 49) 364.
[53] Ibid 363.
[54] Ibid 424.

intact. Doing so would preserve the idea of commanded love, but is there anything recognisably monastic left in this? Well, nothing external would be recognisably monastic, but that is the whole point. It would all be internal, or in Kierkegaard's terms, it would be an inner movement of the heart. All that is left is love according to law. Stripped of all the external trappings, one finally gets to the most significant contribution of Benedict's *Rule* to our understanding of law and love. The result is More's *Utopia*. More imagines the law of love at the level of an entire society. We might perhaps set our sights lower. If not the entire society, then in one's own community; if not in one's own community, then in one's family; if not in one's family, then in one's personal life. Even where it is limited to one's personal life, its value is not diminished, for it lives on in the personal attitude that one takes *towards others*. In this way, love becomes independent and free. 'Thou shall love' means I will love you regardless — irrespective of whether you love me back. My love for you is not dependent on yours for me. Instead, it is dependent on what the law of love requires of me. The law of love is ultimately grounded on one simple and straightforward norm: 'Thou shall love.' Where do we find this law? We find it in utopia. Utopia is, literally, nowhere. By being nowhere, it can be anywhere.