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"TO SEE OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US"

Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity

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Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self: Matthew's and John's Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus

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The first and fourth gospels' Jewish character and concerns have often been contrasted with their strident anti-Jewish sentiments, prompting somewhat embarrassed Christian interpreters, at least in post-holocaust times, to find ways of softening the impact of their vituperative rhetoric. One favoured tactic has been to distinguish between the Jewish people, the crowds, who on the whole are sympathetic to Jesus, and the leaders, who are hostile and so the butt of the evangelists' condemnations. Yet even a casual perusal shows that such a distinction does not really hold up for either work as a whole, even if it does appear to fit certain individual episodes or comments. Another approach has been to ascribe the anti-Jewish remarks to an earlier stage of the tradition and thus to exonerate the final redactor. But this merely puts the problem back one stage. Moreover, the redactor cannot be entirely free of blame since he has, after all, included the offending material in his work.¹ Third, in the case of the Fourth Gospel, the Jewish hostility to Jesus has been identified with that of the world, which is then interpreted existentially, following Bultmann.² But such a solution to the problem does

¹ For a recent discussion of such attempts in regard to John, and with a proposal along the lines of different attitudes reflected at different levels of the work, cf. C. J. Hickling, "Attitudes to Judaism in the Fourth Gospel" in *L'Évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie* (Louvain: 1977), ed. M. de Jonge, 347-354; also J. von Wahlde, "The Johannine Jews," NTS 28 (1982) 33-60. For a discussion of Matthew's views on Judaism, cf. S. Legasse, "L'Anti-judaïsme dans l'évangile selon Matthieu," in *L'Évangile selon Matthieu: Rédaction et Théologie* (Louvain: 1971), ed. M. Didier, 417-428; cf. also W. Pesch, "Theologische Aussagen der Redaktion von Matthäus 23," in *Orientierung an Jesus, Zur Theologie der Synoptiker, Festschrift für Josef Schmid* (Herder: 1973), ed. P. Hoffman, 286-299; E. A. Russell, "The Image of the Jew in Matthew's Gospel" in *Studia Evangelica VII*, ed. E. A. Livingstone, T.U. 126, (Berlin: 1982), 427-42. ² E. Grässer, "Die Antijüdische Polemik in Johannesevangelium," NTS 10 (1965) 74-90.

not consider that in John, the world is characterised precisely as comprised of unbelieving Jews. The text itself drives us back to the question of what caused this anti-Jewish polemic within the gospels, and to what social matrix it belonged. Therefore, it would be a false hermeneutic to try to escape the force of the Matthaean and Johannine invective either by attempting to exonerate the masses of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries from responsibility for this rejection, or by so de-historicising the actual confrontation that it ignores the clear import of our texts.

Our conference's overall theme has prompted the question which may serve as a new key for exploring the polemics of these two works and their intentions. It is a sad fact of everyday human experience, both at the personal and social levels, that our most sharply worded, slanted and in the end downright insulting statements are often directed at those persons or groups who threaten us most and impinge most directly on our own sense of identity by challenging our self-esteem. Precisely, it would seem, because it touches the very core of who we think we are, the threat which is posed by such "others" provokes a primitive, even violent response. This violence expresses itself in attempting to destroy the "other," at least at those points where the perceived threat is most real.³ This universal human experience had been thematised in the Greco-Roman world of our authors in a conscious set of rules for *vituperatio* which were learned in the schools of rhetoric and aimed at destroying the social and political *persona* of one's adversary.⁴ The Palestinian Ben Sirach, writing in the second century B.C.E., was equally conscious of the social implications of vituperative speech, as he repeatedly reminds his readers.⁵ It does not, therefore, appear too presposterous to

³ For a useful discussion of the literary expression of such ideas from an historical perspective, cf. R. C. Elliot, *The Power of Satire, Magic, Ritual, Art*, Princeton 1960.

⁴ Cf. M. A. Grant, *The Ancient Rhetorical Theories of the Laughable*, Madison, 1924.

⁵ D. L. Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education*, (New York: 1957). Aristotle, in his *Rhetorica* (3.19.1 and 1.9.41), set the trend for subsequent treatment by giving the following list of virtues that one should mention in a *laudatio*: justice, courage, self-control, magnificence, magnanimity, liberality, gentleness, practical and speculative wisdom. An evil character is proved by the opposites. These criteria had been developed at Rome by Cicero (*De Orat.* 2.43, 182 and 2.11, 45f). Cf. also the *ps.-Ciceronian* treatise on rhetoric, *Ad Herennium*, especially, 1.5, 12f.

⁶ Ben Sirach 5:11-6:17; 8:5-7; 28:14; 39:4-6, 10. These admonitions to moderation in one's speech and recognition of the social implications of the language of praise and blame may be due to the court provenance of the wisdom tradition, but they could equally well reflect Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions, given the deep penetration of hellenistic culture into Judaism as reflected in this work according to Martin Hengel's masterful analysis in *Judentum und Hellenismus*.

suggest that both Matthew's and John's vilification of Jews comes directly and immediately from their concerns to define the identities of the communities for whom they wrote. This contention could certainly look for support from recent studies of both works, stressing as they do the respective evangelists' strong community concerns and equally, their Jewish milieu. Their necessity to define 'a place on which to stand' within Judaism and to lay sole and privileged claim to it, would appear to offer an interesting vantage point for evaluating what we have called Matthew's and John's anti-Jewish rhetoric.

Choosing two early Christian writers for our exploration does not of course suggest that we are necessarily dealing with a common front against a common Judaism in these two works. There are at least some indications in each, especially in the treatment of the figure of Peter, that had they come into actual contact, the authors and their constituencies might have been only slightly more sympathetic to each other than they were to their respective Jewish opponents. Rather, the value of contrasting in the light of this paper's working hypothesis two early Christian communities which deal with similar, if not identical, social situations that touch them deeply, lies in illustrating the ways in which a common concern can work itself out giving rise to quite different perspectives both on the perceivers and on their opponents.

Community Building, in the sense of giving a group its distinctive identity within a larger tradition, has many different aspects. It must inevitably touch various levels of peoples' lives—the economic level, the cultural level, in the broad sense of values, attitudes and assumptions, and ultimately, the religious level. It is a commonplace of recent New Testament studies that these levels or perspectives interact with and influence each other, even if none of them should be collapsed into any or all of the others. For our present purposes it will be sufficient to concentrate on the following three aspects of this complex process. One, what role do the communities of Matthew and John ascribe to themselves as primary within the larger Jewish tradition? Two, within each group, how does this vision of its task shape the foundation myth in terms of its Jesus figure? Three, what typical attitudes are expected from the loyal adherents of each group, given the group's assumptions about itself and its origins?

1) Matthew

To state that Matthew thought of his community as having primarily a teaching responsibility seems like stressing the obvious when we consider the gospel's final commission "go make disciples of all the nations, teaching them . . ." (Mt 28:19). Yet we need to specify this role more precisely. The disciples are to teach all that Jesus "has

commanded" (*eneteilamen*). This points to the considerable body of teaching that Jesus imparts throughout the gospel, focused particularly in the five great discourses that punctuate the story. While these collections of sayings embody many different types from a formal point of view, at the work's close they are all categorised in one particular way, namely, as commandments. They are not proverbs, beatitudes, apocalyptic utterances or prophetic speeches; they are *entolai*, commands.

That this characterisation of Jesus' teaching grows at once from the Matthean community's own self-understanding and its perception of its various Jewish counterparts, emerges from a number of considerations of the work as a whole. The community has its own explicit rites of admission and rules for expulsion (28:19 and 18:15-19). These show considerable similarity to the Qumran and other sectarian halakha.⁶ For instance, those who are *fully* disciplined in the kingdom (*matheteutheis*), and so capable of carrying out the final commission (cf. 28:19), are twice designated as scribes (*grammateis*, 13:51 and 23:34). This designation is not found elsewhere for any Christian minister, but it is a characteristic description of a teacher in 2nd-temple Judaism. "Binding and loosing" (16:19 and 18:18), terms which have plenty of parallels in later rabbinic writing to describe an authoritative teaching role (but cf. already Mt.23:4), are used to describe the Matthean church's understanding of its own authorisation to teach.⁷ The community's piety has a distinctively Jewish spirit to it in its prayer, fasting and alms giving, yet it too is presented in terms of a set of commands defining Christian piety's specific character in terms of not doing what is done in the synagogues (6:2 and 5). The gospel's central notion, the kingdom of God (heavens), is itself the object of teaching and instruction (13:11 and 19). Knowledge of the kingdom defines the Christian scribe, "who can bring forth from his treasure the new and the old" (13:52). Matthew treats many of the disputes between Jesus and his Pharisaic and/or scribal opponents in such a way that, unlike Mark, his source, he vindicates not Jesus' authority but the Matthean community rule. Indeed in one instance (Mt.19:9) he appears to opt quite deliberately for one of the current

halakic opinions (at least as ascribed by later authorities) on the issue of divorce.⁸ In these disputes, Jesus appears as the Jewish authorities' teacher. When they call his ruling into question, they are represented as not understanding the Scriptures (9:13; 12:3.5.7; 21:16.42; 22:29.31). And on one occasion, they are represented as transgressing those Scriptures through their own tradition (15:3; cf. Mk.7:8).

This list, by no means exhaustive, should suffice to illustrate that Matthew's concern with teaching and his manner of categorising both Jesus and his disciples as teachers, arises directly from and is determined by other Jewish teachers' experience, the claims, piety and the mode of instruction, based on the common heritage of the Scriptures. But Matthew does not conceive of this teaching community as just one among many possible rivals; he wishes to make absolute claims for his Jesus figure and the community that is linked to him in its teaching mission. Jesus alone merits the designations "teacher" (*didaskalos*) or "master" (*katergetes*). Others are not to aspire to any such title within the community, even if they can be known officially as prophets, wise men and scribes (Mt.23:8-10 and 23:34).

The reason for this apparent discrepancy (within the same chapter) with regard to suitable nomenclature for those variously engaged in a teaching ministry is best explained in the light of the earlier presentation at 11:25-30 and 16:16-20. The former passage is made up in part of a Q passage (vv.25-27, cf. Lk.10:21-22) and in part by special Matthean material (vv.28-30) which by implication contrasts Jesus' teaching (his light yoke) with that of the wise and understanding (presumably the scribes and pharisees), who elsewhere are castigated for placing heavy and unsupportable burdens on men's shoulders (23:4). However, Jesus' disciples receive a special revelation from him concerning the Father.⁹ Likewise, Peter's confession of Jesus as "the Son of the Living God" is based not on flesh and blood but on a revelation from the Father (16:17). With these claims, expressed in both wisdom and apocalyptic language, the Matthean community lays claim to an intimate knowledge of the Father's will through its only teacher, 'the Christ'. Thus it seeks to invest its own teaching with special authority since its definitive instructor and guide is the

⁶ J. Gnilka, "Die Kirche des Matthäus und die Gemeinde von Qumran," BZ 7(1963) 43-63; C.-H. Hunzinger, "Spüren pharisäischer Institutionen in der frühen Rabbinischen Überlieferung," in *Tradition und Glaube, Festschrift für K. G. Kühn* (Göttingen: 1971), 147-156.

⁷ G. Bornkamm, "Die Binde und Lösgewalt in der Kirche des Matthäus" in *Die Zeit Jesus. Festschrift für H. Schlier* (Freiburg: 1970), 93-107; P. Hoffmann, "Der Petrus-Primat in Matthäusevangelium," in *Neues Testament und Kirche. Festschrift für R. Schnackenburg*, ed. J. Gnilka, 94-114; cf. especially, 101f. n. 29.

⁸ R. Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium* (Münich: 1963), 36-56.

⁹ The polemical, anti-pharisaic and anti-scribal tendencies of the Matthean redaction and location of this passage have been well demonstrated recently by G. Kinzel, *Studien zum Gemeindeverständnis des Matthäus-Evangeliums* (Stuttgart: 1978), 79-94.

mythical eschatological teacher.¹⁰ Within such a perspective there is no place for teachers who might claim an authority based on learning or tradition. Matthean teachers may indeed be called scribes, wise men or prophets, but by the nature of their community's founding myth, their task and function is inevitably seen as different from that of their counterparts in Judaism's other branches. Matthew, it seems, wants to make this point aggressively, and so the Christology of his work is developed to underpin its claims. Emmanuel, interpreted as "God with us", is the name of the child Jesus (1:21); he is present as guarantor of the community's decisions (18:20), and in the end, the teaching mission is based on his presence being continued to the close of the age (28:20).

From this founding myth of Jesus as the eschatological teacher whose messianic claims are authenticated through an appeal to the Scriptures at every stage of his ministry, Matthew draws very clear consequences for the teaching that is proposed in Jesus' name. Corresponding to the motif of Scripture's fulfilment throughout his career (which highlights its *heilsgeschichtliche* character), there is also the theme of the laws' and prophecies' fulfilment as God's revealed will (Mt.5:17), whose prophetic function is indicated by Mt. 11:15.¹¹

Thus, Matthew seeks to build his teaching on the inherited tradition, yet at the same time to supercede it. The scribe of the kingdom can bring forth "the new and the old" (13:52; cf.9:17), thus providing a righteousness that is greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees and which alone is suited for entry into the kingdom (5:21). The Scribes' and Pharisees' authority is recognised at one level because they sit on Moses' seat (23:2), yet their teaching is declared inadequate for the new situation which Matthew believes Jesus' career to have inaugurated (7:28). To be "perfect" (*teleios*), a Matthean solipsism among the Synoptists (5:38; 19:21), is the attainable ideal only for those who call God, Father (that is, the disciples of Jesus, cf.6:10), and who are prepared to follow Jesus' radical ideal no matter how meticulous their observance of the old may have been.

It is because of these claims to a higher ethical standard based on

¹⁰ Cf. H. Teeple, *The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet*, JBL Monographs X, (Philadelphia: 1957), and more recently, T. Donaldson, "Moses Typology and the Setting of early Christian anti-Judaism: A Study of Acts 7" JSNT 12 (1981) 27-52, have highlighted the evidence for this understanding of Moses as the end-time teacher in Second-Temple Jewish literature of various strands.

¹¹ J. Meier's treatment of this passage from the point of view of Matthean redaction seems the most satisfying to me. Cf. his *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel* (Berkeley 1976), and more briefly, *The Vision of Matthew*, Paulist 1978, 222-229.

the eschatological-teacher myth in which its life and beliefs are grounded that the Matthean community can make absolutist claims on its own behalf with regard both to the inheritance and the future of Israel. As we shall see, unlike John our author persists in using Israel as the designation for Judaism in a global sense during the actual ministry of Jesus (10:56; 15:24). But this is only to point up its failures and its tragedy; failure in fruit-bearing means the transference of the kingdom to another *ethnos* (21:43) and leads ultimately to the tragedy of an abandoned house that remains deserted (23:38f) as unrepentant Israel finds no place at the eschatological banquet with its own patriarchs (8:10f). Being a son of Abraham does not count now (3:9) since sons of the kingdom are recognised not by birth but by faith in Jesus as God's eschatological teacher that leads to doing the Father's will as he has defined it (cf.17:26; 12:50; 21:31). For Matthew, confirmation of this understanding of his community's substitution for Israel and so validation for its foundation myth is seen in the fact that Israel's official death-wish (27:25) has been confirmed in his own generation (23:34,36) by the king's destruction of his rebellious city (22:7).

2) John

When the first and fourth gospels are examined under the rubric of "Jewish concerns," of the many possible contrasts between them, the absence of detailed treatment of Jewish legal issues in the latter work is the most striking. Twice a sabbath healing is the occasion to trigger off a dispute between Jesus and his Jewish opponents. Yet that issue is very quickly passed over for the one central to the whole gospel, namely, Jesus' authority and theological claim to be equal to God (5:10f; 9:14; cf.7:19ff).¹² It is all the more significant, therefore, to find it repeatedly stressed that Jesus' opponents are observant Jews in the strict sense and judge him accordingly—they claim he cannot be from God on the grounds that he does not observe the sabbath (9:10). In IV.8.6 Jesus is to be stoned not for violation of the sabbath, but for blasphemy (10:30-34; cf.8:59; 11:8), and the people who are sympathetic to him are to be excommunicated from the synagogue (9:22; 12:42; 16:2). In the opponents' eyes there can be only this one explanation for such naïveté: "this people who do not know the law are accused" (7:49). On the other hand, since the opponents have heard from the law that the Messiah lives for ever, how can Jesus say

¹² S. Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, NT Suppl XLII (Leiden: 1975), especially 9-63.

that the Son of man must be raised up (12:34)? They have a law and according to that law Jesus should die (19:7), but they themselves cannot enter the Praetorium lest they become defiled and cannot celebrate Passover (18:28, cf. 19:31). It is not that the disciples of Jesus are made to espouse an antinomian position against these opponents within the gospel. While the Johannine Jesus gives just one commandment (*entolē*), namely to love the brother (13:34), elsewhere (14:15-21; 15:10) this is designated by the plural (*entolai*), but these are nowhere spelled out, least of all by the development of a distinctive *halakha* as in Matthew.¹³ Whatever the range of concerns covered by such commands, the author(s) of the Fourth Gospel show no desire to derive them from Scripture as a way of countering their opponents' legal orientation. Yet such a holding back does not mean that the fourth gospel is totally removed from the sphere of Jewish concerns. Quite the contrary, as we shall see. What it does suggest, however, is that the Johannine community has adopted a strategy quite different to Matthew's in order to establish its own claims. It has no desire to define itself as an alternative to those branches of Judaism that were making or had made Pentateuchal law the corner stone for their edifice. The silence is deafening; it is as though there is a conscious attempt to destroy the opponents' world by refusing to take it seriously.

The way the Johannine community has developed its own foundation myth, which Wayne Meeks has so impressively developed in relation to the group's attitude to "the world" as represented by the Jews, corresponds to this stance. However, it seems possible to take Meek's insight further by focussing on aspects of the Johannine Christ myth other than the ascent/descent motif. Meek's article touches on these but does not develop them.¹⁴ Of course we are dealing with a highly complex picture. Strands of varying hues from various backgrounds—Jewish, Gnostic, hellenistic—are all interwoven to present a Christ myth that underpins a community that is turned in on itself, that has a high consciousness of its own identity, and which has separated itself from the world, from Judaism and, it seems, even from other Christian groups.¹⁵ Nevertheless, by focussing on certain di-

mensions of the Johannine Christ myth that can with some confidence be identified as Jewish, we should manage to detect the points at which the community wishes either to be reassured in its own claims or rejects those of rival groupings. As Nils Dahl reminds us, it is as "the Jews" that the Johannine community characterises the unbelieving world, particularly since it is excluded from the synagogue. There is an almost universal consensus that the Johannine writings took final shape within the context of a dispute with Jamnia Judaism.¹⁶

Because John contrasts so strikingly with Matthew in the place it gives to the law in its community, it is particularly instructive to see John's treatment of Moses, (and indeed other figures of the ancient Scriptures, generally) in relation to the Christ figure. Unlike Matthew, John recognizes no law or prophets to be fulfilled. Rather, they are witnesses to Christ who can now be called in evidence to the great *krisis* that Jesus' ministry initiates. Already 1:16f. strikes a critical note of contrast between "law given to Moses" and "grace and truth through Jesus Christ," even if the *charin anti charitos* of the previous verse could arguably be taken to suggest a synthetic rather than an antithetic parallelism.¹⁷ Subsequently, there is no independent value ascribed to the Mosaic law, least of all as a revelation of the divine will; the Scriptures are not a source of eternal life as the Jews think, but only a witness to Christ (1:45 and 5:39). Hence, there is no desire to develop a set of observances based on those Scriptures. Jesus' command is new, not a combination of the new and the old, and it is specifically his (cf. 15:12). The law, on the other hand, is theirs. Since they have so badly misunderstood the Law (that is the Scriptures), Moses, as author of the Scriptures ("he wrote of me" 5:40), will be their accuser (5:45). So their appeal to him against "this man" as to one to whom God spoke is tragically pointless and mistaken (9:28f). Indeed, they so totally misunderstand Moses' role as witness to Christ that their refusal to believe in Jesus implies they never really shared

¹³ Pancaro (*Laio*, 445-51), and others see here a conscious use of Deuteronomic legal terminology, especially the oscillation between *entolē* (singular) and *entolai* (plural). The absence of any specific legal enactments against such a background only helps to highlight the provocative nature of the assertions in Jewish ears.

¹⁴ W. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *JBL* 91 (1972) 44-72.

¹⁵ G. McAra, "The Fourth Gospel and *Religionsgeschichte*," *CBQ* 32 (1970) 13-24; D. Moody Smith, "Johannine Christianity: Some Reflections on its character and delineation," *NTS* 21 (1975) 222-248.

¹⁶ The Johannine Church and History," reprinted in N. Dahl, *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1976, 99-119, especially 111. There is widespread acceptance of J. L. Martyn's conclusions about the influence of the expulsion from the certain aspects of his argument. Cf. his *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, Rev. ed. (Nashville: 1979).

¹⁷ H. Thyen, "Das Heil Kommt von den Juden," in D. Lühmann and G. Strecker, eds., *Kirche, Festschrift für G. Bornkamm*, 185-204, especially 173f. argues for a synthetic parallelism in line with the whole positive tone of his article in regard to the Johannine Jews; Pancaro, *Laio* 539f. argues for an antithetic understanding of law and gospel both in this verse and elsewhere in John.

in the Sinai revelation (5:37). On one occasion, it is conceded that Moses has given the Jews the law only to accuse these law-observant people of never having kept it (7:19).¹⁸ Thus the authority of Moses and Abraham, Isaiah, Jacob and the prophets as representative figures in the Jewish tradition relates to their witnessing to Christ and authenticating his claims as the sole revealer of the Father. Consequently, any Jewish tradition that might seek to build itself on their foundation is seriously misled and can make no claim to the truth.¹⁹

In this exclusive and absolute role of the Johannine Christ figure within the Jewish tradition many different strands of that tradition—wisdom, cultic, mystical—are appropriated, sometimes positively, sometimes negatively. But it is in relation to the legal tradition as represented by Moses that one detects at once the most urgent, and therefore the most polemical thrust. Yet it is this very claim, based on a Christocentric view of history, that determines the community's own stance. It alone is Israel, not the new or the replacement Israel, but simply Israel (1:31.50; 3:10; 12:13; cf. 1:48), the community of Jesus' disciples who have accepted him as the revelation of the Father's *doxa* (cf. 2:11). Over against this community of believers are "the Jews," those who form a solid block of opposition to Jesus and to his community throughout the work and who, on one occasion, pointedly call themselves disciples of Moses (9:28).¹⁹ Not that Jews are excluded from Israel; in the Johannine perspective, Jesus' redemptive death ensures that the whole nation will not perish (11:52). Moreover there are others who wish to come to Jesus but for "fear of the Jews" only secretly (7:13; 9:22; 11:7f; 19:38; 20:19).

Foremost among these is surely Nicodemus, a teacher in Israel (3:10) who comes to Jesus by night (3:2; 19:39), shows an initial faith

¹⁸ A more detailed investigation of the treatment of these central figures from Israel's history (Abraham, Jacob, Moses and Isaiah e.g. in the Fourth Gospel) would show that the colouring comes from Jewish traditions other than the legal one, ranging from dissident (Samaritan) to fringe (Merkavah), as has been shown by such a wide range of Johannine scholars as Moody Smith, Dahl, Meeks, Brown, Schnackenburg, and Thyen. However, this fact only highlights "the inherently conflictual situation" (Moody Smith, cf. note 15 above) that has been taken into a Christian context from Judaism and underlines the polemical intentions of John in regard to the legal traditions and its exponents.

¹⁹ M. Lowe's attempt in "Who were the *IOUDAIOT*?" (NT 18[1976] 101-130) to give the term a purely geographical meaning of Judeans is, in my view, unsuccessful in the end. Nor is the term used in a purely negative sense, *pse* Grässer, "Antijudaismus," 76f; S. Pancaro, "The Church and Israel in St. John's Gospel," NTS 21(1975) 386-405, especially 401, is more nuanced in distinguishing positive, negative and neutral uses of the term "the Jews" in John.

in him, but in the end seems to be on the wrong side of the sharp line separating Jesus' true believers from all those who can be designated as simply "the world". Nicodemus has a representative role for all those "Jews" (in a neutral sense), both leaders and ordinary people, who are sympathetic to Jesus but who earn the following highly ironic, yet negative judgment from the evangelist: "they preferred the respect (*doxa*) of men to the glory (*doxa*) of God" (12:43; cf. 5:44). But it is Nicodemus' characterization that is particularly significant in our present context. Initially, he is described by the evangelist rather pleonastically and with some foreboding as "a man of the Pharisees and a ruler (*archon*) of the Jews. This suggests that "are you a teacher in Israel?" the question Jesus directs at Nicodemus has an ironic intention (cf. 3:10). At 7:50-52 he is one of those Pharisees who pride themselves on their knowledge of the law. Yet he challenges his fellows to act according to that law by giving Jesus a hearing, only to have the derisive name 'Galilean' hurled at him. Then at 19:38-42 he accompanies Joseph of Arimathea (a crypto-disciple of Jesus) at the burial, ensuring that Jesus is buried according to Jewish custom (v.40), before the feast of the Jews (v.41). In short, Nicodemus is representative of a law-focused understanding of the Jewish tradition. So while portraying him as sympathetic may have been useful within the evangelists' overall purpose, John does not show that he made the transition necessary to be a Johannine Christian.²⁰ The suggestion is that consideration of Jesus from the perspective of the law, however well intentioned, will not lead to a proper appreciation of him; true understanding must be preceded by a rebirth through water and the Spirit (3:5).

The Johannine community has therefore firmly set its face against the legal tradition in Israel and found another "centre" to which it can give its undivided emotional and intellectual commitment,²¹ in Jesus the Jew. The community's assurance about its own stance within the Jewish tradition and the claims it seeks to make for it are based on

²⁰ For the treatment of Nicodemus in the Fourth Gospel cf. M. de Jonge, "Nicodemus and Jesus. Some observations on Understanding and Misunderstanding in the Fourth Gospel," reprinted in *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven and Son of God* (Missoula: 1977), 29-48; also Meeks, "Man from Heaven," 54f. R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: 1979), 72, n. 128 disagrees with the interpretation of Nicodemus as a crypto-Christian, but in my view, Brown is reading too much into his final appearance in the gospel, since it is only Joseph of Arimathea who publicly asks for the body (19:38f).

²¹ Cf. F. Segovia, "The Love and Hatred of Jesus in Johannine Sectarianism," CBQ 43 (1981) 258-272.

the presence of the Paraclete who, as the Spirit of truth, has led them into this fullness of understanding about Jesus. Their sense of assurance is articulated by the repeated declaration that they have been chosen by the Father or by Jesus (6:39; 10:29; 15:19; 17:6.8.9.12.24; 18:9). Indeed it is this heightened sense of election that gives the community the courage to face a world whose hostility takes the form of persecution from fellow Jews of the synagogue (15:18; 16:2; cf. 17:14). In the farewell discourses, the opposites of love and hatred and joy and sorrow at once typify the community's own inner affective life and the opposition which it encounters from those outside. These oppositions help to focus on the psychological experiences that give such a powerful impetus towards developing a strong sense of self-identity. Yet, as we have seen, these experiences only reinforced the community's resolve to locate that self-identity within, not outside Judaism. Johannine Christianity is convinced that salvation "is of the Jews" (4:22).²²

It is perhaps significant that we are forced to such generalizations as "the Johannine community" and cannot point to any distinctive group within it (as for example the scribes in Matthew) as responsible for developing this highly distinctive portrait of itself and the equally distinctive negative portrayal of its opponents. This undifferentiated sense of community corresponds to the community's undifferentiated sense of its opponents, but is ultimately grounded in the community's structures and experience. The highly original forms which the articulation has adopted, especially the speeches of Jesus, and the claim that these are validated by the gift of the Spirit, points to a distinctive form of early Christian prophecy allied to a subtle literary skill as this development's germinal seed-bed.²³ Perhaps we should attribute the differences between Matthew and John—not merely in terms of their own self-definition within Judaism but also in their distinctive vituperative attacks on their opponents to this background. It is to this topic that we must now turn our attention with, I hope, a much better appreciation of the internal dynamics that generated and articulated anti-Jewish rhetoric in the first and fourth gospels.

²² It is one of the challenging features of Thyen's important article, "Das Heil kommt von den Juden," (cf. note 17) that he takes this verse (Jn. 4:22) to have a positive, existential meaning for the Johannine community, which thus becomes the key for interpreting the treatment of the Jews in the work as a whole. For another perspective with the history of its interpretation in early Christianity, cf. I. de la Poterie, "Nous adorons ce que nous connaissons, car le salut vient des Juifs," *Histoire de l'exégèse et l'interprétation de Jn. 4:22*, *Biblica* 64(1983)74-115.

²³ This idea has been well developed, especially by D. Moody Smith, "Johannine Christianity," 232f.

II: The Rhetoric of Vituperation and Community Building

As a first step toward evaluating how anti-Jewish rhetoric functions within this perspective of community building, we must ask where the two communities stand in relation to their Jewish opponents. Today, there is almost universal agreement that both gospels come from the post-70 period, and the scholarly discussion has centred on the extent to which the decision of Jamnia affected their relations with an emerging, normative Judaism. However, as Peter Schäfer's careful evaluation of the evidence makes clear,²⁴ a note of caution is called for here that is not always observed, even by critical scholars. Indeed it is much better to stay with the perspectives which the texts offer, since a highly interesting contrast between the two works emerges from this angle of vision. In both works the Christian communities being addressed would appear to be in a less advantageous legal and social position than their Jewish opponents, since the former are represented as suffering at the hands of the latter. Yet the social settings are quite different. In Matthew, the Christian missionaries are under attack. Their suffering is explained in relation to the fall of Jerusalem which is seen as God's punishment for their ill-treatment (cf. 10:23; 22:7; 23:34). Though cast in the form of prophecy on the lips of Jesus, this presumably relates to the past of the author, who is writing in the post-70 period.²⁵ In John, on the other hand, the persecutions and consequently, the "fear of the Jews," are directly related to expulsions from the synagogue (9:22f; 12:42; 16:2) and with the attendant loss of social and legal status within the larger Roman world. Thus, while Matthew looks back at a situation that the community has lived through, has had etched on its memory, but has subsumed into a vision of universal mission which will also bring its own suffering (28:16; cf. 10:18), John, is speaking to a settled community situation in which lasting and deep divisions of the most intimate, familial kind can occur (9:20f).²⁶ It will be worthwhile to keep this

²⁴ P. Schäfer, "Der sogenannte Synode von Jabne," *Judaica* 31 (1975) 54-64 and 116-124, reprinted in the collection *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des Rabbinischen Judentums* (Leiden: 1978), 45-65.

²⁵ D. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, S.N.T.S. Monographs 6 (Cambridge: 1967).

²⁶ S. Brown, "The Matthean Community and the Gentile Mission," *NT* 22 (1980): 183-221, argues that one of the gospel's purposes is to convince the Jewish element in Matthew's church of the need for a universal mission. The addition *kai tois ethnois* at 10:18 suggests that a similar fate awaited the missionaries among the gentiles as had been experienced in the mission to Israel, but this would only have confirmed them in their ideas about the suffering prophet as part of God's plan, which was current in Judaism, and would have therefore consoled and confirmed the missionaries.

very real difference of social situation in view as we explore the anti-Jewish rhetoric in both works.

One obvious starting point for our exploration is the contrasting literary strategies of the two writers as they handle their Jewish opponents. As is well known, Matthew's narrative is punctuated by five lengthy discourses. Yet none of these, not even ch.23 with its bitter direct attack on the scribes and Pharisees, is addressed to the Jewish opponents.²⁷ True, the opponents do appear in the controversy sections of ch.12 (Beelzebul controversy) and ch.15 (discussion about purity and impurity), and while their presence is essential to the narrative, on both occasions there is a change of audience to the crowds (12:46), or to the disciples and crowd (15:10,12). In the Jerusalem section various Jewish opponents are addressed directly through three parables (21:28-22:14) and in the subsequent four controversy stories (22:15-46). Even here important instruction for the disciples is constantly interwoven.

The narrative would seem to require some form of direct confrontation between the protagonists in order to lead into the denouement of the plot in the trial and death of Jesus. By contrast in "the books of the Signs" (chs.1-12), John has the Jews present as Jesus' protagonists from the start. Thus the narrative tension is heightened and the central issue of Jesus' identity is clearly and repeatedly enunciated. By bringing both parties to the trial on stage, the author shows at once, in contrast with Matthew, how central the debate is for him and his church. At the same time, he clearly indicates the impossibility of any 'fusion of horizons' for the adversaries and, presumably, for their respective constituencies also.

Corresponding to these differing macro-strategies of the two compositions, differing approaches to vilification are adopted by both writers throughout their works. Matthew's most favoured strategy for denigrating his Jewish opponents is that of *synkrisis*, or unfavourable comparison, a highly fashionable technique among the school rhetoricians.²⁸ Matthew shows himself to be quite adept in this regard, but the effect is to distance himself and his community from opponents whose special position in regard to God's blessings only serves more

²⁷ P. Minear, "The Disciples and the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew" (in *Gospel Studies in Honor of S. E. Johnson*, ed. M. Sheppard Jr. and E. C. Hobbs, ATIS Supplement Series III, 1974), has shown by his "audience criticism" approach that the addressees of these discourses are part of the Matthean redaction.

²⁸ Hermogenes in his *Prognostics* states that "sometimes we draw our comparison of equality . . . sometimes we put the one ahead, praising also the other to which we prefer it; sometimes we blame the one utterly and praise the other." *Rhetores Graeci*, vol. 2, ed. L. Spengel (Frankfurt: 1966), 14f.

forcibly to highlight their failures, especially when they are contrasted with the most unlikely characters from within and outside Israel. The men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South responded more generously to the preaching of Jonah and the wisdom of Solomon than does this generation to Jesus, even though he embodies in himself both prophetic and wisdom traditions to a far greater degree than any of these scriptural figures (12:41-42). A gentile centurion has greater faith than the sons of the kingdom (8:11); even Tyre, Sidon and Sodom would have performed penance had they the opportunity of Chorozain, Bethsaida and Capernaum (Mt.11:20-24); even the tax collectors and harlots will precede the Jewish leaders into the kingdom because of their genuine repentance (21:31). With the exception of the last example, all these have Q parallels. Yet either by the location in which he places it, or by rounding it out Matthew has highlighted the contrast. One does not have to look very far to see why this is a most suitable rhetorical tactic for his purposes. In juxtaposing greater to lesser to point up the failure of the former, the contrast fits in with Matthew's salvation-history scheme of the replacement of Israel. At the same time, Matthew manages to underline the necessity for moral performance from those who now have preference and who, as we have seen, are his real audience.

John's dominant strategy in dealing with opponents is that of irony which flows over into caricature and parody.²⁹ Thus Jesus' opponents appear limited (ch.3), self-opinionated (ch.7-8) and finally, foolish (ch.9). There is a gradual deterioration in their character which reaches its nadir at the point where their behaviour is most threatening to John and his community, the expulsion from the synagogue. The lowest point corresponds to their rejection, ironically, of the very things they hold most dear, that is: Moses (6:30-31), Abraham (8:52-53), the prophets (12:41) and finally, God himself. They cry to their constant concern with a rigid monotheism in rejecting Jesus' claims (5:18, 8:59, 10:33), the Jews are made to respond in varying derogatory ways founded in their Jerusalem-based legal perspective. They call those who accept Jesus ignorant (7:49) or Galilean (7:52), and call Jesus a Samaritan and possessed (8:48), or a threat to their privileged religious and legal position (11:48). But from the superior perspective of the writer and his implied readers, these intended aspersions have a genuine element of truth and are not all derogatory.

²⁹ Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel. A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: 1983), especially 165-180, has a helpful treatment of the use of irony in John.

Herein lies the irony of the opponents' failure and the limitation of their perspective, but also the strength of the author's case against them as far as his own readership is concerned. As Wayne Booth puts it, "the implied invitation to come and live on a higher and firmer location", an essential ingredient of irony also includes "a strong sense of rejecting a whole structure of meanings, a kind of world that the author himself rejects".³⁰ For John's ideal readership there could be no question of sharing a world-view with such blind and stupid people, or indeed of attempting to emulate their religious concerns with a "better righteousness." One senses that standing directly behind such rhetoric is an author and a community who are deeply troubled by the situation as represented by their opponents. If the community is to come through the trauma it is experiencing, it must discredit them in the way chosen.

Now we must turn to the specific charges in question and see how they are directed at supplying the needs of the respective authors as these have been defined in the first half of this paper. In general it can be shown, I believe, that two complementary motifs occur which are simply the reverse sides of the same concern, namely, that of community building. These are as follows: 1) discrediting the opponents at the points where particular and exclusive claims for one's own community need to be established, and 2) using the opponents' failures and inadequacies as a means of warning one's own community. We shall examine each aspect in turn.

1) Discrediting the opponents

While Matthew still retains certain distinctions between various known groupings within first-century Judaism, it does not seem possible to make any clear differentiation with regard to specific charges for different groups. The tendency seems to be to tar all the different groups with the same brush while nevertheless retaining some sense of their variety. It is difficult to decide whether this feature is attributable to the intentions of the redactor or is already part of the received tradition.³¹ Our main concern is with the charges as they are formulated by the final redactor. These can be reduced to the following three: 1) a failure to understand the Scriptures adequately, especially in the area of attitudes towards the law; 2) hypocrisy; 3) culpable blindness.

³⁰ Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, The University of Chicago Press, (Chicago 1974), 36.

³¹ D. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23*, Suppl. NT LII, (Leiden: 1979), 43-46 and Appendix B, 218-221, has a discussion of the topic with reference to the recent literature and charts, which show clearly Matthew's use of various designations for the groups.

We can begin with the charge of blindness. The Pharisees (and the Scribes) are described three times as "blind guides" (15:14, 23:16 and 24) and three times as "blind" (23:17, 19 and 26). The description is directly related to the Pharisees' inability to interpret the work of God correctly since their own halachic interpretations about hand-washing, oath-taking, the cleansing of utensils and insistence on minutiae of the law of tithing, result in neglecting weightier matters such as mercy, justice and faith (15:6, 23:16-25). From the lack of fruits which they produce (cf. 21:43), Matthew infers that there are direct moral overtones to this blindness. The seriousness of this condition is highlighted through the Beelzebul controversy at 12:22-45. In contrast to the possessed blind and dumb man who is cured, the Pharisees are left in a much worse condition. It is subtly suggested by means of a parable that they risk, not merely blindness but demonic possession because they have attributed Jesus' power of healing to Beelzebul and demanded a sign. They thus fail to recognize the true source of Jesus' power in the Spirit of God, or to acknowledge him as one "greater than Solomon", the wise teacher. Here their blindness is traced not just to a lack of judgment with regard to the Scriptures, but to an evil disposition that refuses to see God's presence in the ministry of Jesus or His wisdom in Jesus' teaching. This radical condemnation is all the more pointed because in mounting it, by way of immediate introduction, Matthew has reinterpreted a text from Isaiah as applied to Jesus in order to clearly establish the claim that his ministry is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Mt. 12:18-21).³² In such circumstances the Scribes and Pharisees' failure is all the more reprehensible, the argument goes. The implication is that Matthew himself is the true scribe who understands the correct import of the Scriptural text.

Closely related to the charge of culpable blindness is the designation "hypocrite", which is applied to the scribes and Pharisees seven times throughout the work (15:7, 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29). The usual understanding of the epithet is that it denotes a lack of correspondence between word and action on the part of the Scribes and Pharisees, especially in view of 23:3's warning 'For they say and do not'. However this understanding does not fit the subsequent condemnations in the "woes" section of ch. 23 (with the exception of vv. 25-27—the concern about cleansing of externals with the inside still unclean). Indeed, its close association with the charge of blindness does not so much imply conscious dissimulation as faulty conclu-

³² L. Cope, *Matthew: A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom*, CBQ Monographs 5, (Washington: 1976), 32-35, and J. Neyrey, "The Thematic use of Is 42:1-4 in Mt 12," *Biblica* 63(1982) 457-473.

sions drawn from wrong premises. This consideration has led to the search for a broader field of reference for the term as Matthew uses it and to the suggestion that it may be related to the Qumran "seekers after smooth things". This possibility is intriguing, since in the Scrolls, this expression always occurs in contexts where the sectarians are in dispute with their opponents on a particular interpretation of the law—even when the note of ethical corruption is also implied, as it certainly is in Matthew.³³

The suggestion that the charge of hypocrisy relates to a failure of interpretation is linked to Matthew's third charge against the Scribes and Pharisees as listed above, namely their failure to interpret the Scriptures correctly. As we previously noted, this occurs repeatedly in contexts of dispute. Twice the opponents are told to go and learn the meaning of the Hosean statement "I desire mercy not sacrifice" in contexts in which explicit Christological claims are made to support the position that is being adopted (Hos. 6:6; cf. Mt. 9:13 and 12:7). The ironic query "have you never read (in the law)?" is used to defend the Mathaeian attitudes on sabbath observance and divorce (12:5; 19:4). It also serves to apply scriptural texts of condemnation to the opponents (21:16 and 42). The Sadducees too are said to err, "not knowing the Scriptures," when they object to the idea of resurrection from the dead (22:29-33).

These comments' clear polemical overtones, combined with the theme of Scripture's fulfillment in Jesus' career which is often achieved by appropriately adapting the actual biblical texts to the context, indicates that this is the heart of Matthew's attack on the Pharisaic and Scribal traditions. As we have seen, the charges of hypocrisy and blindness can be shown to be intimately related to the Scribes' and Pharisees' failure in this regard. We are therefore justified in concluding that Matthew's anti-Jewish polemic is directed towards establishing the claim that it is Christian scribes alone (whose authority derives from and is totally dependent on that of Jesus) who can interpret the Scriptures properly in the new situation of fulfillment brought by his coming. Since this is a matter of life and death, to establish such an audacious claim rival claimants must not merely be discredited, they must be destroyed. The rhetoric of *vitiuperatio* as was practised in the schools, or in the everyday affairs of men was not wholly adequate to the task, even when denigrating comments are

³³ For a full discussion cf. Garland, *The Intention*, 91-123, especially 104-111, on the possible similarities with the Qumran *doreshuq haddoth*; cf. also M. Gertner, "The term *Pharisaion*, *Gazarenoi*, *Hypokritai*: their semantic complexity and conceptual contradiction," BSOAS 26 (1963), 245-268.

made or sub-human epithets applied. Only a rhetoric that is inspired by apocalyptic hatred could achieve the desired effect, and Matthew certainly has his own highly developed repertoire to meet the panic-laden demands of the situation.³⁴ The language of annihilation not denigration is called for as the community seeks to establish its exclusive claims on the Jewish inheritance that its opponents also claim. Both want to appropriate the law and the prophets (seen both as the story of God's history with his people and the revelation of his will).

If we turn to John's detailed denigration of the opponents, we find there is no need to challenge their exegetical tradition as is the case in Matthew. As we have seen in the first part of our paper, John sought to establish a place in Judaism that was over against but not superior to the law-based position of the Jewish opponents. His tendency is not to differentiate various groups within Judaism, however loosely. But insofar as the generalising expression "the Jews" is not wholly adhered to, the Pharisaic element is the one singled out as constituting the real opposition.³⁵ However, there is no debate about the Pharisees' understanding of the law or its implications. Simply, its premises are rejected and discredited as incapable of understanding God's sole revelation in Jesus.

Thus the charge of blindness, which also occurs in the context of the healing of a blind man (ch.9), is given an ironic twist that puts the matter in its proper Johannine perspective. "For an object of judgment (*eis krinon*) I came into this world so that those who do not see might see and those who see might become blind," Jesus declares. The Pharisees retorted "surely you are not calling us blind?" To this Jesus countered "If you were blind you would not have sin; and now you say we see and your sin remains" (9:39-41). This brief dialogue brings the issue into the open. The Pharisaic opponents claim to be able to see, but their claim is allowed only to be followed by the worse charge of permanent sin. This makes the declaration of the purpose for Jesus' coming ("For an object of judgment") all the more ominous. In rejecting Jesus, the Pharisaic group unwittingly rejects the one who has been introduced to the ideal reader as he who takes away "the sin of the world" (1:29). So the group's members will die in their sins

³⁴ On the relation between perceived threat and apocalyptic rhetoric cf. the highly suggestive article of Amos Wilder, "The Rhetoric of Apocalyptic," in *Jesus' Parables and the War on Myth* (London: 1982), 153-168. Appendix A, below, p. 142 gives a list of the apocalyptic denunciations of opponents in Mt.

³⁵ Cf. 124; 3:1; 7:32, 45, 48; 9:16-40; 11:47-57; 18:3. Cf. notes 1 and 19 above on the question of the Jews in Jn.

(8:23f). Their condition, then, is irredeemable. It bears the ultimate consequences from the Johannine perspective.

The other expressions of the charge against the Jews are merely variants of this central theme in which the two protagonists are contrasted as inhabitants of two different spheres and shown to have an unbridgable chasm between them. Nicodemus and the Jews cannot understand because they are "from below" and "of the earth", whereas to understand the in-depth meaning of Jesus' signs which the Johannine community claims for itself (1:51; 2:11), one must be "born from above", or "born of the Spirit" (3:3 and 5; 6:63). They judge constantly by externals, that is, in terms that relate to this world; they know Jesus' family (6:42f), his place of origin (1:27) and his destiny (8:22f), but accurate as this knowledge may be in regard to this world, it prohibits them from penetrating the inner mystery which the Johannine group feels itself privy to, namely, that God is Jesus' Father, and that Jesus is from above and will return there (3:19; 6:62; 8:42). The ultimate condemnation is arrived at in the declaration that they are neither the children of God nor of Abraham, but rather the children of the devil (8:39-44).³⁶ To appreciate the force of this utterance within the Johannine perspective, it should be recalled that elsewhere the devil is described as the "prince of this world" who is "cast out" through Jesus' exaltation, an event which coincides with the judgment of this world (12:31). In an apparent allusion to the Genesis story, the devil is described as a destroyer of men from the beginning, a liar and the father of lies (8:44). By being characterised as his children, the Jews are declared to be irretrievably under his influence within the world, caught up in falsehood rather than the truth and, in the end, sharing the doom that the unbelieving world has merited. As it confronts the Johannine community in a hostile and unrelenting way, the group will no longer be cared for by Jesus or his Father (ch. 17).

John rarely uses the language or imagery of apocalyptic annihilation in passing final sentence on the Jews. Rather he draws on his cosmic dualism to paint an unrelieved picture of confrontation and hostility between the Johannine Christians and their opponents. There is such an aura of inevitability and finality about the situation from the start that there would appear to be no place for any change of heart on the part of the opponents. Yet such a conclusion could obscure the fact that John sees the Jewish refusal to believe in Jesus as culpable, arising from an evil disposition. Those whose deeds are

evil do not want to come to the light (3:20); the Jews do not have God's word abiding in them (5:38); they have never kept the law of Moses (7:19); they seek honour from one another and not the glory that is from God (5:44; 12:43); they judge by externals (7:24; 8:15); they claim to be able to see, and so are guilty (9:40). By repeatedly drawing attention to the failures of Christianity's opponents, John avoids falling into the trap of total determinism that his cosmic dualism could so easily suggest. True, his own community has a heightened sense of its election as we have seen, yet its the opponents moral failures, however unspecified they remain in John's account, do have a bearing on the attainment of proper insight. In the end, "being of the world" or "being of God" is as much a choice as it is a given. That fact makes those who have chosen the latter all the more intolerant of those who have opted otherwise.

ii) Warning for one's own community

Our examination of the ways in which Matthew and John have chosen to discredit their opponents has shown that each has directed their attacks at those points where they themselves are seeking to make exclusive claims for their own communities. In Matthew the Jews are shown to have failed in understanding or expounding the law and the prophets as God's revealed will. In fact they have destroyed it by their own tradition. In John, on the other hand, the Jews lack the depth of vision to see or understand the reality of God in Jesus. In each, the strategies of vilification are combined either with the vehemence of apocalyptic annihilation or the absoluteness of cosmic dualism. The result is two contrasting, yet equally unflattering portraits of Matthew's and John's respective opponents within a Jewish perspective. Yet there is another aspect to this extreme language that calls for attention also and which helps to relate it to our authors' social concerns: it serves at once to warn their own communities and to sharply define their tasks.

We have already noted in passing that Matthew ch. 23, the high point of Matthean anti-Jewish invective, is not addressed to the Scribes and Pharisees but to disciples and the crowds, that is, real and potential members of the community. Since this introduction is clearly attributable to Matthean redaction, it should alert us to the act of communication that the author is engaged in with his own community. Even though the Scribes and Pharisees are granted a certain authority at the outset because they occupy the seat of Moses, they are rejected as authoritative guides. A very different model of teaching ministry is proposed; one which is linked with Jesus' servant ministry by the aid of two sayings Matthew has used elsewhere to express the

³⁶ T. Dozemann, "Specimen Abraham in Jn 8 and related literature," *CBQ* 42 (1980) 342-358.

model for genuine discipleship (23:11-12; cf. 20:26; 18:4). It is only after this general instruction that the woes against the Scribes and Pharisees are uttered. Though the direct mode of address, "you," is employed, the intention is not to change the audience but to adopt a judicial tone for passing judgment on the guilty (cf. 11:20-24). They, therefore, serve as a clear warning for Christian teachers who may have attempted to adopt not just the name but the style and faults of their Jewish counterparts, especially as they were possibly of Pharisaic origin themselves.³⁷ That there is this intimate connection in the author's mind between attacking Jewish opponents and instructing his own community is evidenced elsewhere in the gospel when the author either introduces advice applicable to all (cf. 12:33-37; 22:11-14), or leaves the initial controversy behind by way of introducing instruction for those sympathetic to Jesus (15:10-20; 16:5-12). In each of these instances, attitudes that are typical of one or other of the Jewish groups as presented by Matthew are castigated, and an alternative or contrasting set of values is proposed.

However, closer examination of ch. 23 shows a different, though related pattern emerging. In all, eleven different unacceptable traits of the scribes and Pharisees are listed. As appendix B (below, p. 143) shows, all of these can be found elsewhere in Matthew as issues about which the disciples require instruction or as attitudes which they are warned to avoid (that includes the charge of hypocrisy). Thus Matthew's concerns for his own community are couched in the very terms which he uses to castigate the scribes and Pharisees. He applies the same image, "fruit," to the moral conduct of both groups (3:10; 7:15-20; 12:33; 21:43); the same apocalyptic judgment is in store for the failed disciple and the Jewish opponents alike, namely, exclusion from the kingdom and condemnation to outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (8:12; 13:42 and 50; 22:13; 24:51). It is precisely because Matthew has attempted to define his own group's identity in relation to that of Pharisaic Judaism, both in terms of its tasks and rewards, that he can turn his anti-Jewish rhetoric into warning for his own community. From the vantage point of a scribe disciplined in the kingdom, bringing forth what is new and old, he can judge the failures of all other groups in Judaism and, in the process of discrediting their claims, obtain a clearer perspective of the challenge that faces his own group if its claim is to be sustained.

³⁷ The warnings of Mt 5:18f, for example, are clearly addressed to teaching practitioners in his own community that are unacceptable. In particular the stress on "doing and teaching" that is enjoined here recalls discussions about the priority of *midrash* over *mi'aseh* at Jamnia.

Significantly, in view of the relationship with Judaism arising out of the experiences of the mission to Israel, one of the chief tasks is to develop a mission to "all nations." Matthew's group thereby lays claim to being the messianic people that mediates the blessings of Abraham to all (28:16; cf. 3:9; 8:11), whereas its Jewish counterparts make their proselytes "sons of Gehenna, twice as much as themselves" (23:14).

John states the macro-purposes of his work at 20:31. He intends "that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his name." The precise addresses of this declaration are presumably, in the first instance, his own community, represented throughout the work as the disciples. Yet in the narrative portrayal of this group, at least its inner core had grasped the true meaning of Jesus' presence from the start (1:51; 2:11) and remained constant even when some disciples walked no more with him (6:66-70). True, the farewell discourses (especially the prayer of ch. 17) display anxieties about this group in a hostile world, especially in view of Jesus' absence (17:12f). The danger of disunity seems to be lurking in the background (17:21). Indeed the cosmic dualism of light and darkness, truth and falsehood, believers and world that has been used through the work to give this Johannine group a strong sense of identity and election, comes to a resounding climax in this, Jesus' final monologue (cf. 17:6-9, 11, 24).³⁸ But the community has played its part also. Its members have kept the word of God that Jesus has given them, and they have received his message and have believed (17:6-9)—this in direct contrast to the Jews, whose failures have made them into the unbelieving world. This contrasting parallelism between the inhabitants of the two spheres is carefully orchestrated by John to give his own group a greater assurance in its stance outside the synagogue. The Christians need not fear that their perception of the truth is any less secure because of what has happened to them, since those who represent the synagogue have rendered themselves incapable of understanding and are not any longer even the objects of the Revealer's or his Father's concern. Here vilification serves not so much to define but to confirm the self that finds itself cut off from its natural matrix and is attempting to see an alternative mission for itself by way of compensation (17:18, 21).

That new-found sense of mission is directed in the first instance to those "others" who come into the Johannine purview and whose

³⁸ Cf. the recent detailed study of this chapter by H. Riss, *Das Gebet zum Vater. Zur Interpretation von John 17* (Stuttgart: 1979), especially 339-378 and 474ff.

relation to the disciples is not so clear, but for whom vilification of the Jews could have had rather different consequences. Raymond Brown may have pushed the evidence too far in suggesting three such separate social groups within the gospel, crypto-Christians (ch.9), Jewish Christians of inadequate faith (6:60-66; 7:3-5; 8:31; 10:12) and Christians of apostolic churches, as represented by the figure of Peter contrasted with that of the beloved disciple.³⁹ Yet there is no doubt that there are such borderline cases. To these may be added those Jews who believed in Jesus' name because of the signs which he gave, but who appear to receive a negative valuation (2:25-3:1), and the disciples of John the Baptist (3:22-6). We have already seen that Nicodemus is cast as a representative figure for such sympathetic Jews, and the question of his final allegiance appears to be left ambiguous, at least. The stories of the Samaritan Woman (ch.4) and the man born blind (ch.9) are deliberately constructed in such a way as to suggest stages in faith from a low to a high Christology. Thus the Johannine author indicates the possibility of transition from one sphere to the other for both Christian and Jewish sympathisers alike, since, as we have seen more than once, Johannine faith is in the end both a matter of choice and a gift. Without the predisposition of openness and good intention, no advance is possible. But even then, full blown faith is not assured. In such a context one can see the special role that the vilification of the Jews as unbelievers could play. Their blindness was culpable, but that need not or, indeed, should not preclude others from having the courage of their convictions to make an open and complete transition.

Conclusions

We have been attempting to understand the anti-Jewish rhetoric of Matthew and John in the light of their own community concerns, concerns for the authoritative definition of an independent and exclusive place within Judaism in line with the eschatological and messianic claims that early Christianity as a whole had sought to make for itself. A number of different approaches come to mind as possible heuristic devices for describing the phenomena we have uncovered. Social psychology, for example, might suggest the transference of fears into aggression; sociology could talk of sectarian rhetoric; cultural anthropology might see here a case of aggressive resymbolisation to meet social needs. Illuminating as all these approaches undoubtedly are, it would seem that some hermeneutical reflection

concerning the texts' contemporary meaning, is called for, especially in view of the long history of oppression of Jews by Christians to which these texts contributed, once they were taken as foundational documents by a dominant Christianity backed by the power and authority of the state.

For many Christians it would be a shocking, not to say a highly offensive suggestion, to state that their foundational documents are themselves documents of betrayal insofar as they concerned themselves exclusively with the question of their own identity and ignored the radical command to a universal and all-embracing love. Yet identity questions, both personal and social, would seem to be as essential to us as the very air we breathe. The search for and preoccupation with defining the self are symptoms of our condition, both Jewish and Christian—especially, it would seem, when we are confronted with the experience of a God who seeks to destroy such deep-seated longings within us! Therein lies the paradox that borders on the tragic in our situation. The Christological experience of God in early Christianity captured a few fleeting glimpses of the possibility of risking all by refusing to be identified (for example, Mark's portrayal of Jesus), just as Moses, Isaiah and Job had captured it briefly in their visions of a God who calls out, or who can bring all the nations to Mt. Zion, or who refuses to solve the intractable problem of evil and yet claims to be a good God. But living with such visions is highly dangerous. Hence the need to domesticate this God in the more familiar institutions of life and culture which we see in Matthew's adaptation of the Markan Jesus into the Messiah of Israel, using the attestation of the Scriptures.

The identity problem had beset Judaism, and indeed torn it apart, from the Babylonian captivity at least. Early Christianity was a good learner—in that regard it was thoroughly Jewish from the beginning and remains so to-day with its discussions and soul-searchings that have debased the word ecumenical. History can testify to other ways in which both Jews and Christians have sought to escape the identity question, namely the way of gnosis. But that way too had its hidden pitfalls especially, I would suggest, its desire to opt out of history since it constantly raises anew the question of identity in the tension between memory and hope, and the conflicting ideologies that these give rise to. We cannot turn our backs on such problems and proceed as though they do not exist, hidden as they are in the most innocent and sublime of visions (e.g. in the gospel of John with its inaugural picture of the universal Logos incarnate). It is only when we take seriously both the radical ambiguity of our common human situation

³⁹ *Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 71-88.

and the distortions it has given rise to, even in our so called 'classic', foundational documents, both Jewish and Christian, that we have any hope of moving beyond the past and making a better future together.

Appendix A: Apocalyptic Denunciation of Opponents in Matthew

- 'Already the axe is laid to the root of the unfruitful tree... They cannot hope to escape the coming wrath.
(3:7.10—Pharisees, and Sadducees)
- Those who follow their righteousness will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
(5:20—Scribes and Pharisees)
- Instead of sharing the messianic banquet in the kingdom with the Patriarchs they, sons of the kingdom, will be cast out where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
(8.11f. General)
- Those who blaspheme against the Spirit will receive no forgiveness either in this age or the age to come.
(12.32, Pharisees)
- On judgment day the Ninevites and the Queen of the South will rise and condemn this evil generation.
(12:41.42 Scribes and Pharisees)
- Not having been planted by the heavenly Father they will be uprooted.
(15:13, Pharisees)
- The kingdom of God will be taken from them and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.
(21:43, chief priests and Pharisees)
- As the King makes a marriage feast for his son he will kill the murderers and destroy their city.
(22:7, General)
- They do not enter the kingdom of God themselves and they attempt to prevent others entering.
(22:13, Scribes and Pharisees)
- They make proselytes sons of gehenna twice as much as themselves.
(23:15, Scribes and Pharisees)
- They are full of lawlessness.
(23:28, Scribes and Pharisees)
- They are filling up the measure of their forefathers' guilt, regarding the innocent blood that has been shed and responsibility for it will come on this generation.
(23:32.36, General)
- Their house will be left deserted; no stone will be left upon another.
(23:38;24:2, General)

Appendix B: Denunciations in Matthew 23 directed at Disciples elsewhere.

	Scribes & Pharisees	Disciples
1. Teaching but not doing	23:3.	5:19; 7:21-23
2. Refusal to help those in distress	23:4	18:10; 25:41-45; (cf.10:40-42)
3. Seeking places of honour and respect before men	23:6.7 (cf.6:2.5.16)	6:1-19; 20:26f; (cf.23:8-11)
4. Hypocrisy	23:13.15.23.25.27.29.	6:2.5.16; 7:5; 24:51
5. Lawlessness	23:28	8:23; 13:41; 24:12
6. Making somebody else a son of gehenna	23:15	18:6-10; 10:28 (cf.5:29-30)
7. False ideas about oaths	23:16-22 (cf.12:34: evil speech)	5:33.37
8. Neglect of <i>krisis</i> , <i>eleos</i> , <i>pistis</i>	23:23	7:1-5 (<i>krisis</i>) 5:7; 24:10; 25:42-46 (<i>eleos</i>) 14:31; 17:19-20 (<i>pistis</i>)
9. Blindness	23:16 (cf.15:14)	5:22-23 (cf.5:14-16)
10. Concern for externals but full of greed and lust	23:25	7:15; 6:24; 13:22
11. False respect for the dead.	23:29	8:21-22