

gratuitous anti-Judaism. If *John* is properly read only in the latter way, the consequences for Jewish-Christian dialogue are unfortunate, particularly in view of the virtual certainty that Christians will continue to accord *John* a high, canonical authority in their own religion and theology. But the seemingly anti-Jewish statements in the *Gospel of John* are disastrous theologically only on the basis of a rather narrow and literalistic conception of the authority of the New Testament Scriptures.

"The Jews" in Other Johannine Writings

The prominence of "the Jews" in the Fourth Gospel bespeaks a real, historical situation and confrontation, wherever and whenever it may have occurred. The *Gospel of John*, however, is only one of five "Johannine" writings in the New Testament. In none of the others do Jews or Judaism figure in the same way; in fact, even in a long section of the gospel (chaps. 13-17) this confrontation fades completely into the background. The *Revelation of John* stands at the periphery of the Johannine circle, and, in the judgment of some, wholly outside it. As I have suggested elsewhere, however, there are a sufficient number of points of contact and similarity to warrant the assumption of a significant relationship or consanguinity.¹⁴

Revelation, interestingly enough, reflects less hostility toward Jews than does John's Gospel. The term *Ioudaioi* appears only twice in *Revelation* (2:9; 3:9), in both cases in an indirectly positive sense. That is, members of the "synagogue of Satan" are said to claim to be Jews although in reality they are not. The presumption is that it is good to be a Jew. "Jew" is still used in a positive sense, even as it is in Paul's *Letter to the Romans* (2:17, 28, 29; cf., 3:1). This remains the case even if the "synagogue of Satan" means Jews in Smyrna, or Philadelphia, or even contemporary Jews generally. In that case, they have defected from proper Judaism, from what it should mean to be a Jew. It is not certain, however, that by the "synagogue of Satan" John means all Jews or Judaism generally, as many Christian exegetes have assumed.¹⁵ He may mean only Jews in

the aforementioned localities who have persecuted or driven out the followers of Jesus who are being addressed. In that case we may be very near the milieu of the *Gospel of John*.¹⁶ It is not necessary to assume that John regards all Jews as necessarily members of the Synagogue of Satan, as the author of the Fourth Gospel would, at least if the evidence of passages such as *John* 8:44 is determinative. In other words, the Fourth Gospel may represent the expansion or tendency to generalize attitudes only nascent in *Revelation*. *Revelation* 2:9 and 3:9 may not be derived from, or inferred from, the broader condemnation of Jews and Judaism rather common in the Fourth Gospel. In *Revelation*, "Jew" is still a good word, in the Fourth Gospel, it is not, having been displaced by "Israelite." *Revelation*, if basically earlier than this gospel (as, for example, Barrett argues), may represent a period prior to the *Gospel of John*. Possibly *Revelation* 3:9 still contemplates the conversion of such Jews.

On the other side of the Fourth Gospel, then, one would locate the Johannine epistles. *Ioudaios/oi* appears not once in any of them, a remarkable fact in view of its frequency in *John*, which is in many respects so closely related theologically to them. There is an obvious reason for this. The opponents, who come frequently into view in the letters, are not Jews but other Christians, whose life-style, ethics, and theology do not meet with the author's approval. To hear him tell it, they are loveless heretics who falsely claim to be without sin and perhaps for that reason are especially incorrigible. If, as on other grounds appears likely, the Johannine epistles are later than the Johannine gospel and presuppose it, a significant change in fronts has occurred. The struggle with Jews seems to be a thing of the past. Perhaps significantly, the vehemence of the opposition is still by no means diminished for that reason. If the Christian opponents are not "children of Satan," they are children of this world, "anti-Christ" (1 Jn 4:3, 5; 2 Jn 7). This is not significantly better.

The farewell discourses of *John* are in some respects closer to the Johannine epistles than to the rest of that gospel, in which

¹⁵For example, R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh, 1920) vol. 1, pp. 56-57, 88-89.

¹⁶On the possible relation of the conflict between Jews and Christians in *Revelation* to the *Birkat ha-Minin* and thus to the *Gospel of John*, see C. J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Social Setting* (Sheffield, England, 1986) pp. 4, 9, 12, 149.

¹⁴D. M. Smith, "Johannine Christianity: Some Reflections on Its Character and Development," *New Testament Studies* 21 (1975) 222-48, esp. pp. 233, 234. See R. E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, p. 6, n. 5.

such open opposition to Jews is manifest. In chapters 13 through 17 *Ioudaioi* occurs only in 13:33, where Jesus tells his disciples what he says to them he has already told the Jews. The reference to being put out of the synagogue and being killed (16:2) would seem to have Jewish opposition in view, and Jesus' discussion of the world's hatred (15:18–16:4) doubtless includes Jewish opposition. But otherwise, the farewell discourses are concerned with distinctly Christian theological and related issues, not with external opposition. For good reason it has been argued that the farewell discourses are in some respects, or in some part, closer to these epistles than to the rest of this gospel.¹⁷ The farewell discourses, then, represent a Johannine Christianity that has weathered the synagogue controversy and moved on to other concerns.

One cannot fail to note an anomaly present in both this gospel and these epistles. In no other New Testament opus is there stronger emphasis on God's love, as expressed in Jesus his Son (3:16; 1 Jn 4:10, 14, 16) or on the command to love as the expression of true discipleship. Only those who truly love one another can claim to be recipients of God's love or, for that matter, can claim to love God (1 Jn 4:20). Yet love is expressed only within the circle of believers: "Love one another" (1 Jn 13:34–35; 15:12–13; 1 Jn 3:23; 2 Jn 5). Commandments and exhortations to love the neighbor (Mk 12:31)—and even the enemy (Mt 5:44)—are absent from the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles. Outsiders, whether because they have not believed or because they have believed wrongly, are not necessarily to be loved. While the *Gospel of John* does not teach that Christians should *hate* their enemies (cf. Mt 5:43), 1 *John* comes close: "the world"—those outside the faith (or the church)—is not to be loved (1 Jn 2:15); "the world" will hate believers (1 Jn 15:18, 19). Believers are not told to love the emissaries of the world as if they too are children of God. In fact, the only true children of God are believers (1:12). The Johannine Jesus gives no instructions to disciples about how they should behave toward those who hate them. Perhaps a position of relative powerlessness is assumed. They are simply warned so that they will be pre-

¹⁷ F. F. Segovia, *Love Relationships in the Fourth Gospel: Agape/Agapan in 1 John and the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, 1982), especially pp. 21–24, 217–19, argues that the final redaction of the discourse is the work of the author of 1 *John* or someone closely related to

pared for the world's hatred and be able to overcome it. Even the command to love is subsumed within John's dualism, and does not overcome it. Only God does that: the world may hate God (1 Jn 15:23), but God nevertheless loves the world—in spite of, perhaps because of, its sinfulness. However that may be, believers are not—at least not explicitly—urged to emulate God in this respect.

Here we see a collision between the quasi-metaphysical dualism of the Fourth Gospel and its basic theological-ethical affirmation. That is, the dualistic conceptual framework seems to impede, if not prevent, the universal extension of the love of God and humanity which is the fundamental axiom of *John*. This impediment obviously has to do with the role of belief (i.e., reception of that love). When revelation meets unbelief all bets are off and love's expression is thwarted, at least among human beings. Nevertheless, in John's view, the love of God is not defeated. Whether human love ought to stop at the boundary of belief and unbelief is a question that merits reflection. In the view of the synoptic Jesus, who in this respect is also more likely the historical Jesus, it should not. The fact that in *John* human love does stop at this boundary is, as we have seen, related to the author's and the community's dualism. How it is related is a good question. Does that dualism set limits conceptually so as to override *John's* intent? Is the love of which the author of *John* speaks effective only within the limits set out by a fideistic, if not ontological, dualism? Or is that dualism itself a product of the social situation of *John*, in that the rejection of the community's claims, of its evangelical effort, results in an ossification of boundaries? In that case, one might ask whether John's response is the only, or the best, one in the face of the rejection of missionary witness. John seems to know, however, that the expression of love, even within the community, is the most effective form of witness to those outside (15:12; cf. 17:20–23). If love within the community is a powerful witness, how much more might the expression of love towards those outside the community witness to them?

Implications of the Issue for Contemporary Jewish-Christian Dialogue

A generation ago, scholarship tended to gloss over the Jews

in the *Gospel of John*. For Bultmann the Jews were a surrogate for the world, their presence apparently accounted for by the historical setting of Jesus' ministry within Judaism.¹⁸ John had no great interest in polemicalizing against historical, empirical Jews in his own life-setting, although Bultmann notes that insofar as "the situation of the Church is reflected in the Gospel of John, its problem is the conflict with Judaism, and its theme is faith in Jesus as the Son of God."¹⁹ Bultmann's interest was definitely the theological theme rather than the setting. His English contemporary and counterpart, C. H. Dodd, much more than Bultmann, took into account the Jewish and Old Testament conceptual background of John. Yet Dodd found in the Hermetic literature—of fundamentally pagan origin—the closest affinities with the Fourth Gospel.²⁰ Dodd saw *John* as a book addressed not primarily to Christians, much less to Jews or Jewish Christians, but to a non-Christian public, to "devout and thoughtful persons . . . in the varied and cosmopolitan society of a great Hellenistic city such as Ephesus under the Roman Empire."²¹ For Dodd, even less than for Bultmann, a rather vociferous internecine conflict among Jews, or between Jews and Christians, was not the substratum of Johannine thought; and the exegete did not need to take it into account in order to understand *John*.

Developments of the past two decades, epitomized by Martyn's thesis, have wrought a significant change in Johannine exegesis and interpretation. In different ways, Raymond Brown, Wayne A. Meeks, Marinus de Jonge, Klaus Wengst, Oscar Cullmann, Georg Richter, and others have underscored and demonstrated the significance of the Jewish or Jewish-Christian milieu and affinities of the Fourth Gospel. The second edition of Barrett's justly famous commentary is an accurate barometer of this change.²² Scholars seeking to understand and interpret the *Gospel of John* may no longer bypass or downplay

this dimension of its historical setting or horizon, as had Bultmann and Dodd. Rather, the Jewishness of the Fourth Gospel has been established in such a way as to press upon us the importance of Jewish-Christian relations—and Jewish-Christian disagreements—as ingredients of any historically responsible exegesis.

By the same token, the Jewish dimension of the origin and purpose of the Fourth Gospel can scarcely be acknowledged as something that, while real, belongs essentially to the past. In vital respects the issues upon which the Fourth Gospel focuses with such unrelenting starkness and clarity remain before us. That is, Christians in the contemporary world, like the Christians of the Johannine community, live in the presence of Jews who do not accept the theologically daring—even extreme—propositions about Jesus that the author of *John* set forth. They could not do so and remain Jews in the now generally accepted sense of the term. Thus the Fourth Gospel seems to offer little hope or basis for dialogue between Christians and Jews. At the same time, the fact that *John* belongs to the Christian canon of scripture—to the New Testament—makes such dialogue all the more necessary.

As we have noted, the harshness of the alternatives as posed by the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel—and equally by "the Jews" mentioned in it—is somewhat mitigated by an appreciation of the dire historical circumstances of those ancient Jews and Christians. Both lived under conditions of great stress and duress. The stress under which those Jews lived is not always recorded in as direct or obvious a fashion as is that which beset the Johannine Christians (although, of course, in *John* theirs is also recorded indirectly, as if it applied to Jesus rather than his disciples). The portrait of late first-century Judaism is buried in the difficult, laconic, and often obscure statements of rabbinic sources. It comes to light in the imagery of the post-70 Apocalypses of Ezra and Baruch. And it is fleshed out in the long historical narrations of Josephus, which attempt both to justify the

¹⁸R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans., G. R. Beasley-Murray, et al. (Philadelphia, 1971) pp. 86–87. R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (New Testament Foundation and Facets, Philadelphia, 1983) pp. 128–31, brings out the important element of truth in Bultmann's position: "Through the Jews, John explores the heart and soul of unbelief" (p. 129). See also Ashton, "Joudaioi in the Fourth Gospel," *Novum Testamentum* 27 (1985) 68.

¹⁹Theology of the New Testament, trans., K. Grobel (New York, 1955) vol. 2, p. 5.

²⁰C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953) p. 5.

²²C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Philadelphia, 1978) p. 93, n. 1: "The best attempt to provide a specific Sitz im Leben for the Gospel is that of Martyn"; see pp. 137–38 and *passim*. Barrett has reservations only as to whether Martyn's thesis alone does justice to the range of John's background and intention. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, has a different agenda and perspective, but his literary analysis achieves results that are not at all incongruous with Martyn's.

dominance of Rome in Jewish eyes and to define and defend the essential character of Judaism as a monotheistic religion and a sane and sober ethical philosophy rather than a dangerous and subversive movement. The Judaism of the late first century was badly, if not mortally, wounded after the bloody and disastrous war of 66–70 C.E. It was to suffer further trauma within another half-century in the wake of the suppression of the Bar Kokhba rebellion. The sober sages who were conducting the retrenchment of Judaism, preserving the ancient traditions along Pharisaic lines, truly had no need of the spiritual enthusiasm, messianism, sectarianism, and apparent challenge to the Law and to traditional monotheism that the Johannine community represented.

The Johannine Christians, on the other hand, had the uncompromising zeal of new converts. They were not so much converts from Judaism to Christianity as converts to Jesus, filled with his spirit, born from above, filled with power and glory. (But their conversion to Jesus took them sharply away from the direction in which contemporary Judaism was heading; hence the continuing controversy with "the Pharisees.") They had received—and continued to receive—God's ultimate revelation of himself in the crucified Jesus, whom they believed to be the divine Son of God. If "the world," and particularly their Jewish conferees, insisted upon rejecting God's revelation, the only satisfying explanation was the darkness of their origin and their destiny of sin and death. On the other hand, God not only assured believers of eternal fellowship with himself, but granted them life and joy in this world. Thus the lines were fully and finally drawn; or so it seemed.

Historical circumstances have changed, and continue to change. The setting of modern Judaism is in many respects both more diverse and more hopeful than that of its late first-century counterpart. Yet the continued threat to the existence of modern Israel is almost universally viewed by Jews as a threat to Jewish survival. The Holocaust, of recent and bitter memory, represented a more dire threat to Judaism than the Roman war. After all, the Romans only wanted the Jews to be reasonable—by Roman standards, of course; they did not want to destroy the Jewish people or their religion. The Nazis wanted to destroy both.

There is something in the Johannine blacklisting of the Jews, the consigning of them to this world and to Satan, that in Jewish eyes foreshadows the Holocaust or the annihilation of Judaism. Such a dire, negative view of Jews and of the whole world is undeniably present in *John*. But, paradoxically, it is precisely John's Gospel that presents the motivation, meaning, and effect of God's revelation in Jesus as love. Furthermore, the love of God finds its true response in reciprocal human love that will lead to the unity of the community of love. It is a concept of revelation and response that is in principle universal. In the course of the vagaries and vicissitudes of history, the universal goal was jeopardized, and the dualistic division between truth and falsehood, light and darkness, seemed to be the last word.

Johannine Christianity and Pharisaic Judaism represent opposite poles and possibilities arising out of a common religious tradition. In its need to retrench and conserve the heritage the past had bequeathed to it, this Judaism appears in the *Gospel of John* as remarkably conservative, which in a sense it certainly was. If Johannine Christianity would scarcely qualify as "liberal," it nevertheless enshrines and places a high premium upon elements of spontaneity, novelty, and uniqueness, which are, however, indigenous to—and derived from—the same parent tradition. Within that tradition it is in the nature of the new to take a critical stance towards the old, and of the old to look askance at the new. The potential polarities arising out of a common tradition could not be better illustrated. They stand over against each other as making mutually exclusive claims for allegiance and loyalty (e.g., Jn 9:28, 14:6). The resolution of those claims seems impossible apart from the dissolution of one side or the other. It belongs to the honesty and the integrity of the discussion to honor the reality of the opposing claims. It belongs to the necessity of our mutuality and coexistence, however, not to terminate the conversation but, despite the Pharisees and the Johannine Christians, to continue that dialogue for the sake of the revelation and tradition out of which we both live.

One final observation: it would be wrong to conclude from the tension between Pharisaic Judaism and Johannine Christianity that the one simply represents a conservative and de-

defensive posture toward the inherited tradition while the other represents spontaneity and the claim to new revelations and insights. Within the former, the impetus to preserve the tradition precisely by correlating it with, or making it applicable to, new and emerging problems and situations is a mark of Pharisaism's distinctiveness and originality. Moreover, within Johannine Christianity the need to hold on to what through revelation or experience has established itself soon became urgent, as Raymond Brown has recently shown.²³ The Johannine Epistles are "Johannine Pastorals" (Conzelmann); that is, their goal is to assert and defend the revelation already given. Thus they lay heavy stress on what was "from the beginning" (of the tradition); they speak of the love command as the "old commandment" (1 Jn 2:7) rather than the new (Jn 13:34). This point is important to bear in mind, for it shows that the tensions between Pharisaic Judaism and Johannine Christianity are, phenomenologically speaking, not tensions proper to Judaism and Christianity as separate religions, but tensions that arise almost inevitably *within* a religion, particularly within religions such as Christianity and Judaism, whose essence consists both of the claim that God has spoken and of the claim, however refined or attenuated by qualification or concepts of inference or mediation, that God continues to speak in ways that are—or should be—determinative of human existence.²⁴

²³The *Community of the Beloved Disciple*, pp. 93–144. This view becomes basic to his magisterial commentary, *The Epistles of John* (Anchor Bible 30; Garden City, N.Y., 1982), where he sets it out and defends it exegetically.

²⁴Only after having completed this paper did I become aware of the careful study and proposals put forward by N. A. Beck, *Mature Christianity: The Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic of the New Testament* (London and Toronto, 1985) esp. pp. 248–74. Beck is thoroughly cognizant of historical-critical issues and literature, and should be consulted for the latter. He makes the noteworthy point that John's polemic operates at different levels (see R. E. Brown) and is not simply directed against Jews in an undifferentiated way (pp. 268–70). Whether one should drop "the Jews" in translating *Ioudaioi* and replace it with "the religious authorities" or the like, as Beck suggests, is an important and debatable question. Exactly the same issue arises from the standpoint of feminist hermeneutic in dealing with and translating allegedly sexist or paternalistic language in the Bible. My own conviction is that we cannot resolve these issues by removing offensive aspects of Scripture occasioned by the concrete circumstances of historical origin. Those who want to read "Jews" will continue to do

DISCUSSION

FENN: I am fascinated by the intensity that you describe in these texts. It seems to be a higher level of intensity and emotion than we perhaps find in other texts. But I'm also fascinated by the tendency to explain this in terms of religious cultures or antagonisms within the fold. And, frankly, I can't quite add it all up. And that's just a reflection of my training as a sociologist. How many of the variants have you explained? How much of the intensity can you explain given the methods you adopt? That is, wouldn't you have to look outside of the text if you were trying to explain all the variants of the increase of the intensity of the time? Then, if you do that, it seems to me, you might have to entertain questions like, Was this a pathological response to a crippling disaster? And I do want to ask such questions.

SMITH: Well, let me make one or two rejoinders. I think the intensity is so charged and so important that it explains and justifies the effort that J. L. Martyn made to find a desirable setting for it—whether he's right or wrong. I think that it's the right instinct to do that and he himself has backed away from linking his thesis to the establishment of the Twelfth Benediction in the ninth decade and so forth. It may be a local phenomenon, but it seems to be something very real. Whether it's pathological or not, I don't know. But I think there is a danger of that kind of pathology there; when love is rejected, the reaction is very strong. It's very much like the attitude of military people that peace is the greatest thing, but when somebody violates peace, then that justifies dropping the bomb.

CHARLESWORTH: This is very helpful, Dr. Smith. Could you say a few words on the *apocynagōgos* and the malediction against the *Notzrim* or *Minim*?

SMITH: To me, Kimelman's arguments that the *Notzrim* are latecomers to the text are convincing, but that doesn't mean that the *Minim* are not Jewish Christians. And from what I can see, they may well be. It's one thing to say that the Twelfth Benediction made it impossible for Christians wherever it was used to remain in the synagogue. It's another thing to say that the Twelfth Benediction, as Martyn suggests, was promul-

gated throughout Judaism by the Council of Jamnia between 80 and 90. And as Kimelman points out, if it was, it's very strange that we don't have any evidence for its use in that way.

BEKER: But that's the *apocryphos* reference. Does it have to be tied to the Twelfth Benediction?

SMITH: I don't know if it has to be tied to the benediction. I think that Martyn's effort to tie it to that was a brilliant ploy. In a way Martyn relies on Davies, who describes what might have happened in *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*. I think that Martyn is taking up Davies' suggestion and applying it to *John*, where it is more appropriate than with reference to *Matthew*.

CHARLESWORTH: That's very helpful. What I really find lacking in what Christian scholars do when they refer to Jamnia (Yavneh), is that they tend to assume we know what happened at Jamnia. We have nothing like a copy of the proceedings of the council at Jamnia.

PRIEST: But there's a point, though. I was brought up with the same understanding of the malediction as Martyn espoused. Even though there is no direct evidence about certain things, we're still dealing with a period in which there is very direct evidence about certain other things—the most important things. It seems to me that a calculated inference is legitimate—not to say with absolute certainty, This is what happened; but when dealing with historical texts, we are forced to use creative historical imagination from time to time. And it may be dead wrong, but at least it's a starting point from which we can operate.

SMITH: Yes. In that respect, I think Martyn's proposal is a brilliant stroke.

CHARLESWORTH: I find two things very fascinating. The first is that John is the one evangelist who constantly rewrites and recasts his traditions more than anyone else and, at the same time, *John* is the one gospel in which we can see clear strata and redactional activity. For example, in 3:22, 3:26, and 4:1 Jesus is baptizing. But later editors do not want Jesus to be a

a process of abstracting Jesus from the context in which he lived, of sapping the Jewishness out of Jesus. And this leads us to my second point, that in *John* we find a harsh anti-Judaism: the Jews are the cosmic forces militantly organized against Jesus, and he in turn is struggling not against demons but against "the Jews."

BEKER: Dr. Smith, don't you think, apart from hostility to the Jews, that once you say "before Abraham was, I am," you have lost everything in the Jewish-Christian dialogue?

SMITH: I'm not so sure of that. I think it depends on what kind of discussion we're talking about. I think that the evangelist John in his explicit statements seems to allow no rapprochement between Christians and Jews. But I also think that *John* gives us an agenda that we've got to talk about.