

CHRISTOLOGY AS A CLUE TO THE CONCERNS
OF THE JOHANNINE COMMUNITY

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OF THE JOHANNINE COMMUNITY

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Problem

The historical background of the Fourth Gospel.

Method

Christology was both a major issue leading to a schism in the Johannine community at the time of the Epistles and a major concern of the Gospel. If the Christology of the Gospel reflects this controversy, then this controversy would form part of its historical context.

Procedure

The Johannine Epistles and Gospel are investigated independently to prevent bias.

Results

The secessionists confronted by the Epistles espouse a form of docetic Christology, while the Christology of the Gospel is formulated apparently unaware of any problem with doceticism.

Conclusions

While the emphasis in the Gospel on unity and love could easily be interpreted against a background of community schism, the different protagonists portrayed in the Gospel, and that its Christology seems to be unaware of a docetic problem, make it unlikely that the historical backgrounds are identical.

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OF THE JOHANNINE COMMUNITY

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A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religion

by
Robert K. McIver
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CHRISTOLOGY AS A CLUE TO THE CONCERNS
OF THE JOHANNINE COMMUNITY

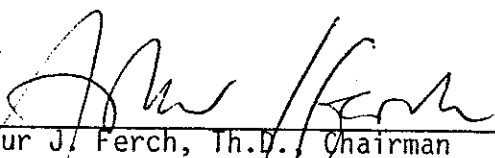
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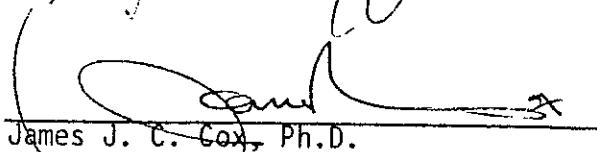
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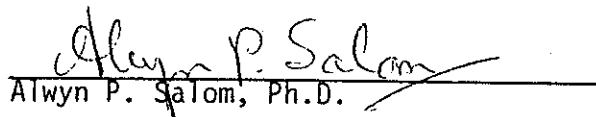
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Dedicated to my Mother
in appreciation of her unfailing love

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		
I. Starting Points		1
Why This Study?		1
Assumptions and Methodological Considerations		6
Procedure		8
II. SCHISM IN THE JOHANNINE COMMUNITY: THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES		9
The Dimensions of the Conflict		9
1 John		10
2 John		18
3 John		20
III. THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF THE DEBATE		22
Jesus Is the Christ		24
Jesus Is the Son of God		26
Jesus Christ Came in Flesh		28
External Witnesses and Parallels		30
The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians		39
Gnosticism		42
Summary		49
Conclusions		50
IV. THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL		53
The Motif of Descent-Ascent		54
Father/Son, Sender/Sent		61
The Titles of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel		66
Son, Son of God		71
Son of Man		72
I Am		76
Other Titles		79
The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel		80
Other Aspects of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel		82
V. HAS A CONTEXT FOR THE FOURTH GOSPEL BEEN DISCOVERED		84
The Case "For"		84

The Case "Against"	88
Christology	88
Discernable Protagonists in the Fourth Gospel	89
Conclusion	93
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	95

CHAPTER I

STARTING POINTS

Why This Study?

Fundamental to a correct interpretation of any document is the context in which it was written and the reason for its writing. The meaning of an author can be completely misconstrued unless the situation addressed is understood. But, as J. Louis Martyn has observed, "More than any other document in the New Testament, the Fourth Gospel has seemed consistently to invite readers in every century to interpret it solely in their own terms."¹ Inviting though this method of approach is, it is self-evident that it is unsatisfactory as a way of understanding the intended meaning of the Fourth Gospel.

The delineation of the correct background against which to interpret the Fourth Gospel has not been easy.² The last fifty years

¹J. Louis Martyn, History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel, rev. ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1968), p. 15.

²Cf. the first words of C. K. Barrett in his book, The Gospel of John and Judaism (London: SPCK, 1975), p. 1:

"No one can satisfactorily explain a text if he has no knowledge of its environment, the readership for which it was intended, and the purpose for which it was written. If a book is anonymous, published without notice and review, there is likewise no means of investigating its environment, readership, and purpose, and thus of explaining it. This dilemma is nothing new for the student of ancient literature. Nor has it only recently been discovered that there is no ancient

have seen a swing away from interpreting the Johannine literature against a Hellenistic background¹ to interpreting it against a Jewish background.² More recently, significant attempts have been made to delineate more accurately the history of the Johannine community.³ Many of the questions raised by the latest research have been very instructive, and some useful results have emerged,⁴ but on the whole

book in which the problem is more acute or bewildering than it is in the Fourth Gospel."

¹This is the old position of critical orthodoxy. Rudolf Bultmann is probably the most recent major exponent of this view. His commentary on John, which became widely available only after the second World War (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, ed. and trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971]), is worked out in terms of an orthodox reaction to gnosticism.

²See, for example, J. A. T. Robinson, "The New Look on the Fourth Gospel," in *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London: SCM, 1976), pp. 94-106; F. Lamar Cribbs, "A Reassessment of the Date and Origin of the Gospel of John," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970):38-55; A. Wind, "Destination and Purpose of the Gospel of John," *Novum Testamentum* 14 (1972):26-69; Robert Kyser, "Community and Gospel: Vectors in Fourth Gospel Criticism," *Interpretation* 31 (1977):355-60, 362-65; Stephen S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), pp. 11-68.

³E.g., Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979); Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle* (London: SCM, 1976). Cullmann has summarized his thinking in an article in the *Expository Times*: "A New Approach to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel," *Expository Times* 71 (1959-1960):8-12, 39-43. Also R. Allan Culpepper, *The Johannine School: An Evaluation of the Johannine-School Hypothesis Based on an Investigation of the Nature of Ancient Schools*, *Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study* 26 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1975); Martyn, p. 1, n. 1. Georg Richter is summarised for English readers by A. J. Matill, Jr., "Johannine Communities Behind the Fourth Gospel: Georg Richter's Analysis," *Theological Studies* 38 (1977):294-315. Brown, pp. 178-81, also summarises the work of Marie-Emile Boismard and Wolfgang Langbrandtner.

⁴Some studies, by their close investigation of the text of the Gospel as it now stands, have turned up some very interesting results. To take just one example, Raymond E. Brown's article, "Other Sheep Not of This fold: The Johannine Perspective on Christian Diversity in the Late First Century," *Journal of Biblical*

the resulting reconstructions have been unsatisfactory. Many of these rely on complex theories regarding the history of the redaction of the Gospel. Each different theological viewpoint detected in the Gospel is allocated to a different redactor, and abrupt transitions are taken as a clue to the seams between the work of the different redactors. There are considerable problems with this method of approach, not the least of which is that no theory of redaction has been able to command any sort of scholarly consensus.¹ Not only this, it is somewhat arbitrary to demand of a writer² a consistency that is rarely achieved even by modern writers. In the case of the Fourth

Literature 97 (1978):5-22, has shown unexpected diversity amongst those considering themselves to be Christians. His analysis is unlikely to be overturned because it is dependent only on the text of the Gospel as it now exists, and not on any hypothetical reconstruction of sources.

¹The comment of Urban C. von Wahlde about Robert Kysar's article, "The Source Analysis of the Fourth Gospel: A Growing Consensus?" *Novum Testamentum* 15 (1973):134-52, is to the point: "It is important to realize the limited extent of this consensus as it is to realize the fact of an emerging consensus at all. While the above disagree only minimally about a basic core of signs in the gospel, they disagree considerably about what other material belongs to the source" ("The Terms for Religious Authorities in the Fourth Gospel: A Key to Literary Strata?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 [1979]:232, n. 2). See also the article by D. A. Carson, "Current Source Criticism of the Fourth Gospel: Some Methodological Questions," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978):411-29, who concludes:

"In brief, this paper is an appeal for probing agnosticism in these matters. This is not to say that the fourth evangelist used no sources; it is a priori not unlikely that he did. But it may be doubted that this has been demonstrated to any significant degree of probability; and it is certain that if they exist, these sources have not yet been isolated in a way which permits precise redaction criticism of the sort in which Fortna wishes to engage" (p. 428).

²Many commentators today would speak of a "Johannine school" rather than an "author" for the Fourth Gospel. The discussion of single versus multiple authorship lies outside the scope of this thesis, but if the authorship of the Fourth Gospel is attributed to

Gospel, the meaning can be entirely misunderstood if two passages are dismissed as contradictory and therefore attributed to different authors. The pattern of repetition and modification that is found in the Fourth Gospel can thereby be completely missed.¹

The difficulty of finding an adequate basis for a careful investigation of the history of the community behind the Fourth Gospel has not gone unnoticed. Raymond E. Brown tells his readers: "I warn the reader that my reconstruction claims at most probability; and if sixty percent of my detective work is accepted, I shall be happy indeed."² This thesis proposes to avoid some of these difficulties by

a school, then the demand for perfect consistency becomes even more tenuous.

¹Wayne A. Meeks makes the following pertinent remarks on p. 48 of his excellent article, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972):

"The major literary problem of John is its combination of remarkable stylistic unity and thematic coherence with glaringly bad transitions between episodes at many points. The countless displacement, source, and redaction theories that litter the graveyards of Johannine research are voluble testimony to this difficulty. Many of the elements of the unitary style are probably not specific to a single author, but belong to the Johannine 'school,' for they are frequently found distributed between portions of the gospel which, on other grounds, we would attribute to 'source,' 'evangelist,' and 'redactor.' On the other hand, not all the *aporiae* in the present form of the gospel can be attributed to clumsy redaction; most of them evidently were acceptable to the evangelist, despite his ability to produce large, impressively unified literary compositions. . . . There are a number of examples not only of double entendre which are progressively clarified by repetition and modification, but also of self-contradiction that are manifestly deliberate ('I do not judge . . . yet if I do judge . . . , 8:15)."

²Brown, *Community*, p. 7. J. Louis Martyn makes this vigorous comment:

"I should also say a brief word about the indicative mood and the subjunctive mood. Considering the widespread use of the indicative mood in the work of historians, it has occurred to me that it would be a valuable practice for the historian to

limiting itself to what can be discovered about the history of the Johannine community without making assumptions about the sources used by the evangelist, or trying to divide the Gospel into different literary strata. The nature of the Fourth Gospel makes these sorts of assumptions so flimsy that they cannot be used as a basis for further investigations without falling into the trap of circular reasoning. Instead, the Johannine documents (The Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles)¹ as they now exist are carefully surveyed to discover how much of the history of the Johannine community can be recovered. The entry point used is the situation revealed by the Johannine letters. As is noted later, the community was racked by theological discussion at the time the Johannine letters were written (see chapter 2). Here, surely, is a secure starting point from which to investigate the history of the Johannine Community. Of all the Johannine literature, only in these letters can indisputable evidence for the situation of the Johannine community be found, and it appears most likely that the dimensions of the conflict revealed in them would

rise each morning saying to himself three times slowly and with emphasis, 'I do not know.' The direct pertinence to this suggestion to the present chapter will be at least partially grasped if the reader will bear in mind the necessity to interpret a good many of my indicative verbs as though they were in the subjunctive mood. The number of points in the history of the Johannine community about which we may be virtually certain is relatively small, and we need to be clear about that" (The Gospel of John in Christian History [New York: Paulist, 1979], p. 92).

¹It was originally envisaged that the Revelation of John would also be included in this investigation, but it was quickly discovered that this would have introduced so many additional problems needing careful investigation (e.g., the common background of Revelation and the Fourth Gospel cannot be assumed, it would need separate investigation, etc.) that the thesis would run to an unmanageable length.

give valuable clues to the situation underlying the Fourth Gospel. Thus, the question to be investigated is this: Does the conflict revealed in 1, 2, and 3 John provide the correct historical background against which to interpret the Fourth Gospel? Does a careful investigation of the dimensions of the conflict revealed in the Johannine letters help to provide the key to interpret the Fourth Gospel in such a way as to reveal the history of the Johannine community? To keep the investigation to a manageable size, the questions are investigated in terms of Christology, one of the key issues of debate in the letters, and one of the key areas of concern in the Fourth Gospel.

This approach is not without its methodological difficulties. Difficult questions about the temporal relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the epistles need to be answered. Not only this, the investigation needs to avoid the trap of letting the situation discovered in the epistles be imposed upon the Fourth Gospel.¹ Thus the assumptions underlying the investigation, along with the methodology to be used, must be set out clearly.

Assumptions and Methodological Considerations

Fortunately, there is a considerable degree of consensus about the fundamental assumption of this thesis--that the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles come from the same first-century Christian

¹Cf. the complaint of D. Moody Smith Jr.: "Although it has long been customary to use the Epistles, especially 1 John, to interpret the Gospel, and vice versa, this is at best a methodologically questionable procedure" ("Johannine Christianity: Some Reflections on Its Character and Delineation," New Testament Studies 21 [1974-75]:233-4).

community. Consequently, the disputed question as to common, community or multiple authorship need not be dealt with.¹

The temporal relationship between the works is a problem for which an adequate answer is not easy. Some parts of the Epistles presuppose material that is in the Fourth Gospel (e.g., the old "new commandment" in 1 John 2:7-11), but this does not necessarily mean that the Fourth Gospel was in a written form at the time the Epistles were written (although it makes it more likely). Most scholars would date all four documents within twenty years of each other, in the latter part of the first century. This means that they are generally considered close to each other in time. That, added to the fact that they come from the same community, is enough of a basis to work on. It shows clearly the four documents must be considered the most important evidence for formulating an outline of the history of the Johannine community. However, a basic problem still remains. It must

¹This matter has been well canvassed. A. E. Brooke, in his commentary, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912) after an exhaustive investigation concluded that 1 John and the Fourth Gospel were written by the same author (pp. i-xix, especially p. ix). C. H. Dodd, on the other hand, in "The First Epistle of John and the Fourth Gospel," *Bulletin, John Rylands Library* 21 (1937):129-56, and, in a less technical manner, in his commentary, *The Johannine Epistles*, Moffat New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946), pp. xlvii-lvi, denied a common authorship. His conclusions were challenged by W. F. Howard, "The Common Authorship of the Johannine Gospel and Epistles," *Journal of Theological Studies* o.s. no. 48 (1947):12-25; A. P. Salom, "Some Aspects of the Grammatical Style of 1 John," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74 (1955):96-102; and W. G. Wilson, "An Examination of the Linguistic Evidence Adduced against the Unity of Authorship of the First Epistle of John and the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Theological Studies* o.s. no. 49 (1948):147-56. For more recent opinions see Brown, *Community*, pp. 93-103; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles*, Hermeneia, trans. R. P. O'Hara, L. C. McGaughey, and R. W. Funk, ed. R. W. Funk (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), p. 1; and I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, New International Commentary, NT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 31-41.

continually be born in mind that there is the possibility that the temporal gap between the works is great enough so the situation that lies behind them is different, and so different as to make the sort of investigation done in this thesis nonsensical. Hence, the procedure adopted must be designed to minimize the problem.

Procedure

Because it cannot be guaranteed that the Gospel and the Epistles were written close enough in time to ensure the same situational background, they must, as far as possible, be investigated independently. Therefore, the following procedure is proposed: (1) The Epistles will be carefully investigated to determine the historical situation that lies back of their composition (chapter 2). (2) Because the dimension of the conflict revealed in the Epistles that will be most thoroughly investigated is the issue of Christology, the Christology of the Fourth Gospel will be independently investigated (chapter 4). (3) Once this has been done, an adequate basis should exist to ask whether or not the same situation lies behind both works (chapter 5). The key step is the independent investigation of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel. Were the investigation not independent, there would be no guarantee that the evidence were not being twisted to suit the demands of making a correlation. If it is shown that the same situation lies behind both works, however, then part of the historical background against which to interpret the Fourth Gospel will have been established.

CHAPTER II

SCHISM IN THE JOHANNINE COMMUNITY:

THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES

A careful reading of the Johannine Epistles indicates that they were written at a time of intense conflict within the community. This chapter attempts to delineate the issues of this conflict. In particular, the christological dimension of the debate is explored as fully as possible. This is done, first, by examining the actual Epistles themselves and, second, by looking at external texts which may throw light on the controversy.

The Dimensions of the Conflict

The interpretative key to 1 John is to be found in 1 John 2:19: ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν. εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν. It is clear from this verse that the Johannine community had experienced a schism, and that the "they" refers to a group from within the community that has left the community.¹ "They have gone out from us" is a reference to a definite

¹This is universally admitted by commentators. See, e.g., Brooke, pp. 53-54; Brown *Community*, pp. 103ff.; Bultmann, pp. 36-37; Dodd, *Johannine Epistles*, p. 52; Marshall, pp. 151-52; F. D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1957), 7:644, amongst many others.

group of schismatics, and the general outlines of the debate between these schismatics and the group left behind is recoverable from the Epistles. It is to this group of secessionists that 1 John 4:5 refers: "They are of the world, because of this . . . the world hears them."¹ The impression gained is that the group that separated is more successful. Thus the context against which 1 John is to be interpreted is this schism. 1 John is written to the group left in the community. This group had recently experienced the bitterness and insecurity involved in the intense conflict that led to the schism. Consequently, 1 John is to be understood as a reassurance to the remaining group and is a vigorous defense of orthodoxy against the theology of the secessionists.² The Johannine Epistles are now examined to discover how much of the details of the debate between the orthodox community and the secessionists is recoverable.

1 John

The very first words of 1 John (ὁ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς) introduce a major theme in the defence of the writer's position. He is stating what was from the beginning, what always was true. He is stating it on the indisputable authority of one who has seen and touched. There

¹Unless otherwise stated, scriptural citations in English are taken from the R.S.V. The Greek N.T. text used is the United Bible Societies' text, 3d ed., 1978).

²Judith M. Lieu, in her recent article, "'Authority to Become Children of God;' a Study in 1 John," *Novum Testamentum* 23 (1981):210-28, emphasises the aspect of reassurance of the remaining community. However, the writer of 1 John clearly has in mind the debate with the Schismatics as he formulates what he says. It is not unlikely that there was still contact and acrimonious discussion between the two groups, but even if that was not the case, the dimensions of the debate leading to the schism still determine most of the material in 1 John.

is no novelty in his message. It is as they heard it from the beginning. This is a recurring theme. It is not a new commandment that he writes; it is an old command which they have had from the beginning (2:7). He does not write because they do not know the truth; they know the truth (2:21). The reader is urged: "Just as it [the $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$] has taught you, abide [$\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nuετε$] in him" (2:27).¹ They are to remain in the truth they have been taught, the truth they received from the beginning. In 1 John the writer is very concerned that they do not move past what they have already learned.² This has a strong apologetic function. The readers are called to remember what they have already learned; they are called back to their previous beliefs. The older message is the authentic message, and they need not be worried that some have left their ranks to follow after some new ideas. This is all the more true because the writer of 1 John is a trustworthy witness. He tells what he has seen, heard, and even touched. He is passing on the message which he heard from Jesus himself (1:5).³

In view of the experience the readers of 1 John have gone through, there is irony in the use of the word $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\omega\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha$ in 1:3, 6.

¹Edward Malatesta, Interiority and Covenant (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978) has highlighted the importance of the concept of "abiding in" in 1 John (see pp. 27-32 and the chart on p. 90), but he has somehow missed the polemic import of the writer's use of this theme (see, for instance, his conclusions on pp. 231-33, 289-90, 323-24).

²This theme is also very strong in 2 John. In 2 John 9 a contrast is made between those who have gone forward and have not remained in the teaching of Christ, and those who remained in the teaching. In 1 John also, it is clear that the writer regards those who have left as having moved past the bounds of true belief.

³Of writers consulted for this thesis, only Dodd appears to have noticed this dynamic (p. 8). (In fairness, it should be added that neither Brown or Malatesta comments specifically on these texts).

Fellowship is something they no longer shared with those that had "gone out." But they do have a more important fellowship. They have a fellowship with "us" (the eyewitnesses and first believers) and with the Father and his son Jesus Christ. A strong dimension of this fellowship is the love the true believer has for his fellow believers. The message the readers have heard from the beginning is that they should love one another (3:11).¹ He who does not love his brother remains in death, while he who loves his brother knows that he has passed from death to life (3:14). There is a strong contrast between the true believers and the world. In fact, they are not to be surprised if the world hates them (3:13). The strong call to love one another is repeated in 4:7-12. Those who love one another are born of God because God is love. God loved us so much that he gave his only Son for our sins. Therefore, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. If any say that they love God, and hate their brothers they are liars; because if they hate their brothers who they see, how can they love God who they cannot see (4:20)? One cannot but think that these comments arise out of the bitterness of the schism. It is not unlikely that the author of 1 John is accusing the secessionists over this issue. He and those remaining have love for one another, but those who have left have not shown this ideal love.

¹There is a fascinating play on the reader's expectations here. In 2:7 the ground is prepared. The writer speaks of a new commandment that is not a new commandment. The interplay over new and old commandments of 2:7-8 must arouse in anyone familiar with the Johannine tradition (as those who were reading 1 John assuredly were) the expectation of the words of Jesus found in John 13:34. However, it is not until 3:11; 4:9-11 that the words of Jesus are used; and they are not introduced as a command (ἐντολή) but as the message (ἀγγελία) which was heard at the beginning.

Therefore, they are not born of God and have not passed from death to life. Whether or not this is so, the strong emphasis on the need of love one for another should be read in the context of the internal situation of the Johannine community as they cope with their recent schism.

It is widely acknowledged that the words "we have no sin," in 1:8, and "we do not sin," in 1:10, are slogans of the opponents of the writer of 1 John.¹ The construction of the sentences points to this. "If we say . . . we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1:8). This is not an empty rhetorical device. Real people saying these things and they are wrong. Once it is seen that these two statements are slogans of the opponents, then 1:6 can also be read as a statement of those opposed. They claim that they have fellowship with God, but this is not true because they actually walk in darkness. This shows them to be liars; they do not do the truth (another key word in 1 John). This link between a claim to have fellowship with God and a claim to ethical perfection becomes important in later discussion about possible links between gnosticism and the heresy confronted in 1 John.

The ethical aspect of the opponent's theology leads 1 John to devote much thought to the issue. In 1:8 it is clearly stated that those who claim ethical perfection are deceiving themselves, that the

¹Brown, *Community*, pp. 123-24, Bultmann, pp. 20:21, Dodd, pp. 21-22, Marshall, p. 110, and J. R. Stott, *The Epistles of John*, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (London: Tyndale, 1964), pp. 76-77, all understand this to be the case. John Painter, in *John: Witness and Theologian* (London: SPCK, 1975), pp. 119-21, identifies the following slogans: (1) We have fellowship (1:6); (2) We have no sin (1:8); (3) Not ever sinned (1:10); (4) I know Him (2:4); (5) I abide in Him (2:6); (6) I am in the light (2:9); and (7) I love God (4:10).

truth is not in them. The following sentence explains why they are wrong. The heart of the Christian message is that if we confess our sins they will be forgiven (1:9). This sort of dual statement is found again in 2:1. The reason for 1 John being written is that the believers will not sin;¹ but if any do sin, they have an advocate with the Father. Thus, while sin is to be forgiven, it is not something that is accepted as a matter of course in the Christian's life; the sincere Christian is continuously striving to overcome sin.

In 2:4 another slogan is introduced by the words "ὁ λέγων ὅτι." The secessionists are claiming they know him (Jesus? or God?), yet they do not keep the commandments. The incongruity of claiming perfection and at the same time not keeping the commandments might lead one to postulate that 1 John is written against two conflicting groups. It is not impossible to reconcile both statements into one system of belief. One who claims he knows God might at the same time think that only this knowledge is important, and that what he does in the body is irrelevant. Some forms of second-century gnosticism exhibit this sort of thinking. Thus it can be said that the same system of belief can encompass both a claim to know God, and a denial of any need for living according to the commands of God (in the body).

Against this divergence between theory and practice shown in

¹Exactly what is meant by the seeming inconsistency between denying the possibility of perfection on the one hand and, on the other, claiming it for the reader has occasioned interest in this passage. In addition to the commentaries previously cited, see also Harry C. Swadling, "Sin and Sinlessness in 1 John," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 35 (1982):205-11; H. K. La Rondelle, *Perfection and Perfectionism* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1971), pp. 227-36; Sakae Kubo, "1 John 3:9: Absolute or Habitual," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 7 (1969):47-56.

the lives of the secessionists 1 John has some very pointed things to say. The true knowledge of God has some very practical manifestations. If any one loves his brother, then he has remained in the light (2:9); but if any one hates his brother, then he is in darkness and walks in darkness (2:10). In 3:3, after pointing out that the believer will be like Jesus when he appears, because he will see him as he is, all those who have this hope are told to purify themselves. Then follows a discussion about sin. All who sin do lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness (3:4). In fact, all who remain in him (Jesus?) do not sin (3:6)! This point is brought home even more strongly, because those who sin have not seen God or known him (3:6). The readers of 1 John are not to deceive themselves. The person that is righteous is he that does righteously (3:7). All those born of God do not sin!¹ It is in this way that the children of God and the children of the Devil can be distinguished.

1 John 3:11-18 extends this theme. Love is again the key idea. The person that does not love, the person who hates, is actually a murderer. In 4:7-12 the theme again is love. God loved so much that he sent his Son, and if God loves like that, we also ought to love one another. Once more in 4:16-21, love is the theme. Perfect love casts out fear. The commandment we have is that we love God and love our brother. Then 1 John 5:3-5 speaks about ethics. The love of God is that we keep his commands--which are not heavy.

¹See above, p. 14, n. 1. Raymond Brown has this to say about these statements: "I understand his 'cannot be a sinner' to mean cannot consistently be a sinner, for elsewhere he recognizes that Christians may fall short of the 'should'" (Community, p. 126; all emphasis in quotations is that of the original author, except when otherwise noted).

He that is born of God has overcome the world.

Now in 5:16-17 the strange concept of two types of sin is introduced--one sin that is not unto death and one that is unto death.¹ Again in 5:18 it is stated that all who are born of God do not sin. Thus it is seen that the ethical dimension of the dispute is canvassed repeatedly and at length in 1 John. It is clearly an important aspect of the argument, and this is only proper because it is in the field of practicalities that beliefs are worked out. Right belief leads to right practice, wrong belief leads to wrong practice.

The issue that arouses the writer of 1 John more than any other is introduced in 2:18-25. This conflict leads him to think that it is the last hour. It stirs him so deeply he considers those who are promulgating the new ideas to be antichrists, harbingers of the end. Who is the liar except he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son (2:22). In 4:1-6 the theme is taken up again. All spirits may be tested by whether they confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh or not. If they confess that Jesus came in the flesh, they are of God; if they do not, they are of antichrist, who (they have heard) was coming into

¹ La Rondelle, p. 235, has this to say about this distinction: "John distinguishes between two categories of sin in basically the same way as in the hamartiology of the old-covenant cultus, e.g. Num 15, 27-31, and of the Psalms. There is a basic difference for John between sin within the walk in darkness, and sin within the walk of light. These sins might be designated cultically as deliberate, presumptuous sin and unintentional sin, i.e., all sin which is repented of. John himself designates them in 5, 16f. as a 'mortal sin' which is hopeless because man himself has radically broken with God and 'sin which is not mortal' which can be forgiven." See also, I. Howard Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus." *Interpretation* 21 (1967):247. For an alternate viewpoint see Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, Anchor Bible (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1982), pp. 612-19.

the world and who has now come. 1 John 4:15 states that those who have God abiding in them are those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God. A similar expression is found in 5:1. Those that are born of God are those who believe that Jesus is the Christ.

Christology is also the theme of 5:6-15. The section starts with a discussion of the three witnesses: the water, the spirit, and the blood. He who does not believe (in the Son of God) makes God a liar. It is a crucial issue because he who has the Son has life, and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. Those who believe in the name of the Son of God have life.

Other interesting aspects of the dialogue between 1 John and those who have left appear, not the least of which is the function of the Spirit as teacher. 1 John 2:20, 27 speaks of the $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$. The Spirit teaches them all things, they have no need of a teacher. Another aspect of the dialogue emphasizes truth. The contrast between truth and error is the contrast between light and darkness--indeed, the contrast between God and the evil one.

As stated above, the whole letter is a finely worked polemical document. To draw out every aspect of this would require a careful exegesis of almost every verse. However, enough has been said to indicate the major dimensions of this dialogue between 1 John and the opponents. The central issue is the Christological one, although more space is devoted to a discussion of ethics. It is out of the Christology, however, that the ethics proceed--belief is reflected in practice.¹ It is also the Christological issue that arouses the

¹Contra Harold S. Songer, who says:
 "To interpret the epistles from the perspective that they are mainly concerned with errors in Christology is to reverse the

writer of 1 John as does no other issue. Those who claim to be sinless are deceiving themselves, they are liars (1:6, 8). Those who deny the Father and the Son are antichrists; if they have not the Son they do not have life. It is belief on the name of the Son of God that leads to life eternal. Those who deny Jesus has come in the flesh are antichrists. The violence of these condemnations indicates the importance that the writer places on this issue. The Christological issue is the key issue; it is the task of the rest of this chapter to investigate this issue as fully as possible. It is helpful to consider first, however, the situation that is reflected in 2 John and 3 John to see if they have any bearing on the topic.

2 John

It is methodologically sound to consider 2 John separately from 1 John. 2 John is a private letter addressed to an individual or to a single house-church congregation.¹ The genre of 1 John is less easy to determine. There is no guarantee that the two works are intended for the same destination (no indication of destination is given in 1 John). It is not impossible that they were written to different geographical areas at different times. Thus 2 John needs to be carefully analyzed by itself before the question of the

concerns of the author. Clearly the ethical concerns were paramount in his mind, and he deals with the Christological errors secondarily and in relation to the ethical," "The Life Situation of the Johannine Epistles," Review and Expositor 67 (1970):404.

Contrast Brown: ". . . Christology was the main battleground between the author and the secessionists" (Community, p. 123).

¹ Brooke, p. 108; Brown, Epistles, p. 652; Bultmann, pp. 107-8; C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles (Moffat: London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946), p. 144; Marshall, p. 60 all regard "the elect lady" as a Christian congregation. The different possibilities are well canvassed in Brooke, Brown, and Dodd.

relationship between the situations behind the two works can be considered.

Although 2 John is very brief, many themes found in 1 John are found again in 2 John. 2 John 7 states that many deceivers have gone into the world. These deceivers do not acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. This is antichrist. Thus, the issue that is reflected in 1 John 2:18-27 is also present in 2 John. In fact, 2 John 7 is very close to 1 John 4:2-3 in the way it is expressed:

1 John 4:2 ὁ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα

2 John 7 οἱ . . . ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί.

This phrase appears to be a formula.

Other themes in 2 John are very close to what is found in 1 John. "Truth" is important in 2 John, as it is in 1 John. The first sentence of 2 John uses the word truth three times: the elect lady is loved by the elder in truth, not only by the elder, but by all who know the truth, because the truth will abide in "us" forever. In 2 John 5-6 the play on new/old commandment found in 1 John 2:7-11 and 3:11-18 is also found; as is the link between love and keeping the commands of God.

The theme of "abiding in" is also prominent. In 2 John 9 those who "go forward" and who do not "abide in" the teachings of Christ are said not to have God.

The correspondence between 1 John and 2 John is surprisingly close in a letter as short as 2 John. Hardly any of the content of 2 John, aside from the personal greeting and the ending, is not found

in 1 John. The correspondence is so great that Bultmann considers 2 John as a secondary work, dependent on 1 John, the letter form being fictional.¹ However, this is not a conclusion that must be drawn. As C. H. Dodd remarks: "If, however, we assume an imitator, we must confess that he has done his work with rare skill."² It is more probable that the close similarity between the two reflects rather a very similar situation and time. 2 John is facing the same sort of errors as 1 John. In 2 John there are those who wish to press forward, to leave behind the traditions about Jesus believed and taught by "the elder." They refuse to acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh. In refuting them, and in giving "the elect lady" reasons for not heeding them, the writer draws upon the same sort of arguments that have served so well in 1 John. The very close similarity between them argues that the two writings were produced near each other in time. It is not impossible that they were also addressed to the same situation, but the evidence is not definite enough to establish that to be the case.

Therefore, it is concluded that 2 John can be used as evidence to establish more fully the thinking of 1 John about the issues raised by the secessionists.

3 John

The situation to which 3 John is addressed appears to be different from that of the other two letters. The issue may well involve

¹Bultmann, p. 1.

²Epistles, p. lxy., cf. Brooke, pp. lxxiii-lxxiix, Brown, Epistles, pp. 16-19, and Marshall, p. 31.

theological differences, but these are not discussed in the letter. What is at stake is the control of the church, and the authority of the "elder." Opposing "the elder" (the author of the letter) is Diotrephes. Diotrephes is described as one "who likes to put himself first" (vs. 9). The elder had written, but Diotrephes did not recognize "us." He brought unjustified charges against "us," and, not content with that, he did not receive the "brethren" and actually wished to throw them out of the church! There is no indication in the letter of the theological persuasion of Diotrephes, whether or not he was one of those who "deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh." Thus, without this information one can only speculate upon the theological position of Diotrophes.¹ It is impossible to say whether or not the conflict between the "elder" and Diotrephes has anything to do with the schism that affected the church(es) to which 1 John and 2 John are directed. Consequently, 3 John is not used as evidence in the investigation of the theological dialogue between 1 John and the schismatics.

¹Bultmann (p. 101, n. 8) makes some very pertinent criticisms of Ernst Käsemann's suggestion that Diotrophes is actually the orthodox leader who had excommunicated the writer of 1 John on this point. Diotrophes is discussed by Abraham J. Malherbe, "The Inhospitability of Diotrophes," in God's Christ and His People, ed. J. Jervell and W. A. Meeks (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), pp. 222-32; Vernon Bartlet, "The Historical Setting of the Second and Third Epistles of St. John," Journal of Theological Studies o.s., no. 6 (1905):212-16.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF THE DEBATE

It has been established that Christology is a key issue dividing those who have remained in and those who have gone out of the Johannine community at the time of the writing of 1 and 2 John. It is to an investigation of the dynamics of this aspect of the controversy that attention is now given.

It would perhaps be helpful to gather all the pertinent data into one place. The texts involved are as follows:

1 John 2:18-24:

18 Παιδιά, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν, ὅθεν γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν. 19 ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν· εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μερηνήκεισαν ἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν· ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν. 20 καὶ ὑμεῖς χρίσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ οἴδατε πάντες². 21 οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀλλ' ὅτι οἴδατε αὐτὴν καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν. 22 Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν. 23 πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει, ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει. 24 ὑμεῖς ὁ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω. ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνη ὁ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε.

1 John 4:1-3:

4 Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε ἀλλὰ δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα εἰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, ὅτι πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον. 2 ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκετε τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ· πᾶν πνεῦμα ὁ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, 3 καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὁ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν² ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν· καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου, ὁ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη.

1 John 4:14-16:

14 καὶ ἡμεῖς τεθεάμεθα καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν ὅτι ὁ πατήρ ἀπέσταλκεν τὸν υἱὸν σωτήρα τοῦ κόσμου. 15 ὃς ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ θεῷ. 16 καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχει ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν.

1 John 5:1:

5 Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός, ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν γεννησάντα ἀγαπᾷ [καὶ]¹ τὸν γεγεννημένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ.

1 John 5:6-8

6 Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐλθὼν δι' ὕδατος καὶ αἵματος³, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι μόνον ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ ὕδατι καὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι· καὶ τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ μαρτυροῦν, ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια. 7 ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, 8 τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα⁴, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.

1 John 5:13-14:

13 Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ἵνα εἰδῆτε ὅτι ζωὴν ἔχετε αἰώνιον, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. 14 καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ παρρησία ἣν ἔχομεν πρὸς αὐτὸν ὅτι ἐάν τι αἰτῶμεθα κατὰ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ἀκούει ἡμῶν.

2 John 7:

7 ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος. 8 βλέπετε

In the above texts certain phrases stand out as formulae. These are often expressed negatively, in the terms in which the group that has "gone out" would use them. For example, 1 John 2:22 asks, "Who is the liar?" The answer is given in terms of a person who denies that Jesus is the Christ. The phrase "Jesus is the Christ" captures, for the writer of 1 John, the essence of the difference between himself and those who have "gone out." It is interesting to note that the same formula ("Jesus is the Christ") is stated positively in 1 John 5:1, where it is said that all who believe that Jesus is the Christ are born of God. Again, the phrase "Jesus is the Christ" sounds very like a formula, and because 1 John 2:22 reveals that this formula is a point of debate between the secessionists and the writer of 1 John,

then its use in 1 John 5:1 is to be understood as part of the hidden agenda of the whole document--the refutation of the statements of the secessionists.

Therefore it becomes evident that the writer of 1 John believes that the formulae revealed in these texts clearly define what is right as distinct from what is wrong. These formulae give a comprehensive delineation of the dividing lines between what is orthodox and what is not. They allow any reader to be able to recognize immediately those who are antichrists (1 John 2:22; 4:2-3; 2 John 7), and even to recognize the quality and certainty of their own standing before God and the prospects of salvation (1 John 4:15; 5:1, 13). The clearest formulae are as follows:

1. Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22; 5:1)
2. Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 4:15; 5:13)
3. Jesus Christ came in flesh (ἐν σαρκὶ: 1 John 4:2; 2 John 7)

To these might be added the formula that probably lies at the back of 1 John 5:6: "Jesus Christ came by (διὰ or ἐν) water and blood."

Because these formulae serve the important function of delineating between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in 1 and 2 John, they need to be investigated closely. Such an investigation should show the main items of discussion within the Johannine community that led to the schism.

Jesus Is the Christ

In using "Jesus is the Christ" as a test of orthodoxy, the writer of 1 John was confident that his readers knew exactly what he

meant. In fact, the meaning of calling Jesus "the Christ" had been well established in the Johannine community, as can be determined from reading the Fourth Gospel.¹ Indeed, the Fourth Gospel provides clues as to how both 1 John and secessionists arrive at their theological positions,² but the approach adopted here is to examine 1 and 2 John in isolation to see if it can be determined from them what the writer meant by the use of the term. This ensures that as far as possible the investigation of the Christology of the Epistles will be carried out independently from the investigation of the Christology of the Gospel.

In 1 and 2 John the title "Christ" is often applied directly to the name of Jesus, in the form Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (1 John 1:3; 2:1; 3:23; 4:2; 5:6, 20; 2 John 3, 7).³ In 1 John 2:22; 5:1 it has the form Ἰησοῦς ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός. This form emphasizes that the term "Christ" is to be regarded as a definite title, and that this title conveys a definite statement about the dignity and person of Jesus.

The most striking fact about the usage of the title "Christ" in 1 John is how intimately it is linked to the concept "Son of God." To deny that Jesus is the Christ is at the same time a denial of the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22-23). The phrase υἱός αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ

¹See the discussion of the title "Christ" in the Fourth Gospel in the next chapter.

²Raymond Brown effectively uses this methodology in *Community*, pp. 109-23. See also his article, "The Relationship to the Fourth Gospel shared by the Author of 1 John and by his Opponents," in *Text and Interpretation*, ed. E. Best and R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), pp. 57-69.

³It is also used this way in a rejected reading in 1 John 4:3. The term "Christ" standing alone as a designation of Jesus is in a variant of 2 John 9 that is also rejected.

Χριστοῦ is used in 1 John 1:3; 3:23; 5:20. This is significant because the idea of Messiah on which Christians built was not a supernatural figure. He belonged to the realm of the earth. That this aspect of the Messiah had not disappeared from the thinking of the Johannine community is shown by the way that the Fourth Gospel expands the idea of Messiah to include a supernatural dimension (e.g., see later discussion on John 7:25-31). Thus, in 1 John, the term is used in a dynamic way as a bridge between the earthly and heavenly aspect of Jesus. This is strengthened by the insistence of 1 John, clearly in opposition to the secessionist's teaching, that Jesus Christ came in flesh (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7). It is at this point that 1 John diverges strongly from the secessionists. Their denial that Jesus Christ came in flesh that shows that they are deceivers (2 John 2) and are led by a spirit other than the Spirit of God (1 John 4:2). Thus 1 John uses the concept of Christ to form a bridge between the concept of Son of God (which the secessionists apparently were happy to believe) and the earthly aspect of Jesus.

The other context in which the title "Christ" appears is in relation to mediation. 1 John 2:1 states that we have a παράκλητος with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the ἱλασμόν for our sin.

Jesus Is the Son of God

The Sonship of Jesus is a prominent theme in 1 John. It is found in 1:3, 7; 2:22, 23, 24; 3:8, 23; 4:9, 10, 14, 15; 5:5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 20. One of the main emphases in 1 John's use of the concept is the close identity between Jesus and the Father. 1 John

2:22-23 points out that those who deny that Jesus is the Christ are in fact denying the relationship between the Son and the Father. This is particularly serious because those who deny the Son do not have the Father; on the other hand, those who confess the Son do have the Father. The Christians addressed by 1 John call themselves children of God (3:2-3). This is possible through their abiding in Jesus. Just as Jesus is the Son of God, so those who abide in him are also related to God, through the relationship that Jesus has with God.

The other prominent emphasis in the use of the Son idea in 1 John is soteriological. In 1:7 it is the blood of Jesus which cleanses from sin. The blood of Jesus is efficacious in this respect because Jesus is the Son. Then 3:8 gives the reason the Son of God appeared; it was to destroy the works of the Devil. In 4:9-10 God's love is revealed in that he sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. 1 John 5:5 states that those who have overcome the world are those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Those who believe in the name of the Son of God have life (5:13). Thus the functional, soteriological aspect of the Sonship of Jesus is a key part of 1 John's use of the concept.

In later centuries, discussion about the person of Jesus lost this soteriological/functional key. In the New Testament, Christology is largely carried on in terms of function, not ontology. But this observation must not overlook the fact that in 1 John ontology is very much a part of the dialogue between "the elder" and the schismatics. It is highly likely that it is on this very concept of "Son of God" that the schismatics were basing their ontology. The schismatics were asking questions about the nature of Jesus in terms of ontology; 1

John answered in terms of function. This aspect of the dynamic of 1 John needs to be pursued further after a discussion of the relationship between the secessionists and the thought world of proto-gnosticism, and in the conclusions about the heresy faced by 1 John.

Jesus Christ Came in Flesh

Not only do the orthodox have the gift of the spirit (2:20, 27), but the secessionists also claim revelations from the spirit. 1 John has to warn his readers to test the spirits to see if they are from God (4:1). The test of the spirit is whether they confess or deny that Jesus came in flesh. Those who deny this are antichrists. The same sort of statement is found in 2 John 7 and is clearly one of the fundamental points of difference between 1 John and the secessionists.

John Stott makes an interesting suggestion regarding the interpretation of 1 John 4:2.¹ He points out that it is preferable to read ὁμολογεῖ in terms of a double accusative, thus reading the phrase as the confession of "Jesus," the "Christ come in the flesh." In view of 2:22, where the kernel of apostasy is identified as the denial that Jesus is the Christ, this reading is attractive. However, it can only be regarded as a possibility because, as Brooke notes, "But so far as grammar and syntax are concerned this separation of Ἰησοῦν from Χριστόν without anything in the context to necessitate it, or even to suggest it, is difficult."²

¹Stott, John R. W. The Epistles of John. London: Tyndale, 1964, p. 156. This reading also appears to be adopted by Houlden (p. 107), who links it to 2:22.

²Brooke, p. 109.

¹M. de Jonge expresses it this way:

In his article, "The Idea of Incarnation in First John," Interpretation 24 (1970):291-302, Paul Minear takes a different position. To Minear, the expression "Jesus Christ came in flesh" should rather be interpreted as "one way of saying that within the authentic Christian fellowship, there abides or dwells Christ's life, his truth, his love, his anointing, his word, his Spirit, and his commands" (p. 292). He arrives at this conclusion by building up parallelisms between 1 John 4:2 and 4:4. From this starting point:

But this misses the point of the intense conflict between 1 John and the secessionists. The "author's own situation" is this direct confrontation with the secessionists over the question of Christology. The secessionists might claim extra spiritual guidance, but 1 John explicitly points out how to tell the true spirits: they are the ones who confess Jesus Christ came in flesh; that Jesus Christ was fully human!

²Schweizer, E., and Baumgartel, F. "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (hereafter cited as TDNT), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 7:140.

full humanity of Jesus. It is the blood of Jesus that cleanses from sin (1:7).

It is most probable that 1 John 5:6-8 also is related to this issue. Jesus came not only by water but by water and the blood. The fact that 1 John felt the need to emphasize that Jesus did not come by water alone, but by water and blood, probably means that he is here engaging in argumentation against his opponents. The reference to water and blood could have pointed back to John 19:34, although in that place there is no reference to the Spirit. What is intriguing, though, is what the secessionists might mean by claiming that Jesus came by water only. It is possible that this refers to John the Baptist's witness concerning Jesus that he saw the Spirit descend on Jesus (John 1:32; presumably, this is something that happened at the baptism of Jesus--Mark 1:10--hence the reference to water). This would fit remarkably well with the teachings of Cerinthus that the Jesus did not become the Christ until the baptism, when the Christ actually descended on Jesus (see later comments on Cerinthus).

This largely exhausts what can be discovered from 1 and 2 John about the Christological dimension of the debate between "the elder" and the secessionists. However, there are still some external texts which might be relevant to this issue, and these are now examined.

External Witnesses and Parallels

The Letters of Ignatius

While on his way to martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius, second bishop of Antioch,¹ wrote several letters, only seven of which have

¹Eusebius Ecc1. Hist. 3:22: "Ignatius was famous as the second bishop at Antioch where Evodius had been the first." In Ecc1.

survived.¹ These letters are generally dated A.D. 107,² close in time to when most date the Johannine Epistles. This becomes even more significant when it is realized that Ignatius is writing about problems in the churches of Asia: Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia, Smyrna; and that he was the bishop of Antioch in Syria. These churches are all from the area near Ephesus where the Johannine writings are traditionally considered to have originated.³ These letters, then, bear direct evidence to churches in the region associated with the Johannine Epistles, from a time period close to when the Epistles were written. Thus they are potentially valuable as external witnesses to the church situation out of which the Johannine Epistles came.⁴ However, the Epistles of Ignatius need to be independently

Hist. 3:36 Eusebius counts Peter as the first bishop, but this is anachronistic.

¹These letters have survived in three recensions. The middle recension, while not accepted by all, is accepted by most scholars as authentic. For discussions of the authenticity of this middle recension see: J. B. Lightfoot, Dissertations on the Apostolic Age (London: MacMillan, 1892), pp. 239-41; Kirsopp Lake, The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 1 (London: Heinemann, 1970), pp. 166-71; William R. Schoedel, "Are the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch Authentic?" Religious Studies Review 6 (1980):196-201; C. P. Hammond Bammel, "Ignatian Problems," Journal of Theological Studies 33 (1982):62-97, esp. pp. 62-80.

²John Lawson, A Theological and Historical Introduction to the Apostolic Fathers (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 103; see also Lake, p. 166.

³E.g., Eusebius Eccl. Hist. 33:31; Irenaeus Contra. Haer. 3:3:4.

⁴Brown, Epistles, p. 6, states it this way:
 "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch are dated to ca. 110-115 and thus within about a decade of the composition of the Johannine Epistles and about two decades of the writing of John. Ignatius, who came from Antioch, visited and wrote to churches in Asia Minor, not far from Ephesus, thus having contact with the two cities most often proposed as the center of Johannine Christianity."

investigated before any comparison is made between the situations out of which the Epistles of Ignatius and John arose.

Clearly a division existed in several of the churches to which Ignatius wrote. In Ephesus there are those who show they have separated themselves by not joining in the common assembly (Eph. 5:3).¹ The Philadelphian church had been 'filtering' out dissension from amongst them (Ignatius chooses not to call it a 'division,' Phld. 3:1). In Smyrna a group that abstained from Eucharist and prayer grew up, because they could not confess that the Eucharist was "the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ who suffered for our sins" (Smyrn. 7:1). Indeed, it appears they were holding their own separate Eucharist (Smyrn. 8:1: the only valid Eucharist was one under the authority of the bishop). The church in Magnesia was warned not to be "led astray by strange doctrines or by old fables" (Magn. 8:1), while the church at Tralles is beseeched to "live only on Christian fare, and refrain from strange food, which is heresy" (Trall. 6:1). Even the church of Antioch in Syria, of which Ignatius was bishop, had recently undergone some upheaval, although it was at peace at the time of writing (Phil. 10:1; Smyrn. 11:2; Pol. 7:1).

Ignatius relates to these problems in a practical, more than in a theological, way. The answer to all these problems of disunity

T. W. Manson, in an article entitled, "Entry into Membership of the Early Church," Journal of Theological Studies o.s., no. 48 (1947):25-32, makes an interesting suggestion about John 5:7f. In it he discerns a reference to the different order adopted in Syria to the general practice of baptism, then anointing, and laying on of hands. In Syria this usage was reversed. Anointing and the laying on of hands preceded baptism. If Manson is correct, this would support the traditional ascription of the Johannine writings to Syria/Asia Minor.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, quotes are taken from Lake.

is crystal clear to Ignatius. The bishop was to be the focus of all unity. "For as many as belong to God and Jesus Christ,--these are with the bishop" (Phld. 3:2). "See that you all follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ follows the Father, and the presbytery as if it were the Apostles. And reverence the deacons as the command of God" (Smyrn. 8:1). Unity through obedience to the hierarchy of the church is a constant theme in all of Ignatius' epistles. "I exhort you:--Be zealous to do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God and the Presbyters in the place of the Council of the Apostles, and the deacons . . . entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ" (Magn. 6:1). This, then, is Ignatius' solution to the problems confronting the churches of Asia--unity by obedience to the bishop.

Despite the practical (rather than theological) approach of Ignatius, it is possible to reconstruct a reasonable picture of at least some of the issues that were dividing the churches of Asia.

In several instances, Ignatius attacks those causing dissension in more specific terms. Those that threaten to lead some of the church in Magnesia astray by strange doctrines or by profitless old fables are accused of wanting to live according to Judaism (Magn. 8:1). The Christian is not to "sabbatize" (σαββατίζοντες), but to live his life in accordance with the Lord's life (Magn. 9:1).¹ Thus, those that were troubling the church in Magnesia must have something in their teaching or practice that is derived in some way from

¹This interpretation of κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες is convincingly presented by Fritz Guy in his article, "'The Lord's Day' in the Letter of Ignatius to the Magnesians," Andrews University Seminary Studies 2 (1964):1-17.

Judaism, at least in the opinion of Ignatius.

Another clear reference to the beliefs of some of the dissident groups met by Ignatius is to be found in his letter to the Smyrnaeans:

. . . he truly suffered even as he also truly raised himself, not as some unbelievers say, that his Passion was merely in semblance,--but it is they who are merely in semblance, and even according to their opinions it shall happen to them, and they shall be without bodies and phantasmal. (Smyrn. 2)

In chapter 5 of his letter to the Smyrnaeans Ignatius complains further about these people. They are not persuaded by the prophecies or the law of Moses (5:1). They praise Ignatius, but they blaspheme his Lord by refusing to confess that he was clothed in flesh (5:2). This is what prevents them from attending Eucharist--they cannot confess that it is the flesh of Jesus who suffered for sins (7:1). What is patently clear from these remarks of Ignatius is that the group of Christians whom he characterizes as "unbelievers" do not believe that Jesus had a body of flesh. Thus his passion did not involve real suffering. This explains the reason Ignatius chose to start this letter as he does, with an exposition about the truth concerning Jesus:

. . . he is in truth of the family of David according to the flesh, God's son by the will and power of God, truly born of a Virgin, baptised by John that "all righteousness might be fulfilled by him," truly nailed to a tree in the flesh for our sakes under Pontius Pilate and Herod the Tetrarch. . . . (Smyrn. 1:1-2)

Ignatius also points out to the Smyrnaeans that after his resurrection Jesus invited the disciples to handle him, and ate and drank before them to show that he was not a phantom without a body (3:2-3).

In the church at Tralles there appears to be a group with very similar ideas:

Be deaf therefore when anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the family of David, and of Mary, who was truly born, both ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died . . . who also was truly raised from the dead. . . . But if, as some affirm who are without God--that is, are unbelievers--his suffering was only a semblance. . . . (Trall. 9:1-10:1)

This appears to be the main point of heresy (6:1) which has led to the formation of a separate group who do not meet with the bishop and the church (7:1-2).

It is of great interest how these Docetists relate to the group of Judaisers in Magnesia. Strangely, the Judaisers are themselves Docetists. In the midst of his arguments with those who live according to Judaism, in urging them not to "sabbatise" but to live according to the Lord's life, Ignatius pauses to mention that some deny his death (9:1).¹ Later in the letter to the Magnesians Ignatius follows a warning against the snare of vain doctrine with an exhortation to be "convinced of the birth and passion and resurrection. . . ." Thus, it appears that there is some identity between the Judaisers and the Docetists in Magnesia.

Further evidence for this connection is to be found in the situation at Smyrna. Those that deny that Jesus was clothed in flesh are not convinced by the law and the prophets (Smyrn. 5:1). This appears to correspond with the "old fables" spoken of in Magnesians 8:1. It is possible that the Judaisers had a more literalistic

¹The antecedent of the relative pronoun is most naturally taken to be his death. Cf. the comments of L. W. Barnard in his article, "The Background of St. Ignatius of Antioch": "There can, I think, be little doubt that in ad Magn. he accuses the same persons of Judaism and Docetism" (Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and Their Background [New York: Schocken, 1966], p. 23).

approach to the interpretation of the Old Testament than Ignatius.¹ Certainly, Ignatius disagrees with their Old Testament interpretation.

This Judaism from which the Docetists draw is unlikely to have been Judaism of an orthodox type. In the letter to the Philadelphians, Ignatius makes the following observation: "But if anyone interpret Judaism to you do not listen to him; for it is better to hear Christianity from the circumcised than Judaism "from the uncircumcised" (6:1). Thus, those who were presenting these Jewish ideas were not themselves circumcised. They were not orthodox Jews. They were most probably Christians who were attracted to some ideas from Judaism, not necessarily orthodox Judaism.

Consequently, while it would be foolish to impose uniformity upon the situation of the churches of Asia, there does seem to be a community of ideas amongst the dissidents in them.² Prominent in their ideas is a Docetic Christology which denies to Jesus a body of flesh. This prevents some of them from participating in the Eucharist celebrated by the bishops. Some also are influenced by ideas from Judaism and most likely have a more literal interpretation of the Old Testament than that adopted by the more "orthodox" Christians. In

¹This is the suggestion of C. K. Barrett in "Jews and Judaizers in the Epistles of Ignatius," in *Jews Greeks and Christians*, ed. R. Hammerton-Kelly and R. Scroggs (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), p. 237.

²Virginia Corwin, in *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), pp. 52-56, identifies three broad divisions within the Christian spectrum at Antioch: the left (the Docetists), and centerists (Ignatius and the hierarchical church), and the right (the Judaists and the Essenes of Qumran). But this division of left and right founders on the evidence of the letter to the Magnesians. On the question of how many groups there were and their background, Barrett's article ("Jews and Judaizers") is excellent.

defence of what he sees as the true faith, Ignatius strongly urges submission to the hierarchy of the church (the bishop, presbyters, and deacons). Only in this way, he believes, can true unity be found. Ignatius does make some defence of what he perceives to be the truth about Jesus. He emphasizes that the suffering of Jesus was real and that he did have a real body. In fact, in Smyrn. 5:2 he insists that the Smyrnaeans not only approve of him but also should confess that Jesus was "flesh bearing" (σαρκοφόρον).

This, then, is the situation in the churches in Asia that is evidenced by the letters of Ignatius. The question now is, How does this relate to the situation reflected in the Johannine Epistles?

In one way there is a remarkable correspondence between the two situations. At the heart of the heresy of the secessionists of 1 John is their refusal to confess that Jesus came in flesh (1 John 4:2). This is prominent in the thinking of the schismatics of Smyrna and Tralles. They believed that Jesus only appeared to suffer because he did not have a body of flesh (Smyrn. 2, 5:2; Trall. 10:1). Thus they believed they could not participate in the Eucharist because they could not confess that it was the body of Christ (Smyrn. 7:1). A schism resulted and groups met apart from the bishop. This corresponds to the group that had "gone out" in 1 John 2:19. It is also conceivable that the emphasis in the Johannine Epistles that Jesus is the Christ could correspond with the debate between Ignatius and the "unbelievers" who disagreed with Ignatius over the interpretation of the Old Testament (Smyrn. 5:1; Magn. 8). Perhaps Ignatius' opponents did not believe that Jesus was the sort of Messiah predicted by the Old Testament.

However, there are some differences between the two situations. First, there is no reference in the Johannine Epistles to a group of Judaisers (although, as is shown in chapter 4 below, it is possible that the Gospel of John reflects a situation of conflict between the Johannine Christians and a group of people with some contact with Judaism). Secondly, it is difficult to reconcile the ecclesiology of the two groups of letters. The emphasis in 1 John is on an individual sort of Christianity. It is the one that has the Son that has life (1 John 5:12). Indeed, the Johannine Christian has no need of anyone to teach him because he is individually led by the Spirit (1 John 2:27). "The Elder" has a great deal of trouble with a certain Diotrophes, who loves to be first (3 John 9). How he would relate to the monarchical bishop Ignatius cannot be said with confidence, but he would certainly be hostile to his model of church government. This highlights the diversity amongst early Christianity in Asia and raises doubts as to the exact correspondence between the Epistles of Ignatius and John. One possible explanation would date the letters of Ignatius later than the Johannine Epistles, with the establishment of the monarchical bishopric between the two sets of writing. Another possibility would point to the variety of local church government that existed at the time. The scheme espoused by Ignatius (bishop, presbyters, deacons) was merely one of the forms of local church government existing in Asia. Certainly each local church had its own leaders, and the majority of churches were beginning to adopt the hierarchical model, though other less structured forms of church government still existed alongside these. The very vehemence with which Ignatius repeats over and over how each

congregation must be obedient to the bishop shows there were significant groups that did not agree with this sort of church organization. It is possible that the Christians among whom the Johannine Epistles were written were such a group. This would date the two groups of writing much more closely together. It could also mean that Ignatius reflects a slightly later picture when the hierarchical model of church government had advanced. However, because of the very close similarity between the Docetic ideas opposed by both groups of writings, it does appear likely they reflect a very similar situation to that which existed in the churches of Asia at the turn of the century. The Johannine Epistles must be interpreted primarily without reference to other materials, but the Letters of Ignatius do provide an invaluable external witness to their historical context.

The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians

Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was martyred ca. A.D. 155 at the age of eighty-six.¹ He was widely revered in the early church, not only because of his martyrdom but because he was reputed to have known the apostles personally, including John.² A letter Polycarp wrote

¹Lake, p. 280; F. L. Cross, The Early Christian Fathers (London: Duckworth, 1960), p. 19; Lawson, p. 153; Johannes Quasten, Patrology, vol. 1 (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1950), p. 77.

²Irenaeus reports that he himself met Polycarp: "But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen the Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried a very long time . . ." Adv. Haer. 3:3:4 (The translations of Irenaeus are taken from The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1). In a letter to Florinus, preserved by Eusebius in Eccl. Hist. 5:20:6, Irenaeus also says, ". . . so that I can speak even of the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and disputed . . . how he reported his intercourse with John and with the others who had seen the Lord. . . ." See also Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. 5:33:4.

to the Philippian church has survived. It is somewhat difficult to date this letter. Phil. 13:2 speaks of Ignatius as if he were still alive (thus dating the letter ca. A.D. 107), while Phil. 9:1 speaks of Ignatius as already dead, inferring that this section of the letter could have been written anytime up to ca. A.D. 155).¹ Nonetheless this letter could be potentially valuable as a background for the Johannine Epistles. Like the Epistles of Ignatius, it is close to the Johannine Epistles both geographically and temporally. In addition, the letter contains a direct allusion to one of the key points of controversy pointed out in 1 and 2 John:

Phil. 6:3-7:2:

ζηλωταὶ περὶ τὸ καλόν, ἀπεχόμενοι
τῶν σκανδάλων καὶ τῶν ψευδαδελφῶν καὶ τῶν
ἐν ὑποκρίσει φερόντων τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου,
οἵτινες ἀποπλανῶσι κενούς ἀνθρώπους.

VII

1. Πᾶς γὰρ ὅς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογῇ Ἰησοῦν
Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθέναι, ἀντιχριστὸς ἐστίν·
καὶ ὁς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογῇ τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ σταυροῦ,
ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν· καὶ ὁς ἂν μεθοδεύῃ τὰ
λόγια τοῦ κυρίου πρὸς τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας καὶ
λέγῃ μῆτε ἀνάστασιν μῆτε κρίσιν, οὗτος πρωτό-
τοκος ἐστὶ τοῦ σατανᾶ. 2. διὸ ἀπολιπόντες
τὴν ματαιότητα τῶν πολλῶν καὶ τὰς ψευδοδι-
δασκαλίας

1 John 4:1-3:

4 Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε ἀλλὰ δοκι-
μάζετε τὰ πνεύματα εἰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, ὅτι πολλοὶ
ψευδοπροφῆται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον. 2 ἐν τούτῳ
γινώσκετε τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ· πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ
Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν,
3 καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν² ἐκ τοῦ
θεοῦ οὐκ ἐστίν· καὶ τοῦτό ἐστίν τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου, ὃ
ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη.

2 John 7:

7 ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον,
οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί·
οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος.

¹This led P. N. Harrison to suggest that the extant letter is in fact a conflation of two of Polycarp's letters. His suggestion

It is clear that Polycarp is making a direct allusion to either or both 1 John 4:2-3 and 2 John 7.¹

Thus, the letter of Polycarp to the Philippians appears at first sight to be an extremely valuable external witness to the situation soon after the schism reflected in 1 John. The denial that Jesus has come in the flesh is linked with a refusal to confess the testimony of the cross and a denial of the resurrection and the judgment (Phil. 7:1). Those people espousing these ideas are called false brethren and deceivers (Phil. 6:3). Thus the parallels to the schism in 1 John appear quite clear.

However, when the nature of the letter is understood, these close parallels tend to look less valuable as an external witness to the heresy. This is because the whole letter is an exhortation to the Philippians which is composed of a patchwork of quotations and allusions to various New Testament writings. It is possible that Polycarp is not referring to any event or situation from his time, that he is merely alluding to 1 John 4:1-3 and 2 John 7. The denial of the resurrection could conceivably be an allusion to 1 Cor 15:12. There is no way of knowing which of these two possibilities is correct. The value of Polycarp's letter to the Philippians as an external witness to the heresy of 1 John is potentially great, but

has been met with approval, e.g., Cross, p. 21; L. W. Barnard, "The Problem of St. Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians," in Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and Their Background (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), pp. 31-39; for contrary views, see Lawson, pp. 157-58; Schoedel, p. 199; and Bammel, pp. 69-70.

¹ Brooke, pp. lii-liii; Brown, Epistles, pp. 8-9.

because of the nature of the letter it can at best only be a witness of doubtful value.

Gnosticism

Defining gnosticism is made problematical because gnosticism had almost as many viewpoints as there were people promoting it.

Robert Haardt comments:

The basic structure common to the many manifestations of Gnosis can be given representation in an abstract schema. Any such showmodel would have to include, of necessity, however, a considerable degree of generalization and be lacking consequently in content, if it were to bring under one common denominator all the individual types emerging from the writings of the various communities pressing a Gnostic religion.

It may not be out of place therefore to point out that the typical Gnosis outlined in such a schema, of course, never actually existed.

When reading through the different gnostic documents, one thing stands out more than anything else. There is no real commonality of dogma among them. Each is as remarkable for its differences with other gnostic works as it is for its similarities.

However, there must be some basic elements sufficiently recognizable so that a writing can be described as gnostic. Jacques M  nard finds the essence of gnosticism to be the myth of the fall.² Created matter is fallen. Into creation individual souls descend. Salvation is by liberating these sparks of light. Gnosticism is characterized as distancing God from creation. Creation is evil and is to be

¹Gnosis: Character and Testimony, trans. J. F. Hendry (Leiden: Brill, 1971), p. 4.

²"Gnosticism is indeed essentially defined by this myth of the fall. . . . This myth is common to all Gnostics, in whatever variant forms they presented it, and through it they distinguished themselves from all other religions, such as, for example, Christianity." Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, ed. E. P. Sanders (London: SCM, 1980), 1:1040-41.

escaped by secret knowledge given by revelation. This dualism is at the heart of gnosticism.¹

Because of the gnostic's conviction that matter was evil, the Christian forms of gnosticism tended towards a docetic Christology. For example, Valentinian gnosticism differentiated between the animal body which Jesus received from Mary, and the Spirit which was impassible:

This Christ passed through Mary just as water flows through a tube; and there descended upon him in the form of a dove at the time of his baptism, that Saviour who belonged to the Pleroma, . . . He also continued free from all suffering, since indeed it was not possible that He should suffer who was at once incomprehensible and invisible. And for this reason the Spirit of Christ, who had been placed within Him, was taken away when he was brought before Pilate. . . . It follows, then, according to them, that the animal Christ, and that which had been formed mysteriously by a special dispensation, underwent suffering. . . .²

It scarcely needs to be pointed out that many of the details of the above quotation fit nicely into what has been discovered about the heresy confronted in 1 John. The unwillingness to attribute to the Christ real flesh could follow directly from these ideas. The heretics' denial of Jesus as the Christ could also be explained by the fact that for the writer of 1 John the Christ was a real historical figure anticipated in the Old Testament, while in this form of

¹Cf. the words of Jonas: "A Gnosticism without a fallen god, without benighted created and sinister creation, without alien soul, cosmic captivity and acosmic salvation, without the self-redeeming of the Deity--in short: A Gnosis without divine tragedy will not meet specifications." Cited by R. McL. Wilson, Gnosis and the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), p. 27. See also Th. P. van Baaren, "Towards a Definition of Gnosticism," in The Origins of Gnosticism: Colloquium of Messina, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Leiden: Brill, 1970), pp. 174-180.

²Actually, in Valentinian gnosticism, the being of Jesus was divided into four constituent parts, each one corresponding to one of the divine Tetrads. The citation is taken from Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. 1:7:2.

gnosticism the Christ was a divine entity. Claims to perfection linked with bad behavior are also to be found in Valentinian gnosticism (e.g., Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. 1:6:3-4).

A very important question must be asked before any identification is made between gnosticism and the heresy confronted in 1 John is made--Does gnosticism predate 1 and 2 John?

There is good evidence that non-Christian gnosticism predates Christian gnosticism. For example, the gnostic text Eugnostos, which is non-Christian, is used as the basis for Sophia Jesu Christi.¹ Birger A. Pearson has been able to show the existence of a distinct Sethian-gnostic system built around the figure of Seth as redeemer. He thinks it is probable that this system is pre-Christian.²

However, using the fact that non-Christian gnosticism predates Christian gnosticism to establish that gnosticism predates the New Testament is to leave several very large gaps in the proof.³ First, there need to be documents that can be dated to pre-New Testament times. These documents must be then established as coming from groups that were in contact with early Christian communities.

Two lines of evidence may bring gnosticism much closer to 1 and 2 John, viz. Irenaeus' comments about Cerinthus, and possible

¹Ménard convincingly demonstrates this (pp. 134-41) as he does for The Second Tractate of the Great Seth and the Testimony of Truth (pp. 141-45).

²"Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and the Development of Gnostic Self-Definition," in Jewish and Christian Self Definition, ed. E. P. Sanders (London: SCM, 1980), 1:152-55.

³Edwin M. Yamauchi makes some very pertinent criticisms in a section entitled, "Non-Christian therefore Pre-Christian," in his book Pre-Christian Gnosticism: a Survey of the Proposed Evidences (London: Tyndale, 1973), pp. 181-84.

gnostic terminology in Ignatius. According to Irenaeus, Cerinthus was a contemporaneous opponent of the apostle John.¹ He also gives the following summary of the teachings of Cerinthus:

Cerinthus, again, a man who was educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians, taught that the world was not made by the primary God, but by a certain Power far separated from him, and at a distance from that Principality who is supreme over the universe, and ignorant of him who is above all. He represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation, while he nevertheless was more righteous, prudent, and wise than other men. Moreover, after his baptism, Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler, and that then he proclaimed the unknown Father, and performed miracles. But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, inasmuch as he was a spiritual being. (Adv. Haer. 1:26:1)

Several parallels between the views of Cerinthus are presented here, and the heresy opposed in 1 John stands out. First, it explains how the heretic might deny that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22) because, according to the Cerinthus, Jesus was different to the Christ. Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary; the Christ was a heavenly being which descended upon Jesus at his baptism and left before the passion. This form of belief also denies flesh to the Christ (1 John 4:3). The teaching that the Christ only descended upon Jesus at the baptism could explain why 1 John insists that Jesus Christ came both by water and by blood, not just by water (1 John 5:6-8).

However, what is perhaps the key element in the teaching of Cerinthus does not find reflection in 1 John. Nowhere is there any

¹"There are those that heard from him [Polycarp] that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, 'Let us fly, lest even the bath house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of truth is within'" (Adv. Haer. 3:3:4); the story is quoted by Eusebius Ecc1. Hist. 3:28:6.

polemic against the idea that the creator was not the Supreme God, but rather a being that did not even know of the Supreme God. This indeed is an extraordinary omission if the heresy opposed in 1 John is Cerinthianism.

The other possible early link between the Johannine Letters and gnosticism is found in the letters of Ignatius. In the letter to the Trallians Ignatius alludes to his knowledge of heavenly things:

Am I not able to write to you heavenly things? Yes, but I am afraid that I should do you harm 'seeing you are babes.' Pardon me, for I refrain lest you be choked by what you cannot receive. For I myself, though I am in bonds and can understand heavenly things, and the places of the angels and the gatherings of principalities, and 'things seen and unseen,' not for this am I a disciple even now, for much is lacking to us, that we may not lack God. (Trall. 5)

It is to be regretted that Ignatius did not choose to speak further about his knowledge of heavenly things and the places of the angels, because then it would be much easier to determine just how alike his beliefs and those of the gnostics were. The sort of categories mentioned are very like those in which the gnostics were thinking.

There is yet another possible point of contact between Ignatius and gnosticism. Magn. 8:2 speaks of Jesus Christ as the son of God who is his Word proceeding from silence.¹ In Valentian gnosticism, Sige (silence) was a consort of Bythus, the perfect pre-existent Aeon (from which everything else derives).² However, it is not possible to establish that such a connection was made as early as the time of Ignatius nor that Ignatius was thinking in these terms when writing to the Magnesians. It is impossible to be sure whether

¹ὅς ἐστιν αὐτοῦ λόγος ἀπὸ σιγῆς προελθών.

²Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. 1:1:1.

or not Ignatius was in touch with any gnostic ideas. All that can be said is that it is possible that he was.

What this evidence shows is that it cannot be ruled out a priori that some form of gnosticism may have been the heresy opposed in 1 John, or at least have informed that heresy. Its dubious nature, though, shows that it cannot be automatically assumed that gnosticism was the heresy involved. A close look at the Johannine Epistles themselves is the only way one can be sure.

Some aspects of the heresy opposed by 1 John lend themselves to be interpreted in terms of gnosticism. The following assertions all have a strong gnostic flavour: (if we say) "We have fellowship with him . . ." (1 John 1:6); (if we say) "We have no sin . . ." (1:8); (if we say) "We have not sinned . . ." (1:10); (he who says) "I know him . . ." (2:4); (he who says) "I abide in him . . ." (2:6); (he who says) "I am in the Light . . ." (2:9); (if anyone says) "I love God . . ." (4:20). The total impression gained from the ethics of the heretics might be described as follows: What is important is a true fellowship and knowledge of God. It is vital to know God, to abide in God, to love God. It is the knowing that is important: what a person does in his body is not. The heretics seem to downplay considerably the importance of what is done with the body. The body is irrelevant. In fact, they deny that Jesus Christ came in flesh. In their view, the son of God could not have flesh. All of this seems very like the gnostic ideas of the material world and of salvation. For the gnostic, the material world is evil. Salvation is obtained by a secret knowledge, by a communion with the supreme God. What happens in the body is irrelevant also to salvation.

Not only are the ethics of the heretics very much like gnosticism, but their Christology (as shown above) is perfectly consistent with what is found in gnosticism. Therefore, it is to some extent legitimate to call the heresy opposed in 1 John as gnosticism, or proto-gnosticism.

But applying the label gnosticism can be dangerous. Most importantly, it must be remembered that gnosticism was not a monolithic phenomenon. Just because the heresy can be called gnosticism does not mean we know any more about it than can be discovered from the text of 1 and 2 John. There is no justification for reading the whole thought world of later gnosticism back into 1 John. Edwin Yamauchi says:

Scholars have been misled in conceiving of Gnosticism in organic analogies, that is, in regarding primitive Gnosticism as a creature with all of its parts present--if in rudimentary form. Hence it has been assumed that if anthropological docetism is attested by the end of the first century, dualistic cosmology must also have been presumed.¹

Probably a better approach would be to see the heresy opposed in 1 John as belonging to the thought world out of which gnosticism arose. The dualistic anthropology of the Greeks tended to downplay the importance of the body. As early as Plato the soul was conceived as an other-worldly entity that had become entrapped in matter. Many Greek philosophies tended towards cultivating the soul at the expense of the body. Gnosticism found fertile soil to grow in the intellectual climate of the first century. This is shown by the different possible origins that are proposed for gnosticism--Judaism, Hellenism,

¹"The Descent of Ishtar, the Fall of Sophia, and the Jewish Roots of Gnosticism," Tyndale Bulletin 29 (1978):168.

Iran (dualism), Babylon (astrology), Egypt (the mysteries). The intellectual climate was ripe for gnosticism.¹

It should be noted also that some aspects of the Johannine portrayal of Christianity were very congenial to gnostic thinking. The emphasis the Fourth Gospel places on knowing God (John 14:7, 17:3, 25-26) and the very high Christology it presents lent itself to exegesis. It is significant that the Fourth Gospel found earlier acceptance in gnostic circles than among the more orthodox.² This increases the likelihood that the heresy opposed in 1 John was gnostic to some extent.

Summary

What is known about gnosticism gives a very close parallel to some of the ideas espoused by the heretics of 1 John. The gnostic's docetic type of Christology appears to correspond very closely to what has been constructed about the Christology of the heretics. In particular, Cerinthus is linked to the Johannine community by tradition. It appears possible, then, to call the heresy proto-gnosticism. Being able to apply this label, however, does not mean that any more is known about the heresy than can be derived from 1 and 2 John. Since gnosticism is such a diverse phenomenon, that one element of the system does not demand every other element to be

¹G. van Groningen, First Century Gnosticism: Its Origin and Motifs (Leiden: Brill, 1967), p. 13, in addition to giving this list, quotes the conclusion of van Unnik: "Gnosticism then is a product of this world of religious ideas and convictions, flowing and mingling together."

²Elaine H. Pagels, The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973); T. E. Pollard, Johannine Christology and the Early Church (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), p. 24.

present. In particular, it cannot be guaranteed that the cosmic dualism which Irenaeus attributes to Cerinthus forms part of the particular form of the heresy opposed by 1 John. All this label shows is that the heresy was a child of its times, that it was particularly in tune with the thought world of the late first century. It increases the probability that what has been discovered about the heresy is correct because such a combination of ideas would have been quite at home at the time and place that the Johannine Epistles were written.

Conclusions

This chapter has investigated as fully as possible one dimension (the Christological) of the conflict within the Johannine community reflected in 1 John. It is perhaps now appropriate to draw the different threads together and summarize what has been discovered.

1 John 2:19 reveals that there has been a schism within the Johannine community. 1 John debates with the secessionists in the areas of ethics, authority, and Christology. In the area of Christology, three formulae provide the reader of 1 John with criteria for determining orthodoxy: "Jesus is the Christ," "Jesus came in flesh," and "Jesus is the Son of God." Of the three it is almost certain that 1 John and the secessionists agreed that "Jesus is the Son of God." Where they differed was with regard to the formula, "Jesus came in flesh." The heretics denied that Jesus (as the Christ) came in flesh.

Some external witnesses were examined and found to contain tantalizing parallels. The letters of Ignatius, written not long after the traditional dating of 1 and 2 John, and to churches in the

area traditionally assigned to their provenance, provide a fascinating possible backdrop. Ignatius writes against groups of people who have separated from fellowship with the hierarchical church. These people have some association with Judaism, or with ideas from Judaism. Interestingly enough, they combine this with a docetic Christology. They believed that Jesus did not suffer because he did not have a body of flesh. He only appeared to suffer. This seems to be a close parallel with the situation reflected in the Johannine Epistles, but there is a significant difference in the ecclesiology of the two groups of letters. This could be explained in terms of diversity of church organization existing in Asia Minor at the time; nonetheless, it prevents an exact correspondence between the two situations. Perhaps Ignatius is writing about the situation as it had developed since the period of the Johannine Epistles, at a time when the monarchical bishoprics were being established throughout the region.

It was also discovered that the heresy of the secessionists in 1 John could be described as proto-gnostic. Because of the great variety of thought within gnosticism, this label does not give any more information about the heresy than can be discovered from 1 and 2 John. It does, however, indicate that the heresy is at home in the intellectual milieu of the late first century which provided the seed-bed of gnosticism.

While what has been discovered from 1 John gives some insight about controversy that led to a schism in the Johannine community, the question as to whether or not this provides a significant clue as to the situation of the Johannine community when the Fourth Gospel was written is yet to be answered. A closer examination of the

Christology of the Fourth Gospel should provide the perspective against which some answers may be reached.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

A well-known feature of research is that the researcher tends to discover that his particular interests are the primary focus of the text investigated. Thus, to avoid reading the Fourth Gospel entirely through the categories that have been established for the Johannine Epistles, and before addressing the question of the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the controversy reflected in the Johannine Epistles, an attempt must be made to delineate independently the main features of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel. Only thus can the relationship between the two historical contexts be adequately investigated.

John 20:31 states boldly that the whole gospel had been written so "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in his name." According to this, the purpose of the book is tied up intimately with Christology and Soteriology. And in fact this is the case. From the very first words of the Gospel the readers is confronted with the central mystery that the Gospel presents throughout. The divine, pre-existent creator God became flesh and tabernacled with men. Paradoxically, while his glory was seen, he was rejected by men. But to all who believed, he gave authority to become children of God. The prologue sets the scene for the rest of the gospel. Story follows story,

all for the purpose of unfolding an adequate understanding of Jesus. Thus, studying the Christology of the Fourth Gospel takes this investigation close to the heart of its message.

The investigation of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel looks first at two key motifs, that of descent-ascent and that of Father/Son, Sender/Sent. Next the presentation of the titles of Jesus is discussed. Titles formed a very important part of the dialectic of 1 John, and so are important for the overall investigation as well as being important in the Fourth Gospel's Christology. Finally, other relevant ideas are discussed.

The Motif of Descent-Ascent¹

When Pilate heard from the Jews that Jesus made himself Son of God he was the more afraid, and asked Jesus, πόθεν εἶ σὺ (19:9). This question pervades the whole gospel: Where does Jesus come from? When two of John the Baptist's disciples were asked by Jesus, τί ὄρατε, they replied, 'Ραββί. . . . ποῦ μένεις; (1:38). Jesus invited them to "come and see." This is an invitation to the reader of the gospel, as well as to the two disciples of John the Baptist. The reader is invited to investigate who Jesus is as the Gospel unfolds. There is a pattern of progressive repetition¹ as the reader is led to a fuller understanding of who Jesus is.

Thus it is that the Fourth Gospel follows the prologue with a series of incidents that introduce many of the titles of Jesus. John the Baptist denies for himself the titles of Christ, Elijah,

¹" . . . these themes become clear only as their progressive development is traced through the gospel," Meeks, p. 57. See also Meeks, pp. 48, 55.

Prophet (which, by implication, are titles of Jesus) (1:20-21). He gives Jesus the title, Lamb of God (1:36). Andrew calls Jesus Rabbi (1:38) and the Messiah-Christ (1:41). Nathaniel calls Jesus the Son of God and King of Israel, while Jesus calls himself the Son of Man (1:51). This is highly significant, because Jesus is here introducing what he considers to be the most appropriate designation for himself, the Son of Man. In this introductory chapter all other titles are given to Jesus by others, but Jesus chooses this title for himself. It is right here, then, in the words of Jesus that the first explicit mention of the motif of ascent/descent occurs.¹ Jesus assures Nathaniel that he will see greater things than what has made him believe. He will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. As with the other titles, nothing further is said to explain who or what the Son of Man is, and just what the enigmatic saying about the angels ascending and descending upon him means. But the theme is further developed as the gospel unfolds. It is met next in the story of the visit of Nicodemus.

Nicodemus opens the conversation by acknowledging that Jesus is a teacher who has come from God. At this, Jesus informs him that

¹In the past decade two important articles have appeared on this topic: Meeks, pp. 44-72; and Charles H. Talbert, "The Myth of a Descending-Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity," *New Testament Studies* 22 (1976):418-39. Both writers criticise Bultmann's hypothesis of a gnostic redeemer myth on the grounds that the typical gnostic myth with which Bultmann compared the Johannine descent-ascent motif never existed. However, Meeks does commend Bultmann for "his recognition and insistence that any attempt to solve the 'Johannine puzzle' must begin with this picture of the descending/ascending redeemer" (p. 44). See also the criticisms of Bultmann in Martin Hengel's book, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (London: SCM, 1976), pp. 33-41.

it is not possible for a man to see the kingdom of God unless he is born ἄνωθεν (3:2). When Nicodemus misunderstands this to mean "again" instead of "above," Jesus explains that what is born of flesh is flesh, and what is born of spirit is spirit. Therefore, Nicodemus should not be surprised that he is told that it is necessary for him to be born ἄνωθεν (3:6-7). Jesus goes on to say that he knows of what he speaks, because he bears witness to what he has seen (3:11). In fact, no one will ascend to heaven except the Son of Man, who has come down from heaven (3:13). Vs. 14 introduces another aspect of the theme of ascent. It is necessary for the Son of Man to be "lifted up," so that all who believe in him might have eternal life. Here the double meaning of the expression is clear. Jesus is to be lifted up on the cross, like the serpent in the wilderness (3:14); but in the back of the mind of the reader must be the rest of the context of this chapter. The Son of Man is to be lifted up, he is to ascend again to his Father, from whence he came. His cross is his exaltation.

The Gospel then introduces a brief comment about John the Baptist. John says that Jesus must increase while he decreases (3:30). This is explained by noting that he who comes down from heaven is above all. He that is from earth speaks only of earthly things (3:31). John the Baptist, by implication, is from the earthly realm, while Jesus is from the heavenly realm. Not only is John the Baptist from the earthly realm, Nicodemus also is clearly operating in the earthly realm. He cannot understand that a man should be born "from above." He can only see as far as being born "again," which he cannot understand. Thus, the teacher in Israel cannot understand

Jesus because he does not recognise that he is from heaven (despite the fact that he realizes that Jesus is sent from God) and that he speaks of heavenly realities. Jesus has the authority to speak of heavenly realities because he has descended from heaven. He speaks of what he has seen.

The descending-ascending motif is further explored in the discussion between Jesus and the Jews following the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. The Jews asked Jesus for a sign, citing the example of Moses who brought bread down from heaven. Jesus answers that it was not Moses who gave them bread from heaven, but his Father, who gives the true bread which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world (6:31-33). Jesus is the bread of life who has come down from heaven (6:35, 41, 48, 58). No one has seen the Father except he who was with (παρὰ) God, he has seen the Father (6:46). He who believes has eternal life (6:47). The Jews grumble at the idea that Jesus has come down from heaven because they know his origins, they know his parents (6:42). This same idea is brought up again in 7:25-31 in the discussion as to whether or not Jesus is the Christ. The crowd reasons that Jesus cannot be the Christ because they know from whence he comes; when the Christ comes, they will not know from whence he comes. This is ironic because, in fact, they do not know from whence Jesus has come. As Jesus points out, they do not know who sent him, but he knows for he is παρ' αὐτοῦ and he sent him.

This irony is even stronger in 7:40-44. The crowd reasons that Jesus cannot be the Christ because the Christ is to come from Bethlehem. This sets up an expectation in the mind of the reader of the gospel who knows that Jesus was in fact born at Bethlehem. But

the Fourth Gospel never points this out; this is not the ultimate point of Jesus' origins. Jesus originates in heaven.

In 8:21-29 Jesus begins to tell his disciples that he is going where they cannot follow. His remark is misunderstood by the crowd and even by his disciples (13:33, 36-37). It is explained clearly only after the resurrection. Jesus sends a message to the disciples (via Mary) that he is going to his Father (and their Father), to his God (and their God) (20:17).

Much more material in the gospel could be used to illuminate the descent/ascent motif,¹ but what has been discussed here is perhaps sufficient to illustrate the dynamic involved. Some of the implications inherent in the motif can now be explored.

There is an interesting contrast between the motif of ascent/descent in the Fourth Gospel and the spatial dualism of apocalyptic thought. For example, in the Apocalypse of John, what happens on earth is determined by what happens in heaven.² Salvation must come from heaven. God, in establishing his suzerainty first in heaven (Rev 12:7-9), has in effect won the whole war. When Jesus returns to earth he comes as Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev 19:16). In contrast, the dualism between the things above (heavenly) and the things below

¹E.g., the motif also appears in 9:29, 33; 10:36; 11:29; 13:1, 3; 14:2-3, 12, 28; 15:5; 16:16-17, 27-30; 17:8, 11; 20:17.

²Paul S. Minear points out: "For him [John] it was axiomatic that all heavenly happenings, whether present or future, derive from what happens in heaven. For him, therefore, a vision of heaven was quite indispensable to the understanding of earthly events" in Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (London: SCM, 1962), pp. 24-25. See also John G. Gammie, "Spatial and Ethical Dualism in Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature," Journal of Biblical Literature 93 (1974):356-85; J. J. Collins, "Towards the Morphology of a Genre," Semeia 14 (1979):1-20.

(earthly) in the Fourth Gospel is somewhat different. John A. T. Robinson expresses it this way:

. . . the theme of the whole Gospel is the interrelation of the two levels of reality--λόγος, spirit, the eternal glory of the divine, on the one hand, and flesh, this world of space and time, on the other. The great affirmation of this writer is that they coincide in Christ: the Word became flesh and the glory of the invisible God is seen and heard and handled.

Jesus is the revelation of the Father--he who has seen Jesus has seen the Father (14:9). In Jesus is the revelation of the things of God and heaven. Both the heavenly and earthly realms coincide in Jesus. Jesus is uniquely qualified to reveal heavenly things because he himself is a heavenly being. No one has seen the Father except he who is from God (6:46). No one has gone into heaven except he who has come down from heaven (3:13). He that is of earth can speak only of earthly things (3:31)--the implication is that he that has come down from heaven can speak of heavenly things. This is the principle of "like by like."² Jesus can speak of heavenly things because he is a heavenly being.

Interestingly enough, as Meeks points out, the motif of ascent/descent is found only in the discourse material of the Fourth Gospel, not the narratives.³ There is, in fact, no actual description

¹ John A. T. Robinson, "The Use of the Fourth Gospel for Christology Today," in Christ and Spirit in the New Testament, ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen Smalley (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), p. 64.

² See on this: Bertil E. Gärtner, "The Pauline and Johannine Idea of 'To Know God' against the Hellenistic Background: The Greek Philosophical Principle of 'Like by Like' in Paul and John," New Testament Studies 14 (1968):209-31.

³ Meeks, p. 50.

of the heavens. This is in marked contrast to many gnostic documents.¹

Meeks also highlights another aspect of this motif that is of real relevance to this study:

In telling the story of the Son of Man who came down from heaven and then re-ascended after choosing a few of his own out of the world, the book defines and vindicates the existence of the community that evidently sees itself as unique,

¹This fact, that in the Fourth Gospel the heavenly Jesus is firmly rooted in earthly (fleshy) events, has led Rudolf Schnackenburg to conclude: "Thus the Gnostic myth of redemption and Johannine Christology are worlds apart: one is religious philosophy presented in mythic language, the other biblical religion one is myth, the other history; one is Gnosis, the other faith." Present and Future: Modern Aspects of New Testament Theology (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1966), p. 173.

As well as the gnostic myth, another concept that has sometimes been used to explain the New Testament thinking about Christology is the concept of θεός ἄνθρωπος. E.g., see Morton Smith, "Prolegomena to a Discussion of Aretologies, Divine Men, the Gospels and Jesus," Journal of Biblical Literature 90 (1971):174-99; Hans Dieter Betz, "Jesus as Divine Man," in Jesus and the Historian, ed. F. Thomas (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), pp. 114-33; and Charles H. Talbert, "The Concept of Immortals in Mediterranean Antiquity," Journal of Biblical Literature 94 (1975):419-36. This usage has come under increasing attack: e.g., Carl R. Holladay, Theios Aner in Hellenistic-Judaism: A Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977); Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The 'Divine Man' as the Key to Mark's Christology--The End of an Era?" Interpretation 35 (1981):248-49; W. V. Martiz, υἱός, υἱοθεσία TDNT 8:339-40. θεός ἄνθρωπος was never a fixed category in the ancient world, and therefore it cannot be used as a concept against which Jesus can be measured.

The problem with all such external keys to the understanding of New Testament Christology, in general, and Johannine Christology, in particular, is that they tend to become procustean beds. The primary text of the New Testament ceases to be the focus. Instead the focus becomes the external model. What such categories do show, though, is that in the first century there was a prevailing thought milieu against which the Christological statements of the New Testament would be understandable to first-century readers. Cf. the comment of Oscar Cullmann in describing the relationship between the Fourth Gospel, Qumran, and the Odes of Solomon: "... it is also improbable that the evangelist made direct use of the Odes, the solution must be sought in a common cultural Milieu," p. 36.

alien from its world, under attack, misunderstood, but living in unity with Christ and through him with God. It can hardly be regarded as a missionary tract, for we may imagine that only a very rare outsider would get past the barrier of its closed metaphorical system. (Emphasis supplied)

Father/Son, Sender/Sent

A dominant motif in the Christology of the Fourth Gospel is the motif of Father/Son, Sender/Sent. The theme is introduced in the prologue. The Logos became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, "δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός" (1:14). There is something unique about the relationship between Jesus and God. He is the μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, he is the λόγος that was not only with God, but θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (1:1). No one has seen God, but the μονογενὴς θεός,² who was εἰς τὸν κόλπον of the Father, who has made him known (1:18).

The discussion that follows Jesus' healing of the man at the pool Bethzatha allows a further development of this theme. The Jews were incensed because Jesus had not only healed the man on the Sabbath but had also told him to take up his pallet and walk. Jesus retorts that his Father is working still, and he is working. The Jews understand this as a claim that Jesus is equal with God (5:11-18). Jesus goes on to explain the relationship between himself and the Father. The Son does nothing, except what he sees the Father doing. But Jesus will do greater works so that they might marvel, even raising the dead and giving life. The Father judges no man but has given all judgment to the Son. Their identity is such that all who honor the Son, honors

¹ Meeks, pp. 69-70.

² The reading μονογενὴς θεός is to be preferred rather than μονογενὴς υἱός (contra. RSV). See Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual

the Father (who sent the Son) as well. The Father has life in himself and has given the Son to have life in himself; in fact, there is an hour coming in which all who are in the tomb will hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth. The Father has given the Son authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man (5:25-29). Jesus goes on to cite a list of witnesses to himself: John the Baptist, the Father, his works, and scripture (5:30-47).

When the Jews were amazed at the teaching of Jesus and asked how he had received "learning" seeing that he had not been educated, Jesus replied that the teaching was not his, but "his who sent me" (7:15-18).

John 8:31-58 records a discussion between Jesus and some Jews who believed in him. The Jews were incensed at the implication that they were slaves. They were descendants of Abraham and had never been enslaved. Jesus answered in terms of their actions. If they sin, they are slaves to sin; if they were Abraham's seed, then they would do the works of Abraham (who would have believed Jesus). Their works show who their true father is; he is the Devil. If they had God as their Father, they would have loved Jesus (vs. 42). If Jesus glorifies himself, then his glory is nothing; but his Father glorifies him, whom the Jews call their God (vs. 54). After the statement that Jesus existed before Abraham, the Jews took up stones to throw at Jesus.

John 10:31-39 records another incident in which the Jews wished to stone Jesus, and they explain their reasons for wishing to do so. The Jews assure Jesus that they do not wish to stone him

because of his good works, but because he, a man who makes himself to be God, commits blasphemy. This is what the Jews understood when Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." In reply, Jesus cited Ps 82:6 which calls judges "gods." It is an argument a minori ad maius.¹ If God himself could call those πρὸς οὓς ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγένετο (cf. 10:35, 1:14) gods, then how much more can he whom the Father consecrated (ἡγάσεν) and sent into the world call himself the son of God. The sum of Jesus' argument is this, that as the one sent from God, the Father is in him and he is in the Father. He was, as it were, God's personal ambassador (or special envoy), and thus dealing with him was in effect dealing with God. Expressed in personal terms this means that Jesus had the right to call himself son of God.

In the Fourth Gospel the final meeting of Jesus and the disciples is prefaced by the comment that Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. He knew that the Father had given all things into his hand, that he had come out from God and was going to God (13:1-3). Thus this motif of sender/sent combined with that of descent/ascent is to provide the key to understanding the rest of the scenes before the betrayal and arrest.

In his conversation Jesus says that no one comes to the Father except by (διὰ) him; he is the way, the truth, and the life (14:6). When Philip asks him to show them the Father, he replies, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9). The Father loves the disciples because they love Jesus (16:27-28). Jesus' Father is also the

¹Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel According to John (i-xii), Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 410; Bultmann, p. 389.

disciples' Father by virtue of their relationship to Jesus.

Much more of the gospel could profitably be canvassed to illustrate this theme,¹ but enough material has been covered to enable conclusions to be drawn about the way the Fourth Gospel intends it to be understood.

The motif of Father/Son used in the Fourth Gospel describes the unique relationship between Jesus and God. He is from God, he was in the bosom of God, and, in fact, he was God. The Father is in him, and he is in the Father to such an extent that they are one. He that has seen the Son has seen the Father, and he who honors the Son honors the Father. The Son exercises the functions of divinity: he judges, he raises the dead to life. The Sender/Sent aspect of this motif also describes this. "An emissary is not simply someone who is sent, but also an envoy, a plenipotentiary; he speaks and acts in the name of the one who has sent him. The perfect emissary identifies himself entirely with the sender."²

But as well as this strong note of equality with God, there is at the same time a definite subordination of the Son to the Father.³ Jesus is dependent on the Father for his message (7:16; 14:

¹E.g. the motif is also present at 3:16, 35; 6:29, 37-40, 44, 46, 57; 7:28-29; 8:16-18, 26-27; 9:4; 10:25; 11:40; 12:26, 44-45, 49-50; 14:2, 7-8, 11, 20-24, 28, 31; 15:21, 23, 26; 16:15; 17:2; 18:11. This list is not complete.

²M. de Jonge, "The Son of God and the Children of God in the Fourth Gospel," in *Saved by Hope*, ed. J. I. Cook (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 48; the article is reprinted in de Jonge's book, *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven and Son of God*, trans. J. E. Steely (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977).

³This is so much so that C. K. Barrett, after quoting the *Quicumque vult*, asks provocatively: "On this basis, does the Fourth Evangelist qualify for salvation?" "'The Father is Greater than I'

24), his life (5:26; 6:57), his power (5:30), his authority to execute judgment and give life (5:21-29), his disciples (6:37, 44), and his glory (17:1). This is not restricted to just the occasional saying, it is widespread throughout the whole Gospel. Both the equality with God, and his subordination to him are expressed by the motif of the Father/Son.

The question as to Jesus' divine status is not foreign to the concerns of the Gospel. One of the charges brought by the Jews at the trial of Jesus was that he made himself the Son of God (19:7); and twice the Jews wanted to stone Jesus because of his claim to a special relationship to God (5:18, 10:33). It is undeniable that the Fourth Gospel ascribes to Jesus the designation "God."¹ One of the first statements of the Gospel is that the Logos is God (1:1); and the Gospel works towards the climax where Thomas confesses "My Lord and my God" (20:28). This confession is immediately followed by the statement of purpose: The Gospel had been written that the reader might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (20:31). Thomas has seen and believed, but it is better to believe without seeing. The Fourth Evangelist has no quarrel with the statement of Thomas. On the contrary, he would have all his readers make the same

(Jo 14, 28): Subordinationist Christology in the New Testament," in *Neues Testament und Kirche*, Herausgegeben von Joachim Gnilka (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), p. 144. For subordination in John see the whole of this article (pp. 144-59), and the more detailed exposition in J. Ernest Davey, *The Jesus of St. John: Historical and Christological Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (London: Lutterworth, 1958), pp. 90-157.

¹On this, see B. A. Mastin, "A Neglected Feature of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 22 (1975):32-51; and Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1959), pp. 306-10.

statement of belief, on the basis of his testimony as an eyewitness. Thus in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as fully divine, as the $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\eta\varsigma$ $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$, but also as one who is subordinate to the Father.

The Titles of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel

Leander E. Keck makes some interesting observations with reference to the New Testament uses of titles:

What I am proposing is that the Christological titles be regarded as metaphors. . . . As Ricoeur observes, 'Metaphorical interpretation presupposes a literal interpretation which is destroyed.' Metaphor is not a slip of the tongue; it is, in Ricoeur's phrase, 'calculated error.' A metaphor is effective precisely because the ordinary, inherited meaning is shattered by its new use. A metaphor 'works' because it deliberately sets up a clash between two things we know separately but do not identify in ordinary speech. Similies leave the inherited meanings intact in order to compare two known realities but metaphors live by the disparity of what is identified.

This is an excellent description of the way the Fourth Gospel uses titles. As the Gospel is read there is a progressive development of the correct understanding of particular titles. Often, the tension between the reader's expectation and the actual intended meaning of the title is deliberately exposed.

Of the major titles surveyed here, the titles Christ, Son of God, and Son of Man are particularly relevant to the task of comparing the Christology of the Fourth Gospel with that of the Johannine Epistles. Thus they are examined in some detail.

Christ

The term $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ occurs in the Fourth Gospel at 1:17, 20, 41; 3:28; 4:25, 29; 7:26, 27, 31, 41, 42; 9:22; 10:24, 31; 11:27;

¹Leander E. Keck, "Jesus in New Testament Christology," Australian Biblical Review (1980):12.

12:31.¹ The crucial importance of this title in the thinking of the Fourth Evangelist is shown by its use to summarise the kernel of what the Gospel is intended to convey--that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (20:31).

The title is introduced very early in the Gospel. It is used first near the end of the prologue where Jesus and Moses are compared. The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Jesus has been clearly identified as the Christ (1:17) by the time John the Baptist is asked whether or not he is the Christ (1:20). John denies the title for himself (2:20, 25; 3:28). His function is that of the voice in the wilderness, preparing the way of the one who is to come after him (1:22, 25-28; 3:28). Questions about the nature and function of the Messiah are raised (but not answered here) by the question directed at John. He is asked why he is baptizing if he is not the Christ (1:25).

It is highly significant that at 1:41 a translation is given. Andrews, immediately after meeting Jesus, finds his brother Simon and tells him, "We have found the Messiah." The Hebrew title Messiah is immediately translated into the Greek title Christ. This is a clear indication that the etymology of the word had not lost its force.²

¹It is omitted from 4:42 and 6:69 in the best MSS. On 6:69, see Metzger, p. 215. 4:42 does not warrant even a comment in Metzger (because it is not listed as a variant in the UBS Greek New Testament).

²W. C. van Unnik, "Jesus the Christ," *New Testament Studies* 8 (1961-62):113. Van Unnik concludes: "However, it is important for our investigation to see what was the essential element in the Messiahship of Jesus for those early Christians: this was not the outward activity of a king, but the person possessed by the Spirit" (p. 115).

The Messiah-Christ was the annointed one. John the Baptist bore witness that he saw the Spirit descend upon Jesus. John recognized that he could only baptize with water, but the one who was to come (Jesus) was to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Christ because of his unique endowment of the Spirit.¹

Chapter 4 records the conversation between Jesus and the woman of Samaria. The woman perceives that Jesus is a prophet (vs. 19). After hearing his reply to her question about the correct place of worship, she ventures to say that she knew the Messiah is coming, who is called the Christ (vs. 25; note that once again Messiah is translated into Christ). As John Marsh says:

Little is known of Samaritan Messianism, save that a Messiah or Taheb, was expected as one who returned and restored. The woman's words suggest that she looked forward to full and authoritative teaching (shown in the sense of make plain by telling); her messianic beliefs as a Samaritan would lead her to suppose that the Taheb would finally establish Gezizim as the one place of worship for all nations of the earth.²

This belief in a coming Messiah was most likely based on Deut 18:18.³ Moses promised that the Lord would raise up a prophet like himself. This links the concept of Messiah to the concept of the Prophet. The Samaritan woman had already conceded that Jesus was a prophet, she was now wondering whether or not he was the Prophet, the Messiah.

¹ Cf. the remarks made by S. Mowinckel about the anointing of the Kings of Israel in He that Cometh, trans. G. W. Anderson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), pp. 63-74.

² John Marsh, Saint John, Pelican (London: SCM, 1968), pp. 218-19.

³ Rudolf Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to John, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 1:441; John Bowman, The Samaritan Problem (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: 1875), p. 60.

Jesus is identified as the Prophet several times in the Fourth Gospel. John the Baptist denies to himself the title prophet (1:21, 25). The implication is that Jesus is the Prophét. The man who receives his sight back considers Jesus is a prophet (9:17), and the crowd that saw the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes said that Jesus truly is the Prophet who is coming into the world (6:14). Certainly, in chap. 4 Jesus as the Messiah is primarily revealer. The titles of Prophet and Messiah overlap in this chapter.

Chapter 7 is helpful in indicating the expectations about the Messiah current in the first century. John 7:27 reveals that it was expected that the Christ would have an unknown origin. Jesus informs his hearers that they might think they know his origins, but in reality, they do not.¹ Then 7:31 shows that it was also expected that the Christ would be a wonder worker. After Jesus' teaching about the water, there is again speculation about the Messianic status of Jesus. Some would understand Jesus as Prophet, others as Christ (7:40). This is ironic, because Jesus is both Prophet and Christ. Another objection is raised against the identification of Jesus as the Christ. The Christ does not come from Galilee, but is a descendant of David, from the village of David. This reflects the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Davidic king. In 2 Sam 7:8-16 is recorded the oracle of Nathan to David. David is promised that when he dies the Lord will raise up offspring after him, and God will establish his kingdom. God will be his Father, and he shall be God's son (cf. the Father/Son motif in the Fourth Gospel). The throne will be established forever. This theme finds expression in several places in the Old Testament.

¹See above, p. 61.

For example, Isa 11:1-16 talks of the shoot from the stump of Jesse. The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him. He will judge in righteousness, and the wicked will be slain by his breath. The edenic state will be restored--the wolf will lie with the lamb. The remnant of the Lord's people will be gathered in, and the enemies of Israel destroyed. In the Old Testament three offices were associated with anointing: the king, the high priest, and (on occasion) the prophet. This is carried over into the thinking of the Fourth Gospel. The title Messiah (=Christ) is tied up with the offices of prophet, priest, and king.

The Messianic kingship of Jesus is a paradoxical kingship, though. Jesus explained to Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world (18:36). Jesus avoided any involvement in a political move to make him king by popular acclamation (6:14-15). Pilate, in hanging the placard on the cross, indicated the nature of the kingship of Jesus. Jesus on the cross was king of the Jews. The cross was his throne. If he was lifted up on the cross, not only would this cast out the ruler of this world, it would draw all men to Jesus (12:31-32). It is the cross, then, which is the judgment of the world; it is the cross which gains the victory over the Devil; it is the cross which is the focal point of Jesus' kingdom.

The fact that prior to Christianity first-century ideas concerning the Messiah were diverse¹ has not prevented the formation of

¹"We must not forget that at this time Judaism had by no means a single fixed concept of the Messiah. We are accustomed to think of the Jewish Messiah as if he were an unambiguous, clearly defined figure. In general it is true that the Jews expected a saviour with certain nationalistic and Jewish characteristics. But this common form could hold the most widely varying content" (Cullmann, p. 111).

a reasonably clear idea as to the features of the debate about the Messiah which had taken place between the Johannine community and other groups. Of course this debate often goes back to the life of Jesus and extended beyond the writing of the Fourth Gospel.¹ The debate about Jesus as Christ was carried out in terms of origin and function. Jesus as Messiah was from a place unknown--heaven. His function as Messiah revolved around the ideas of the Davidic king and the Prophet. Jesus is the true king foreshadowed in the promises to David. But his kingdom is unlike earthly kingdoms, it is a heavenly kingdom. The battles he fights are cosmic battles against the invisible rulers of the world. By his cross he has conquered these powers and now holds suzerainty over the world. As Prophet, Jesus is the true revealer and restorer. These are some of the ideas inherent in the Fourth Gospel's use of the title Christ.

Son, Son of God

The title "Son," or "Son of God" is found throughout the fourth gospel. It is used to convey the unique relationship between Jesus and God. He is at the same time equal to God, and His emissary.²

See also, M. de Jonge, "The Use of the Word 'Anointed' in the time of Jesus," Novum Testamentum 9 (1966):132-48; A. J. B. Higgins, "The Priestly Messiah," New Testament Studies 13 (1967):211-39; G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 2d ed. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1975), pp. 47-51.

¹ See, for example, A. J. B. Higgins, "Jewish Messianic Belief in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho," Novum Testamentum 9 (1967): 298-305.

² This title has been discussed fully on pp. 64-70 above.

Son of Man

The title "Son of Man" has a somewhat different locus to the title "Son of God," although (as is seen) the two are related. The title "Son of Man" has generated a large body of secondary literature and little consensus. For example, Geza Vermes bases his understanding of the title on the fact that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is not a genuine Greek idiom. Therefore, if the phrase is to have any meaning, it must be an Aramaic meaning. He concludes from his study of Aramaic that bar nasha usually meant "man," in general, but that at times it is used as a circumlocution for the personal pronoun; it was never used as a title.¹ While supported by Matthew Black, Vermes' ideas have not gained wide support.² Most scholars would still agree that in the Gospels the expression must be understood to be a title in some of its uses.

Another problem with the title "Son of Man" is its background. Within the Old Testament, the background is generally agreed to be Dan 7, where the Son of Man is a heavenly being associated with the

¹"The 'Son of Man' Debate," Journal for the Study of NT 1 (1978):20.

²Matthew Black, "Jesus and the Son of Man," Journal for the Study of NT 1 (1978):4-18. See also: Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Another View of the 'Son of Man' Debate," Journal for the Study of NT 1 (1978):58-68; John P. Brown, "The Son of Man: 'This Fellow,'" Biblica 58 (1977):361; Francis J. Maloney, "The Johannine Son of Man," Biblical Theology Bulletin 6 (1976):182-83; Barnabas Lindars, "Jesus as Advocate: A Contribution to the Christology Debate," Bulletin, John Rylands Library 60 (1980):479; Barnabas Lindars, "Re-enter the Apocalyptic Son of Man," New Testament Studies 22 (1976):53; Merrill C. Tenney, "The Concept of Sonship in the Fourth Gospel," in New Testament Studies, ed. H. L. Drumwright and Curtis Vaughn (Waco, Texas: Markham, 1975), p. 48; William O. Walker, "The Son of Man: Some Recent Developments," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 45 (1983):585, who all refer to the Son of Man as a title.

Ancient of Days, and to whom was given glory and everlasting kingdom.¹ The use in Ezekiel, where Ezekiel is addressed as Son of Man, does not have the same sort of relevance. Most agree with this, but the problem lies with First Enoch. In Enoch there is a personal, heavenly Son of Man, very like the Christian concept.² But it is impossible to determine the relative dating between the New Testament and the Similitudes of Enoch.³ It is perfectly possible that the use of the title in Enoch is a derivative from Christianity. The other extra-New Testament parallel that could be cited as background is 2 Esdras 13:1-3.⁴ As this document is to be dated to the last decade of the first century, it is a valuable insight into how some contemporary Jews were

¹A. J. Ferch, *The Son of Man in Daniel 7* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1979) has a full discussion and up-to-date bibliography of Dan 7.

²1 Enoch 46:3-4 reads:

"And I asked the angel who went with me and showed me all the hidden things, concerning that Son of Man, who he was, and whence he was, (and) why he went with the Head of Days? And he answered and said unto me: This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness, with whom dwelleth righteousness, and who revealeth all the treasures of that which is hidden, because the Lord of Spirits has chosen him, and whose lot hath the pre-eminence before the Lord of Spirits in uprightness for ever. And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen shall raise up the kings and the mighty from their seats, and the strong from their thrones and shall loosen the reins of the strong, and break the teeth of sinners" (R. H. Charles, ed. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* Oxford: Clarendon, 1964, 2:214-15).

³For a discussion of relative dating, etc., see James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), pp. 75-78; see also, C. F. D. Moule, "Neglected Features in the Problem of 'the Son of Man,'" in *Neues Testament und Kirche*, Herausgegeben von Joachim Gnilka Freiburg: Herder, 1974), p. 416; J. C. Greenfield and M. E. Stone, "The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the Similitudes," *Harvard Theological Review* 70 (1977):51-65; C. L. Mearns, "Dating the Similitudes of Enoch," *New Testament Studies* 25 (1979):360-69.

⁴Jacob M. Myers, *I and II Esdras*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 126-29; Dunn, pp. 79-81.

thinking about the Messiah, but it can hardly be said to be influential in the formation of the way the Son of Man title is used in the Fourth Gospel.

Within the Fourth Gospel the term "Son of Man" is found in 1:51; 3:13-14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34; 13:31. The title is first used at 1:51 as the climax of the introductory section. Others attribute titles to Jesus (Messiah, King of Israel, etc.), but Jesus calls himself "Son of Man." He assures Nathanael that he will see greater things, he will see the heavens opened, and the angels of God going up and coming down upon the Son of Man. Jesus, as Son of Man, is the bridge between the heavenly and earthly realms.¹

In 3:14-15 the Son of Man is seen as a heavenly figure. No one has ascended into heaven except the one who has come down out of heaven, the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up. Jesus is to be again exalted to heaven, he is to be lifted up; but paradoxically this is by means of his suffering and death, by being lifted up on the cross. John 12:23 and 13:31 both speak of the glorification of the Son of Man in terms that clearly mean his death on the cross. Thus, exaltation through suffering is inherent in the Fourth Gospel's use of the Son of Man.

¹C. H. Dodd quotes from Bereshith Rabba 70:12 where the ladder is identified by some rabbis as Joseph himself, in which case Jesus could be substituting himself in the place of Joseph, and thereby making a comparison between himself and Joseph. The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1955), p. 245. However, Raymond E. Brown finds "No one of these variations is particularly convincing. However, in the theme that they have in common they are probably correct . . . Jesus as Son of Man becomes the locus of divine glory, the point of contact between heaven and earth," John, p. 91.

In 5:27 the title is used without the article. The Father has given the Son authority to execute judgment, because he is a Son of Man. It is possible that the title is anarthrous because it is emphasizing that the humanity of Jesus makes him uniquely qualified to judge humanity, but this is less likely than the possibility that the LXX text of Dan 7:13 (in which the Son of Man is anarthrous) is reflected here.¹ What is clear is that in 5:27 the Son of Man is eschatological judge. It is he who will raise the dead at the last day.

Chapter 6 also emphasizes the heavenly nature of the Son of Man. It is the Son of Man who will give the true bread from heaven (6:27); in fact, it is the Son of Man himself who is the true bread from heaven (6:53, cf. 6:51). Jesus asks his disciples if they are scandalized by the statement that he is the true bread from heaven, what will they be when the Son of Man goes up to where he was before (6:62).

In the Fourth Gospel the Son of Man is almost exclusively a self-designation of Jesus. It conveys the fact that he is the bridge between the earthly and heavenly realms. It denotes his exaltation, the exaltation of the cross. As the Son of Man he is eschatological judge (cf. Dan 7).

¹So C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John*, 2d ed. (London: SPCK, 1978), p. 262; and Brown, *John*, 1:215. Marsh, p. 265, takes both options, while Bultmann, *John*, pp. 260-61, and Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:112-13, cast doubt on the authenticity of the saying.

I Am

The "I am" sayings fall into two categories: those without predicates and those with predicates.

The phrase ἐγώ εἰμι occurs without a predicate in 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 9:9; 13:19; 18:5-6, 8.¹ In Johannine usage it is clear that the phrase can have a mundane meaning. The man who received back his sight identified himself by saying ἐγώ εἰμι (9:9). When Jesus was talking to the woman at the well he indicated that he was the Christ by saying ἐγώ εἰμι (4:26). In 6:20, where Jesus is walking on the water, the phrase could again merely be self-identification, as it could be also in 18:5, 6, 8. But it is definitely used as a title in 3:24, 28 and 13:19, where the phrase is the subject of the verb πιστεύειν. Even in 4:26, 6:20, and 18:5-8 the context is anything but mundane. In 18:6, when Jesus said ἐγώ εἰμι those that had come to arrest him fell to the ground. In 6:20 it is Jesus who is walking on water who says ἐγώ εἰμι, and in 4:26 Jesus is identifying himself as the Messiah.

It is the occurrences in John 8 that provide a good starting point for a discussion of the supra-mundane dimension of the meaning of the phrase in the Fourth Gospel. Jesus tells his listeners that they will die in their sins unless they believe that "ἐγώ εἰμι" (8:24). Thus, this title embodies within it a conception of the person of Jesus that is a necessary part of saving faith. His hearers are

¹This group of texts is discussed by B. Harner in The 'I Am' of the Fourth Gospel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970). See also Dodd, Fourth Gospel, pp. 93-96; David Daube, The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism (London: Athlone, 1956), ch. 9, "The 'I Am' of the Messianic Presence" (pp. 325-29); and the more general discussions in Brown, John, 1:533-58, and Schnackenburg, John, 2:79-89.

surprised at this, and ask, "Who are you?" Jesus answers in terms of the one who sent him, his Father, and then tells his listeners that when they see the Son of Man lifted up, then they will know (8:28). It is the cross that more than any other thing reveals the true nature of Jesus.¹ Later in the same chapter Jesus tells his listeners that Abraham rejoiced to see his day. The Jews immediately questioned this statement because Jesus was not yet fifty years old. Jesus then solemnly declared that before Abraham was, ἐγώ εἰμι. At this the Jews pick up stones to throw at him--not only because Jesus had made a clear claim to pre-existence, but because his listeners were reminded of some of the uses of this phrase in the Old Testament.

The LXX translation of Isaiah provides some very significant examples of the use of the phrase, ἐγώ εἰμι:

Isa 43:10:

¹⁰ γένεσθέ μοι μάρτυρες, καὶ γὰρ μάρτυς, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, καὶ ὁ παῖς, ὃν ἐξελεξάμην, ἵνα γνῶτε καὶ πιστεύσητε καὶ συνῆτε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ἔμπροσθέν μου οὐκ ἐγένετο ἄλλος θεός καὶ μετ' ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔσται.

Isa 41:4:

⁴ τίς ἐνήργησεν καὶ ἐποίησεν ταῦτα; ἐκάλεσεν αὐτὴν ὁ καλῶν αὐτὴν ἀπὸ γενεῶν ἀρχῆς, ἐγὼ θεός πρῶτος, καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐπερχόμενα ἐγώ εἰμι.

Isa 51:12:

¹² ἐγώ εἰμι ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ παρακαλῶν σε.

Exod 3:13-14:

¹³ καὶ εἶπεν Μωυσῆς πρὸς τὸν θεόν Ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐλεύσομαι πρὸς τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐρῶ πρὸς αὐτοὺς Ὁ θεός τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἐρωτήσουσίν με τί ὄνομα αὐτῷ; τί ἐρῶ πρὸς αὐτούς; ¹⁴ καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός πρὸς Μωυσῆν Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν καὶ εἶπεν Οὕτως ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ Ὁ ὢν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς.¹

¹ See J. E. Morgan-Wynne, "The Cross and the Revelation of Jesus as ἐγώ εἰμι in the Fourth Gospel (John 8:28)," Studia Biblica 2 (1978):219-26.

² The LXX text is taken from Septuaginta, ed. Alfred Rahlfs, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1950).

In all these instances the phrase ἐγώ εἰμι is an important self-designation of the One God. Thus, the phrase is another example of double entendre in the Fourth Gospel. As the reader notes the reply of Jesus to the soldiers in the garden, he is not surprised when the rabble falls to the ground. When he hears Jesus admit that he is the Messiah by saying "ἐγώ εἰμι," there is a distant echo of divinity in his mind.

There are seven ἐγώ εἰμι sayings with a predicate:

- I am the bread--of life (6:35, 48)
 - which has come down from heaven (6:41)
 - the living bread (5:51)
- I am the light of the world (8:12)
- I am the door (10:7, 9)
- I am the good shepherd (10:11, 14)
- I am the resurrection and life (11:25)
- I am the way, the truth and the life (14:6)
- I am the true vine (15:1, 5)

Together, these seven sayings encompass a large proportion of the first half of the Fourth Gospel. They are significant summary statements of the meaning the reader is to place on the σημεῖα chosen by the fourth evangelist. The restoration of the sight of a blind man shows that Jesus is indeed the light of the world. Jesus can raise Lazarus to life again because he is the resurrection and the life. The significance of the feeding, of the five thousand is that Jesus is the bread of life that has come down from heaven.

Several of the sayings point out that Jesus is the only way to the Father. Salvation and eternal life are available only through Jesus. He is the door; he is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the life-giving vine, and it is only by abiding in him that his followers will bear much fruit. Jesus is the good shepherd. His sheep hear his voice.

Other Titles

Several other titles are given to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. Mention has already been made of "King of Israel" and "The Prophet."¹ Other titles that deserve mention are "Logos," "Lamb of God," "Saviour of the World" (4:42), and "Holy One of God" (6:69).

Logos² is used only in the prologue. As the concept is found both in the Hellenistic and Judaistic thought, it is used by the Fourth Gospel as a point of contact between the Evangelist and his readers.³ Both the pre-existence and divinity of the Logos are

¹See pp. 73-75 above.

²On Logos, see Barrett, *John*, pp. 152-57; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), i:cxxvii-cxlvii; Cullmann, pp. 249-69; Dodd, *Fourth Gospel*, pp. 263-85; Eldon Jay Epp, "Wisdom, Torah, Word: The Johannine Prologue and the Purpose of the Fourth Gospel," in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 128-46; Edwin D. Freed, "Theological Prelude to the Prologue of John's Gospel," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 32 (1979):157-69; C. T. R. Hayward, "The Holy Name of the God of Moses and the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," *New Testament Studies* (1978):16-32; Robert Kysar, *John, the Maverick Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1976), pp. 24-31; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 237-42; Pollard, pp. 6-15; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:481-93.

³As Pollard says (p. 6):

"Commentators are unanimous in emphasising that the concept of the Logos, or rather a variety of concepts of Logos was current in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century A.D. Therefore it would make a suitable point of contact for the evangelist as he sought to commend his gospel. That he uses it primarily--we may almost say solely--as a point of contact should be evident from the fact that, having used the concept in the Prologue, he does not use it again. . . ."

It is interesting to note that the Logos concept found its way into Hellenistic thinking from a Semitic background: "It has to be kept in view that in the LXX the meaning of λόγος and ῥήμα is much influenced by the basic Heb. דבר. The great significance of λόγος in stoic philosophy, like that of πνεῦμα, possibly derives from a semitic root, since Zeno was certainly a Semite." Procksch, *TDNT* 4: 93.

emphasised, as is the fact that the Logos became enfleshed (1:1, 14).

John the Baptist called Jesus the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (1:29, 36). It is probable that John the Baptist understood the title in terms of an apocalyptic lamb, such as is found in Revelation, but that the Fourth Evangelist understood the title in terms of the passover lamb.¹

The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel

Ernst Käsemann has presented the problem of the humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel with disturbing clarity:

. . . we must also ask: In what sense is he flesh, who walks on the water and through closed doors, who cannot be captured by his enemies, who at the well of Samaria is tired and desires a drink, yet has no need of drink and has food different from that which his disciples seek? He cannot be deceived by men, because he knows their innermost thoughts even before they speak. He debates with them from the vantage point of the infinite difference between heaven and earth. He has need neither of the witness of Moses nor of the Baptist. He dissociates himself from the Jews, as if they were not his own people, and he meets his mother as one who is her Lord. He permits Lazarus to lie in the grave four days in order that the miracle of his resurrection may be more impressive. And in the end the Johannine Christ goes victoriously to his death of his own accord.²

He concludes:

One can hardly fail to recognize the danger of his christology of glory, namely, the danger of docetism. It is present in a still naive, unreflected form and it has not yet been recognised by the community.³

¹On the title "Lamb of God," see Dodd, Fourth Gospel, pp. 230-38; and C. K. Barrett's response in "The Lamb of God," New Testament Studies 1 (1954-55):210-18.

²Ernst Käsemann, The Testament of Jesus (London: SCM, 1968), p. 9.

³Käsemann, p. 26.

Käsemann's remarks have not gone unchallenged. Leon Morris, for example, has devoted a whole paper to analyzing the above comments phrase by phrase.¹ Jesus does not customarily walk on water, he only walks through doors after the resurrection (which coincides with the Synoptic view of the resurrected Jesus), and so on. In fact, at times the Johannine portrayal of Jesus emphasises his humanity to a greater extent than the synoptics. The father, mother, and brothers of Jesus are known (6:42; 7:2). He experiences human emotions such as love (11:5) and anger (11:33), and he even wept at the death of Lazarus (11:35). He can grow weary (4:6), and he bleeds (water and blood) when a spear is thrust into his side (19:33-34). Even his resurrection body has a form which can be touched (20:27).² C. F. D. Moule is probably correct when he said:

There is no denying that the fourth evangelist allows himself sometimes to draw a very docetic picture; but then he also contradicts it. The truth seems to be that he simply states both facts--Jesus is the pre-existent Son of God, the unique Son who shares God's glory; yet also, Jesus is the one who accepts human limitations; and³ he does not bring them into anything like a unified system.

What is most significant to the present investigation is that the Fourth Gospel allows itself to present the truth about Jesus in ways which are so open to a docetic misinterpretation that

¹"The Jesus of Saint John," in Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology, ed. R. A. Guelich (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 37-53.

²James McPolin gives a good discussion of the real humanity of Jesus in his article, "The Word Was Made Flesh," The Way 21 (1981): 22-33.

³C. F. D. Moule, "The Manhood of Jesus in the New Testament," in Christ, Faith and History, ed. S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), p. 100.

. . . the total weight of the material makes certain that the writer was blissfully unconcerned about the Docetic heresy. He goes as freely as he pleases in the direction of Docetism, although, for practical reasons, he does not embrace entirely the idea that his subject is merely an appearance. But he is at no point anti-Docetic, and seems plainly unaware that a problem of the kind exists for Christianity.

On the whole, this is probably a true assessment of the presentation of the humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. There is debate about the nature of Jesus, but it tends to be carried out in terms that would emphasize the divinity of Jesus rather than his humanity. Over and over the Jews are antagonistic towards Jesus because of his high claims. There seems to be little debate about whether or not Jesus was fully human. This is assumed. What is clearly most controversial is that this man could be divine, that this man could be from heaven.

Other Aspects of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel

There are several other aspects of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel which, while they do not need the detailed treatment afforded the ascent/descent and the Father/Son motifs, still deserve some comment.

The early part of the Gospel is worked out in terms of a series of signs (2:11, 4:54). In fact, all of the miraculous "works" of Jesus are probably intended as signs, because in 20:31-31 it is stated that Jesus did many signs, but only a small selection are made to illustrate that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. These signs point to the unique personhood of Jesus. The Evangelist complains about those who saw the signs of Jesus and still did not believe

¹Guy M. Davis, Jr., "The Humanity of Jesus in John," Journal of Biblical Literature 70 (1950):105-12.

(12:37), although he is at pains to point out that it is an inadequate faith that is entirely built upon the miraculous rather than on the unique person to whom the miracles point (2:23-24; 6:26). These signs point to the fact that Jesus is supra-mundane, that he is not of this world but from above.¹

Several times throughout the Gospel, Jesus is compared to great leaders of the Jewish nation. "The law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (1:17). Jesus is greater than both Jacob (4:12) and Abraham (8:53, 58).

Judgment is a prominent theme of the Gospel.² Jesus is portrayed as the eschatological judge. The Father has given all judgment to the Son (5:22, 27); but Jesus has no need to judge, because he who does not believe in Jesus has been condemned already (3:17-19). This is an extraordinary statement about Jesus. One's fate in the final judgment is determined by belief in Jesus. Those who believe have eternal life.³

¹Barrett, John, pp. 75-78, makes some interesting observations about the background of the word "sign." For example, in Aristotle it means probable argument, against certain proof. See also Peter Riga, "Signs of Glory: The Use of 'Semeion' in St. John's Gospel," Interpretation 17 (1963):402-24; and Brown, John 1:525-32; Paul Barnett, "The Jewish Sign Prophets--A.D. 40-70: Their Intentions and Origin," Tyndale Paper 25 (1978):1-22.

²Leon Morris points out that the statistics of the group show that John uses the word more times than any other New Testament writer (except for Acts, where it is used mostly of secular law). "Such statistics show that the idea of Judgment interested him more than it did most writers," The Gospel According to John, New International Commentary NT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 231, n. 80.

³3:15, 36; 6:40, 47; 20:31.

CHAPTER V

HAS A CONTEXT FOR THE FOURTH GOSPEL BEEN DISCOVERED?

Now that the Johannine Epistles and the Fourth Gospel have been independently investigated, a sufficient data-base has been built up from which an adequate comparison of the two can be made. The question to be addressed is this: Has a historical context for the Fourth Gospel been discovered? This is investigated in two parts: the case "for" identifying the schism reflected in the Johannine Epistles as the historical context of the Fourth Gospel, and the case "against." After this has been done, possible conclusions are drawn.

The Case "For"

The Fourth Gospel itself gives the reason for which it was written:¹

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are

¹The words of W. C. van Unnik are still true twenty years later:

"It has always been recognized that John informs his readers that he knows far more about the life and works of Jesus than he tells them in his gospel, but that he deemed his selections sufficient for his purpose. That purpose is twofold . . . it has to do with a certain belief about Jesus and this belief will give to those who accept it life eternal. This belief about Jesus who comes from Nazareth in Galilee, who is a man with father, mother, brothers and friends is formulated in a double manner viz. that Jesus is (a) the Christ, (b) the Son of God. . . . The unsuspecting student may think that

written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)

This informs the reader of the Gospel that what is in the Gospel has been carefully selected to demonstrate two things. First, it shows that Jesus is the Christ, and that Jesus is the Son of God. What is most significant for the purposes of this study is that two of the three Christological formulae used in 1 John to determine orthodoxy are present here, viz., "Jesus is the Christ" and "Jesus is the Son of God."¹ The third formula, "Jesus Christ came in flesh," is found at an important place in the prologue of the Gospel. The Fourth Gospel starts with the divine, pre-existent Logos. It describes how this Logos came to earth by saying, "The Logos became flesh and tabernacled amongst us, and we saw his glory, glory as the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Thus, right from the outset, the Fourth Gospel describes the incarnation in terms which insist that Jesus took flesh.

An examination of the Gospel has shown that it fulfils its stated purpose. The motif of Father/Son was discovered to be one of the foundation pillars of its Christology.² This would correspond

such a clear statement would be the guiding principle of all thinking, speaking and writing on the Fourth Gospel. But on consulting the commentaries and handbooks he will find that he has been deceived. Many times the expositors start with the beginning in ch. i, are fascinated by the word Logos and say John wants to show that Jesus is the incarnate Word, whatever may be the disputed origin and contents of this term. But this is something different from the wording of xx 31" (Sparsa Collecta [Leiden: Brill, 1973], p. 38).

¹See above, pp. 22-31.

²See above, pp. 64-70.

well with the insistence of 1 John that Jesus was the Son of God. The correspondence with the concern of 1 John that Jesus is the Christ and the presentation of Jesus as the Christ in the Fourth Gospel is also great. It was also found that the Gospel mirrored a great deal of debate about the nature of the Messiahship of Christ.¹

Another direct point of contact between the polemic of the Epistles and the Gospel is the reference to the water and the blood of John 19:33-34 (cf. 1 John 5:6).

In addition to these direct points of contact, some parts of the Fourth Gospel are particularly suited to a community undergoing the stress and bitter debate of schism. Jesus speaks of himself as the vine, his Father being the vinedresser. Some branches will be cut off, the rest pruned, so the vine will bear much fruit (John 15: 1-2).

It is possible that these words of Jesus were selected by the evangelist to remind his readers that the troubles experienced by the community could be considered as the Father's pruning of the vine.

Significantly, Jesus prays that his disciples might be one, just as he and the Father are one (John 17:20-21). This text points out that it is not for the immediate disciples only that Jesus is praying; he prays also for those who would later believe.

The time when Jesus washed his disciples' feet was of great importance in the memory of the Johannine community. The most natural reading of John 13:14-15 is that the community itself practiced a service of footwashing in remembrance of this incident.² The

¹See above, pp. 71-76.

²Herold Weiss criticizes R. A. Culpepper and Oscar Cullmann: "Improbable as it may seem, the two most recent attempts to define the

example of Jesus, at a time when he was fully conscious that his Father had given all things into his hands, and when he knew that he had come from God and was to return to God (John 13:3), set a pattern of humility for his disciples to follow. In a time of intra-community debate such a message was very timely. Also timely would be the new commandment Jesus left his disciples: that they love one another.¹

Another passage that a community undergoing schism would find very relevant would be John 10:1-42. Various actors in the allegory of the sheepfold fit very well into this scenario. Jesus is the good shepherd. He is the only true door into the sheepfold. Others try to get in by other means, but their purpose is to scatter, rob, and kill. However, Jesus as the good shepherd, lays down his life for his sheep, defending them from these marauders. Jesus' sheep hear his voice and follow him, and he gives them eternal life. The Father who gives them to Jesus is great, and no one is able to snatch them out of the hand of the Father. Neither can they be snatched out of the hands of the Son, because the Son and the Father are one. For any group under siege from schismatic elements there is a strong note of reassurance here. Such a group would also be able to identify other actors in the allegory. The false shepherd and those who wish to come into the sheepfold by other ways to murder and destroy could

Johannine community somehow managed to ignore the foot-washing altogether. There can be no doubt, however, that the Johannine community must have performed this ceremony with some regularity and with a definite purpose in mind." "Foot Washing in the Johannine Community," Novum Testamentum 21 (1979):198.

¹John 13:34-35; cf. 1 John 2:7-8; 3:11; 4:9-11. See also p. 12, n. 1, above.

easily be identified with those who are troubling and splitting the community.

These, then, are some of the elements which point to the possibility that the schism reflected in the Johannine Epistles is the correct historical context for the Fourth Gospel. They constitute the case for the identification. Impartial investigation demands that both sides of the evidence be presented.

The Case "Against"

Christology

The identification of the schism of the Epistles as the historical context of the Gospel founders upon the way the Fourth Gospel presents its understanding of Jesus. At the heart of the secessionist's theology is a docetic Christology. Their greatest problem is that they cannot confess that Jesus came in the flesh.¹ It is precisely here that the Fourth Gospel appears to be unaware of any problem. Many times statements about Jesus are made in a way which could easily be misunderstood as docetic. It is not that the Gospel has a docetic Christology: it states clearly in 1:14 that the Logos became flesh, and it also emphasizes his real humanity.² It is because it is so unguarded in its statements. It is barely conceivable that it could have been written at a time of intense controversy over a heretical, docetic Christology.

There is also a subtle difference in emphasis in the Christology of the Epistles. The motif of sender/sent is present (e.g.,

¹See above, pp. 29-31, 41.

²See above, p. 86.

1 John 4:9, 14), but the descent/ascent motif is almost completely absent. Whereas the prologue of the gospel starts with the pre-existent Logos, the prologue of 1 John starts with tangible realities--things that have been seen, heard, and touched. There is also a greater richness in the Christology of the Gospel which cannot be explained only in terms of greater space. Not only is the motif of descent/ascent missing, but also the "I am" sayings, the title "Son of Man," the signs, and the eschatological judge. The Christology of the Epistles appears to have been worked out within a much narrower framework, largely determined by the debate with the secessionists.

^{Ant}
Discernable Protagonists
in the Fourth Gospel

Another reason why the historical contexts of the Epistles and Gospel of John cannot be equated is that the protagonists that are discernable in the Fourth Gospel appear to bear little relation to the secessionists of the Epistles. Now, it must quickly be pointed out that any investigation of the Johannine community in terms of the conflicts recorded in the Gospel is fraught with difficulty, the greatest being that the Gospel is reporting on historical events that had previously taken place. The controversies between Jesus and the protagonists in the Gospel are part of the historical context of the life of Jesus rather than the historical context of the Johannine community at the time of the writing of the Gospel. The evangelist says he has deliberately selected his materials (John 20:30-31). Some of the controversies in which the community was engaged at the time of the writing show through in the materials selected and, in some cases, in the way they are presented.

The most prominent group of protagonists in the Gospel are "the Jews."¹ This is in marked contrast to the presentation of the synoptic gospels. There the protagonists are identified as Scribes, or Pharisees, or Sadducees. Where the term "the Jews" is used, it is most often in the phrase "King of the Jews."² It is used in a hostile sense in Matt 28:14, where the narrative concerning the guards at the tomb is interrupted with the comment that the story that the disciples stole the body of Jesus is told amongst "the Jews" till this day. Clearly, this use for Matthew belonged to the time of the writing of the Gospel, not to the time of Jesus. Mark 7:3 explains to his (Gentile) readers that the Pharisees and all the Jews wash their hands before eating. Again, here is a usage that belongs to the social setting of the writing of the Gospel, rather than the context of the time of Jesus. There is another explanatory note to Gentile readers in Luke 23:51. Aramathea is said to be a Jewish town. The use in Luke 7:3 is somewhat more ambiguous. The elders of the Jews had told the centurion about Jesus. This, again, probably presupposes a Gentile audience to the Gospel.

Thus, the term "the Jews" is an unusual way for the evangelist to describe the protagonists of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. It is

¹On this see: Urban C. von Wahlde, "The Johannine 'Jews': A Critical Survey," *New Testament Studies* 18 (1982):33-60; Wayne A. Meeks, "'Am I a Jew?' Johannine Christianity and Judaism," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1975); 1:180-85; Severino Pancaro, "The Relationship of the Church to Israel in the Gospel of St. John," *New Testament Studies* 21 (1975):396-405; E. L. Allen, "The Jewish Christian Church in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74 (1955):88-92.

²Matt 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37; Mark 15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26; Luke 23:3, 37, 38.

not that the Fourth Gospel is antagonistic towards Judaism. Nathaniel is called a true Israelite (1:47) and Jesus tells the Woman of Samaria that salvation is of the Jews (4:22).¹ Thus there are two groups of Jews: the true Jews who believe in Jesus (of whom Nathaniel is a representative), and those that gradually become his enemies. John 8 represents somewhat of a watershed in the relationship between Jesus and "the Jews". At the feast of tabernacles the Jews were still trying to work out who Jesus was.¹ In chapter 8 the Jews are still wondering about Jesus (8:22), but there is a group of them who believe in Jesus (8:31). They are told that they will truly be disciples of Jesus only if they remain in him (8:31). They are also told that the true children of Abraham do the works of Abraham (8:39, 48, 58). By the end of the chapter, there is a growing disillusionment amongst the Jews (8:48). In the next two chapters a growing rift between Jesus and "the Jews" develops (10:22-39, especially v 49); until in 11:54 Jesus no longer walked openly amongst "the Jews." The Pharisees gradually emerge as the group that actively seeks to destroy Jesus.²

Some scholars have seen in this presentation a veiled allegory of the history of the Johannine community.³ But this places too low a value on the historicity of the Gospel as well as leading into the labyrinth of source analysis.⁴ But it is more likely that the

¹John 7:12, 15, 25-29, 31, 40-43.

¹John 4:1; 7:32, 45-48; 8:3-6, 13; 9:13-15, 40-41; 11:46-47, 53, 57; 12:42; 18:3.

³Particularly Martyn, History and Theology; and Brown, Community.

⁴See comments above, pp. 3-4, especially p. 4, n. 1. Smalley, John, pp. 9-40 gives a convincing demonstration of the Gospel's historical trustworthiness.

evangelist chooses "the Jews" to describe the actual opponents of Jesus because he could see similarities between the way the original "Jews" could not understand Jesus and the debate between the Johannine community and some contemporary "Jews" at the time of writing. "The Jews" may indeed indicate that there is conflict between the Johannine church and a group that could be identified with "the Jews."

Some additional evidence of such a conflict in the way Jesus is contrasted with Judaism by the Fourth Gospel is noted. Moses gave the law, but Jesus brought about grace and truth (1:17). It was water from stone pots set out for Jewish ritual cleansing that Jesus changed into wine (2:6-11). Jesus is the true bread from heaven; he is superior to the manna of the Exodus, because those that ate of it died, but those that eat his body will not die (6:58). Jesus is greater than Jacob (4:12) and Abraham (8:53, 58). Right at the beginning of his ministry Jesus announces his mission by cleansing the temple of the merchants (2:13-22). In 16:2, Jesus prophesies to his disciples that they will be put out of the synagogue and killed. Is this prophecy coming true in the experience of the Johannine community at the time when the Fourth Gospel was written?

The relevance of this to the present study is clear. There is no indication in the Johannine Epistles that the secessionists were in any way linked with "the Jews" or with Judaism. This is not to say that they could not be so linked--the discussion of the heresy in the letters of Ignatius has shown that.¹ But it does make any equation of the two situations less probable.

¹See above, pp. 36-38.

In addition, a consistent contrast is made between John the Baptist and Jesus¹ and between the Beloved Disciple and Peter² which may reflect other conflicts not hinted in the Epistles.

Conclusions

Has a historical context for the Gospel been discovered? Alas, no! While many comparison's between the contexts of the Epistles and the Gospel were discovered, the way that the Gospel presents its Christology means that the two situations cannot have been identical.

Does this mean that the whole investigation has been fruitless? No, on several counts. First, the investigation has been of immense personal value because it has broadened immeasurably an understanding of the Fourth Gospel and many of the key areas of Johannine study. Second, the Epistles do in one way provide some sort of guide to the historical context of the Fourth Gospel, even though they do not provide the exact context. The debates which find their full flowering in the heresy of the secessionists in 1 John are present in the Fourth Gospel; e.g., in what way Jesus is the Christ and how to understand how he can be human and divine. In the Gospel these debates are overshadowed by other concerns and are somewhat lost in the historical presentation. But they are there. Last, the study of the Epistles acts as control to conclusions that are drawn about the historical context of the Fourth Gospel. There is a historical

¹John 1:8, 13, 19-28; 3:22-36; 10:40-41.

²John 18:15-18; 20:3-6; 22:20-21.

continuity between the two situations. Thus, the picture of the Johannine community that is drawn from the Gospel cannot be drawn in such a way that there is no conceivable link between that and what is evident from the Epistles. Therefore, while this study has not produced any dramatic breakthrough in the study of the problem of the context of the Fourth Gospel, it has, for these three reasons, been very worth while.

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