

ABSTRACT

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The Anti-Semitic Wirkungsgeschichte of the Gospel of John
(Under the Direction of DR. WAYNE COPPINS)

Since over half of the references to “the Jews” in the Gospel of John suggest a negative literary association, it is not surprising that the text has been used in Anti-Semitic rhetoric throughout the centuries. While scholars today verbally acknowledge that certain verses from the Fourth Gospel have been used to denigrate ethnic Jews, little work has been done to explore such discriminatory uses. In this presentation, instead of assuming the historical-critical focus on original meaning and context, I will assume the focus of reception history, which is on such historical interpretations and uses. This thesis examines the way the Gospel of John has been interpreted and used Anti-Semitically at influential points in its history such as in the Early Church documents, Luther’s writings, and pro-Nazi rhetoric. It seems these earlier interpreters read the term “the Jews” in its original context in John to apply to all ethnic Jews and then applied this interpretation to contemporaneous Jews. This analysis will inform the way contemporary scholars engage the brutal history of the Fourth Gospel’s use, as they seek to be faithful to the original situational text and mindful of the way the text has been exploited. Whether or not scholars agree with defamatory uses of the Gospel of John, the importance of understanding the particularities of such uses cannot be disregarded in this age of fundamentalism.

INDEX WORDS: Gospel of John, Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism, Reception History, Chrysostom, Luther, German Christians

ANTISEMITISM AND THE RECEPTION HISTORY OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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DEDICATION

This thesis is primarily dedicated to all those in history who have wrestled with these issues through, and even with, their lives. It is also for my parents who taught me to respect both the Judaism of my father's religious heritage and the Christianity of my mother's.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | v |
| CHAPTERS | |
| 1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 2 RECEPTION HISTORY OR <i>WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE</i> | 4 |
| 3 CHRYSOSTOM, ANTISEMITISM, AND JOHN..... | 10 |
| 4 LUTHER, ANTISEMITISM, AND JOHN | 18 |
| 5 RACIALIZED CHRISTIANITY, NAZI GERMANY, AND JOHN..... | 24 |
| 6 INCORPORATION OF <i>WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE</i> INTO CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE | 34 |
| 7 HISTORICAL-CRITICAL EXAMPLE WITH <i>WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE</i> | 41 |
| WORKS CITED | 48 |

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells the Jews, “You are from your father the devil” (8:44).¹ No matter what that originally meant or how it should be interpreted today, it should not be surprising that the Fourth Gospel has been used in antisemitic discourse throughout the centuries. Further bolstering such discourse, at least half of the references to “the Jews” in the Gospel of John suggest a negative literary association. Many scholars have sought to address the possible anti-Judaism or antisemitism in the Fourth Gospel particularly in the last thirty-five years.² The questions are not only historical-critical and literary but also theological, hermeneutical, and liturgical.³ However diverse, the focus of these contemporary interpretations is primarily on original and contemporary understanding, though the preliminary issue of concern is the Fourth Gospel’s history of antisemitic use.

Though scholars will verbally acknowledge that certain verses from the Fourth Gospel have been used to denigrate ethnic Jews, less work has been done to explore such discriminatory uses. There are certainly clear examples of the Fourth Gospel being used to discriminate, even from influential church fathers. Simultaneously studying these later historical interpretations and the original meaning could give us a better understanding of what the text might mean today.

¹ Unless stated otherwise, assume all scriptural references from the New Revised Standard Version.

² As noted by James D.G. Dunn in “The Embarrassment of History: Reflections on the Problem of ‘Anti-Judaism’ in the Fourth Gospel” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers from the Leuven Colloquium* (ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville; Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), Rosemary Radford Ruether’s publication of *Faith and Fratricide* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974) sparked much of this research.

³ For a good collection of contemporary interpretations, see *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers from the Leuven Colloquium* (ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville; Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001).

For example, since the meaning or comprehension of certain words in the Gospel of John changes over time, understanding how certain words have been used in that evolution can aid our understanding of the original meaning from within our contemporary context. While some scholars have sought increasingly to study the historical reception of the Bible, there does not seem to be much work examining the historical interpretations and uses of the Gospel of John, whether considered anti-Jewish, antisemitic, or otherwise.

In this thesis, by analyzing its use in antisemitic works by influential church fathers and New Testament scholars, I seek to examine creative ways to approach the issue of anti-Judaism within the Fourth Gospel. Before said analysis, I provide in the next chapter a brief survey of reception history, the relatively new field within Biblical scholarship that seeks to address the gap in scholarship regarding historical uses and interpretations of the Bible. Though there is significant lack of clarity of method within the field, at least the aim of my research fits consistently within it. For that reason, within the framework of reception history, I then go on to analyze the use of the Gospel of John in commonly considered antisemitic literature. Providing an example from the early establishment of anti-Judaism within Christian theology, Saint John Chrysostom in the fourth century reveals the integration of Johannine quotations and themes in documents infamous for antisemitism, particularly in his *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*. Martin Luther, especially in his later works such as *On the Jews and Their Lies*, incorporates various elements of medieval Catholic antisemitism into the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Recognizing the inclusion of racial discourse into New Testament scholarship with the example of Ernest Renan in the nineteenth century, I end the analysis with the publications of German Christian leaders during the Nazi period.

With such a synopsis of examples from the antisemitic reception history of the Fourth Gospel, wrestling fully with the way in which these documents inform contemporary scholarship is much too great a task for this thesis. Instead, I focus on what these documents tell us about who or what is responsible for such anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. Even the editors of *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* raise the issue of responsibility in the first paragraph of the Preface with regard to the initial modern acknowledgement of ethical Scriptural issues: “The question arose whether the Scriptures themselves or the misguided interpretation of them were responsible for such unethical phenomena.”⁴ The reception history in this paper seems to indicate that neither the text nor the interpreters are solely responsible, but the responsibility lies with both. Noting this responsibility, I indicate the ways that the reception history might inform diverse areas of scholarship, though particularly focusing on its incorporation into historical-critical research. Lastly, I propose a particular translation of the term “the Jews” in the Gospel of John – that is, one that seems to partially address the discriminatory history and potential and that seems to respect the original literary meaning.

Through all this work, I do not wish to minimize the impact of other prejudices but reveal through the example of antisemitism the way that understandings of Scripture lead to prejudice. I deplore the conclusions in the works analyzed but hope that such analysis will contribute to the removal of prejudices within the Church and outside, especially when they condone maltreatment and genocide.

⁴ Bieringer et al, *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, ix.

CHAPTER TWO RECEPTION HISTORY OR *WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE*

As the approach used in the following paper will be a part of reception history or a form of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, I would like to begin by giving an overview of my understanding of this relatively new “field” within biblical scholarship. Unfortunately, it seems reception history is less defined by method than by aim and by the type of material analyzed. To complicate understanding, there are various terms beyond reception history, such as post history, effective history, or history of effects, that are also used to describe similar, related types of inquiry. All, though, seem to address the gap in biblical scholarship in which few address historical uses of the Bible, as such, and/or the effect such uses have had on history. Also, no matter the term used to describe these relatively new approaches, there are concerns about the soundness of any of these scholarly inquiries. For example, these approaches often lack a rational method or extend conclusions beyond their inherent rationality. While I respect such concerns, it seems the problems do not lie with the rationale for approaching this area of study but with certain actualizations or possible extensions of reception/effective history. Having noted the similar aim and purpose of all these terms, I seek to differentiate the terms in their usage. Since these approaches still lack definition of method, I will develop a method through this paper that analyzes particular Johannine themes in specific historical works. I will use the term reception history to describe this method for reasons to be made explicit later.

To begin, let us examine more fully the gap hopefully addressed by scholars of reception history or effective history. Heikki Räisänen begins his essay “The ‘Effective History’ of The

Bible” with the recognition of this gap: “A biblical scholar is sometimes asked, ‘What effect has the Bible had?’ To my embarrassment, I have not been able to draw on solid results of research to answer this very reasonable question.”⁵ In general, compared to research into the original meaning and context, much less research has been done in the way Biblical texts have been used throughout their history or to what effects such uses have had. Many commentaries and other work on the Fourth Gospel assume an understanding of the influence of the text but do not cite explicit work done in this area. For example, Andrew Lincoln’s commentary on the Gospel of John argues that “Despite the horrendous misuse of this passage in the Gospel’s later reception, in the Gospel itself it has nothing to do with antisemitism,”⁶ yet only one explicit source is cited, *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* ed. by Bieringer et al., which focuses on original meaning and only a few of the articles even mention *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Fortunately, some work has been done on Anti-Jewish theological reception of the New Testament, such as Rosemary Ruether’s *Faith and Fratricide* (1996). However, it seems little work has been done on later reception of particular Anti-Jewish verses in the Gospel of John, compared to the wealth of work done on the same verses’ original meaning and context. In general, there is much work that could be done on how biblical texts have been used in history.

Beyond simply filling the ivory tower of academia, Ulrich Luz finds in the reception of his work an urgent need for reception history work because “the history over centuries the Bible has had with us, during which it formed and shaped our culture and our churches, has become unknown for most so-called ‘educated’ people of today.”⁷ His convincing reason then for

⁵ Heikki Räisänen, *Challenges to Biblical Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 263

⁶ Andrew Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005), 73.

⁷ Ulrich Luz, “The Contribution of Reception History to a Theology of the New Testament,” in *The Nature of New Testament Theology: Essays in Honour of Robert Morgan* (ed. C. Rowland and C. Tuckett; Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 123-134 (quote from 125).

research in reception history is that it is not only knowledge that needs to be known by some people in the world but important enough to be generally accessible.

While proponents of reception history or *Wirkungsgeschichte* carefully articulate reasons such as above, other scholars have raised concerns about such scholarship, primarily with its current actualizations or possible extensions. Without having to read much within the field, one can see that there are many different approaches without a clear method. In his description of the reception history approach used in the Blackwell Bible Commentaries, editor Christopher Rowland argues that “in this task there have been no obvious role models and one of the major challenges has been to find ways of organizing a diffuse body of material.”⁸ While obviously this issue can be partially attributed to the scarcity of materials in this area, work that has been done is incredibly diverse not only in subject matter but also in method. Some scholars, such as Ulrich Luz, focus on the canonical tradition of certain texts and their use within the Church, while others seek to examine the importance of texts in how effectively they altered history. Fortunately, scholars use different terms to describe the previous difference of method, but the haziness of the use of such terms weakens the focus of the scholarship. Let us turn to the distinct uses for a greater understanding of the varying scholarship that has been done.

The usage of terms such as reception history, post history, and effective history differs fairly drastically not only from one term to another but also from scholar to scholar. Ulrich Luz rather clearly defines reception history as “the history of the reception of biblical texts in periods subsequent to New Testament times” and then begins to delineate it with respect to *Wirkungsgeschichte*, attributed to Hans Georg Gadamer from his work *Truth and Method* (1989).

⁸ Christopher Rowland, “A Pragmatic Approach to *Wirkungsgeschichte*: Reflections on the Blackwell Bible Commentary Series and on the Writing of its Commentary on the Apocalypse” (paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Evangelisch-Katholischen Kommentar series, Germany, 21-23 March 2004), 1-2.

He argues that *Wirkungsgeschichte* should be translated effective history because Gadamer's original aim was to show, instead of merely that history objectively exists, how effective history is: that is, how an individual's own history affects her or him. Luz then prefers to use the term reception history to describe the direction of biblical scholarship and effective history as the theoretical background for it.⁹ Similarly, Anthony Thiselton delineates the difference between *Wirkungsgeschichte* and reception history, as distinct from the history of interpretation and his own more general term "post-history." Beyond Luz's summary, Thiselton describes Gadamer's dialectic as a "logic of question and answer" which differs "from the notion of *solving 'problems'* (exemplified in Kant)."¹⁰ Using this knowledge, Thiselton describes his own style of "Wirkungsgeschichte or reception history," wrestling with the fact that "'History' and the interpreter's own historical situation colour the agenda brought to the text; but the text itself also *shapes successive agendas by and through the effects that it produces.*"¹¹ So it seems that while Luz simply wants to examine the way in which texts were used in the past and today, Thiselton seeks to wrestle with the way the history of the interpreter and the text itself affects such uses. Even beyond their understanding, Räisänen chooses to distinguish effects from use in that an effect of the text must be from a plausible understanding of the original meaning of the text.¹² In all this, it seems there has been work to define exactly what reception or effective means, but the distinction between *Wirkungsgeschichte* and reception history is that the first is not a field of academic inquiry but a type of work or method while reception history describes the field. And so I will use the terms.

⁹ Luz, "The Contribution of Reception History to a Theology of the New Testament," 124-125.

¹⁰ For Thiselton's development of this point, see his recent *Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

¹¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works with New Essays*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 292.

¹² Räisänen, *Challenges to Biblical Interpretation*, 271

Now I would like to return to some general concerns that seem to apply across the area of research described by any of the related terms. These concerns raised by a proponent of effective history Markus Bockmuehl seem to seriously address some issues with the work done so far that has been titled *Wirkungsgeschichte*, effective history, or reception history. First, Bockmuehl questions the function of finding contradictory uses of the same passage. He wonders whether one can honestly do such a broad analysis of interpretations in which one cannot “decide between true and false interpretation,”¹³ as Luz argues. Considering the blatant misuse of the Bible, his last question especially seems poignant: “can the history *generated* by the text shed any light whatsoever on the history and world of meaning represented by the text itself?”¹⁴ In fact, Räisänen argues that “it is unacceptable [sic] to draw from the effects of a phenomenon conclusions about its original nature.”¹⁵ These questions are certainly directed at work that has been done and labeled reception or effective history, with a possible target of the Blackwell Bible Commentaries. In a description of the approach taken in these commentaries, one of the editors Chris Rowland writes, “Instead of beginning from a particular hermeneutical theory the series focuses on the task of exploring some of the many and various effects of biblical books.”¹⁶ While this work might be used as fodder for understanding the biblical texts themselves, it seems at least in this case Bockmuehl’s worry is validated until someone proves that their work actually gives more understanding of the text itself. While only time will tell on the importance of reception or effective history work within biblical scholarship, the tackling of these concerns of Bockmuehl could grant more quickly such importance or the lack thereof.

¹³ Markus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 166.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Räisänen, *Challenges to Biblical Interpretation*, 266.

¹⁶ Rowland, “A Pragmatic Approach to *Wirkungsgeschichte*,” 1.

Despite these concerns and ambiguity within this area of research, I would like to describe why my particular method is best described as reception history, and I hope to address some of the unease delineated above. While I worry that this paper will contribute to the diversity of related materials and their lack of unifying method, I hope that by identifying this work as reception history it will later contribute to a more unified method of reception history by the incorporation of distinct methods. To provide more justification of describing this work as reception history, this paper finds its theoretical justification of Thiselton's description of Gadamer, where he chooses to describe similar work as either *Wirkungsgeschichte* or reception history – he uses both. To get beyond the concerns with reception history's actualization, my primary reason for describing my research as part of the field of reception history is that the purpose and content are the same. No matter whether one describes this area as effective or reception history, Räisänen articulates this research's place well: "it makes sense to ask, What influence has the Bible (as distinct from everything else) had on life? For it is the meaning of the *Bible*, as distinct from everything else, which a biblical scholar is trying to delineate..."¹⁷ Though he chooses to distinguish carefully between effects and use, I find in this paper that both, at least for the interpreters themselves, are working so tightly together that it is often hard to distinguish between them. Certainly this is easier to do when many interpreters are placed side by side as one can then compare the textual elements in each, though also recognizing the repetition of history. Therefore, in terms of method of analysis, I assess simply the appearance of Johannine quotations and themes in commonly considered antisemitic works, then examine the overall method of interpretation at the end of each chapter, and later seek to distinguish a few

¹⁷ Räisänen, *Challenges to Biblical Interpretation*, 268

examples of how the text seems to influence the interpreters vs. how the interpreters seem to use the text.

CHAPTER THREE CHRYSTOSTOM, ANTISEMITISM, AND JOHN

In the late fourth century,¹⁸ Saint John Chrysostom delivered a series of sermons exhorting his Christian congregants to avoid the Jews and Jewish practices. Collected into eight discourses today, the texts of the sermons themselves suggest that the polemic stems from some Christians continuing to observe certain Jewish holidays or respecting Jewish oaths more than their own affirmations. Chrysostom addresses a multitude of contemporaneous issues, ranging from participation in Jewish synagogues to simple fraternization with Jews to intra-church dissension regarding this Jewish-Christian polemic. To support his own conclusions, Chrysostom appeals to a broad range of Scripture with an emphasis on the following: Jesus' relationship with "the Jews" in the Gospels, Paul's counsel about the new church and its relation to Judaism, and the historical and prophetic accounts of the Jews (I use this particular term to mirror Chrysostom) in the Old Testament. Though in these Discourses Chrysostom more often uses elements from other biblical books such as Matthew and Daniel to disparage the Jews, my focus is on the way Chrysostom uses particular texts and themes from the Gospel of John in order to understand how historical figures incorporated the Gospel into their anti-Judaism. Not all the references to the Fourth Gospel are anti-Judaic; there are a few references to the Gospel of John that focus more on Christian morality and living since the center of attention of the Discourses is not the Jews but the congregants' relationship with them. Still, Chrysostom's overall method of persuasion continuously disparages the (unbelieving) Jews and their practices.

¹⁸ Saint John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against the Judaizing Christians* (trans. Paul W. Harkins; vol. 68 of *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*; eds. Hermigild Dressler et al.; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1977), liii.

I will show that Saint John Chrysostom in these Discourses uses certain Johannine references to “the Jews” in specific thematic ways to justify his negative portrayal of Jews and Judaism.

Particularly in his references to the Gospel of John, Chrysostom’s debasing of the Jewish character reaches a moral and spiritual level, characterizing the Jews as apart from God. This debasement is in his very first description of the Jews in the First Discourse; he labels the Jews “pitiful and miserable.”¹⁹ While Chrysostom throughout the Discourses will quote the Old Testament to conclude that the Jews’ behavior is immoral, these first adjectives entail a different, mystical kind of justification: “They really are pitiable and miserable... [because] the morning Sun of Justice arose for them, but they thrust aside its rays and still sit in darkness.”²⁰ Though Chrysostom does not explicitly quote the Gospel of John, this metaphor connecting light with Christ and darkness with Jews evokes similar imagery from the Gospel, which for one example quotes Jesus saying: “I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness” (John 12:46). Later, Chrysostom demonstrates his mastery of the Fourth Gospel with a specific quote and uses it also to eternally separate the Jews from God. Chrysostom quotes John 8:19 in reference to all non-believing Jews’ relationship with God after the coming of Jesus Christ: “No Jew adores God! Who says so? The Son of God says so. For he said: ‘If you were to know my Father, you would also know me. But you neither know me nor do you know my Father’.”²¹ The author of the Gospel repeats this assertion four or five times (7:28; 8:19, 47; 15:21; 16:3), so it seems that Chrysostom is picking up an important element of the Gospel—that is, that “the Jews” in their darkness do not know or are not from God the Father.

¹⁹ Ibid, 3.

²⁰ Ibid, 5.

²¹ Ibid, 11.

The reason that Chrysostom demonstrates that the Jews no longer have access to God is to show that there is no good reason to follow Jewish practices, such as worship in synagogues. Using elements of the previous quote from John 8:19, he debases Jewish worship as not of God: “If, then, the Jews fail to know the Father, ... who should not make bold to declare plainly that the synagogue is a dwelling of demons? God is not worshipped there.”²² Continuing to try to convince his parishioners of this demonic element in Jewish practice, Chrysostom cites John 8:44, infamous for antisemitic use. His goal is to counter the argument that nonbelievers, particularly the Jews, can perform good, so he turns to John’s connection of “the Jews” with the devil: “To learn how false [that the demons do effect cures] is, listen to what Christ said about the devil: ‘He was a murderer from the beginning’...do you rush to him as you would to a physician?”²³ By connecting the Jews with all that is dark and apart from God, Chrysostom seeks to discourage his parishioners from practicing any part of Judaism and even not to associate with the Jews.

Now Chrysostom seamlessly weaves together the Passion narratives from all Four Gospels in his many statements that the Jews crucified Jesus. His caricatures of the Jews almost always include some sort of reference to this point. The following is a good example. Since some of the Christians are observing the fast along with the Jews, Chrysostom asks his parishioners to “Consider, then... It is with those who shouted: ‘Crucify him, Crucify him.’”²⁴ A little later, he calls the Jews, “the slayers of Christ.”²⁵ Comparing Judaism and Christianity during his time, Chrysostom continues to make the same claim: “They crucified the Christ

²² Ibid, 11.

²³ Ibid, 236.

²⁴ Ibid, 22.

²⁵ Ibid, 23.

whom you adore as God.”²⁶ While it is hard at times to differentiate which Gospel Chrysostom is referencing, his other usage of the Gospel of John reveals such knowledge that its Passion narrative must impact his thinking as much as the others’, save maybe Matthew. The specifically Johannine influence could come from the emphasis in the Johannine Passion narrative on the Jews’ indictment of Jesus according to their Law, which allows him to make the piercing statements against the Jews of his time who continue to follow that Law.

The primary purpose of indicting the Jews as crucifiers of Jesus for Chrysostom is to discourage his parishioners from associating with the Jews. In order to show the kind of disassociation he requires, Chrysostom tells a story reportedly from his recent life of a Christian man requiring a Christian woman to take a Jewish oath. For this action, Chrysostom condemns the man saying, “he was no better off than a mule if he, who professed to worship Christ, would drag someone off to the dens of the Jews who had crucified him.”²⁷ Later, he uses the same justification to keep Christians away from the Jews: “They slew the Son of your Lord; do you have the boldness to enter with them under the same roof?”²⁸ When this association becomes one of religious practice, Chrysostom worries that his congregants will justify the practices of the Jews over and against church practices: “For when they see that you, who worship the Christ whom they crucified, are reverently following their ritual, how can they fail to think that the rites they have performed are the best and that our ceremonies are worthless?”²⁹ In all these situations, we see that Chrysostom states that the Jews crucified Christ in pleas for his followers to not associate with the Jews or follow their rituals.

²⁶ Ibid, 78-79.

²⁷ Ibid, 12.

²⁸ Ibid, 28.

²⁹ Ibid, 20.

Picking up another element from the Fourth Gospel, Chrysostom elevates spiritual forms of worship over legal manners of responding to God. At one point, he specifically references the Gospel of John and the story of the Samaritan woman, fairly clearly elucidating this theme:

“‘God is spirit, and they who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.’ When Christ said this, he removed from us for the future the obligation to observe one place of worship and introduced a more lofty and spiritual way of worship.”³⁰

Similarly elevating a spiritual way of worship finds mention throughout the discourses. Early on in only the Second Discourse, he argues that there is no more need for the Law but that “It has prepared our soul to receive a greater philosophy.”³¹ This preparation of the Law gives way to “the loftier lessons which surpass the nature of man [that] we had to learn from the Lawgiver himself.”³² In all of these examples, we see how Chrysostom elevates spiritual over legal responses to God.

Now, Chrysostom uses the Johannine dualism of spirituality and legalism to show that no one, especially no Christians, can worship God by following the Law from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. By choosing spiritual worship *instead of* legalistic forms, Chrysostom purposefully rejects the *instead of* part of the dualism. In the following example, he highlights spiritual forms of worship with the dual purpose of devaluating the latter part: “The best time to approach the mysteries is determined by the purity of a man’s conscience and not by his observance of suitable seasons.”³³ In this way, he condemns “he who still sits at the feet of the Law and can see nothing greater than what is written therein.”³⁴ Through his appropriation of this Johannine

³⁰ Ibid, 144.

³¹ Ibid, 42.

³² Ibid, 185.

³³ Ibid, 63.

³⁴ Ibid, 42.

dualism, Chrysostom is able to de-elevate the status of the Law in comparison with the new spiritual way.

Lastly, I would like to point out that the focus of Chrysostom's Seventh Discourse is a major Johannine theme according to some scholars such as Raymond Brown and Andrew T. Lincoln, though it is heavily debated.³⁵ By this premise, the different signs performed by Jesus in the Gospel all reflect a new understanding of Jewish ritual. For example, Jesus inverts the holiness of the water in ceremonial jars by turning it into wine. Honestly, with regards to this theme, Chrysostom does not reference an explicit Johannine understanding. Though the Discourse focuses on the theme, there is only one explicit related reference to the Fourth Gospel (John 1:17), which is used simply as a proof text to show that there's a new Law: "And again, John said: 'For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.'"³⁶ Though Chrysostom does not explicitly reference the Gospel, the theme, as understood by Brown, is articulated very clearly. With regard to sacrifice, he dismisses the old and introduces the new: "it was God's will that the old sacrifice be abolished and the new sacrifice replace the old."³⁷ Also, Chrysostom maintains this replacement theme in general with various Jewish practices: "a greater Law had to be brought in to replace the old."³⁸ Whether or not Chrysostom articulates clearly his appropriation of this Johannine theme, it is clear that he agrees with the Gospel writer if contemporary scholars are right in their characterization of the latter.

³⁵ For opposing readings that regard the following not as discontinuous, see Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003) or Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991).

³⁶ Chrysostom, *Discourses Against the Judaizing Christians*, 185.

³⁷ Ibid, 186.

³⁸ Ibid, 199.

As before, Chrysostom uses this juxtaposition of the old sacrifices with the new at least in part with a specific purpose against the Jews: to belittle the old sacrifices and prove their inefficacy. Demonstrating the finality of the old sacrifice, he says “that never again will a king arise for the Jews.”³⁹ After articulating the replacement of the old with the new so clearly, his overall goal of avoiding the mixing of the religions comes clearly to the forefront. Worried that the Jews might taint his parishioners, he concludes this discourse with the prayer and hope that “there will be no one hereafter who will dare to flee to them.”⁴⁰ Lastly, let us connect this theme of the old temple’s replacement with a new form of worship with the first element discussed in this chapter, the Jews’ separation from God. With regards to the temple as a “house of business” in the previous discourse, he there uses a verse of the Gospel to show that “after the grace of the Spirit has abandoned them, they are still stubborn with God and carry on their irreligious rites.”⁴¹ All in all we see how distinct elements of the Fourth Gospel are used in overlapping ways to encourage Chrysostom’s congregants to avoid the Jews and Jewish practices.

For the purpose of this study, it is now necessary to point out the interpretive steps Chrysostom takes through the above uses of the Fourth Gospel. How does he demonize contemporaneous Jews and their practices? In what way does Chrysostom’s continual addressing of the Jews as Christ-killers mean that Christians cannot associate with them? How does claiming the superiority of spiritual worship degrade the legalistic response to God? Lastly, how does he use the replacement theme of old with new to literally and entirely replace Judaism with Christianity?

³⁹ Ibid, 200.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 204.

⁴¹ Ibid, 174.

All of these questions have a similar answer, as Chrysostom follows his particular hermeneutic. First of all, Chrysostom appeals to a literal understanding of Scripture where the Bible is the literal Word of God and interprets it using his common sense. Chrysostom bases his arguments on the Bible, as he did with the man who prefers an oath from the Jews: “I talked to him a long time, drawing my lesson from the Holy Gospels.”⁴² Sometimes, without recognition that others could read the same words and disagree, he appeals to what Jesus said: “Could I produce a witness more trustworthy than the Son of God?”⁴³ In this simplistic way, he is able to not delineate a difference between the literary use of “the Jews” in the Gospels and the Jews of his time, which allows him to call the latter Christ-killers. Moreover, to support his interpreted biblical understanding, he often appeals to certain rhetorical devices that induce guttural emotional responses, such as asking the following closed question: “Is it not strange that those who worship the Crucified keep common festival with those who crucified him?”⁴⁴ Following this type of rhetoric, Chrysostom also, to justify his method, uses extended metaphors, such as a physician healing the sick⁴⁵ and a soldier going back for the dead after battle.⁴⁶

⁴² Ibid, 12.

⁴³ Ibid, 11.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 18.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 207-8.

CHAPTER FOUR

LUTHER, ANTISEMITISM, AND JOHN

Unfortunately, Saint John Chrysostom was by far not the only important church leader to write against the Jews. Specifically, the great reformer Martin Luther wrote four broadly considered antisemitic treatises in his later life. The second treatise, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, is “widely recognized as Luther’s most violent piece of writing,” according to Michael Mullett,⁴⁷ though one must note there are other violent pieces against peasants and Catholics. It calls for the burning of synagogues and schools, for restrictions on Jews using the highways, and five other similarly aggressive measures.⁴⁸ However influential or not one considers these particular statements on later Antisemitism, particularly in Germany, Luther’s treatise reflects the Reformation’s incorporation and development of the Antisemitism that had existed from the early church down through the Middle Ages. Again, let us examine the incorporation of elements from the Gospel of John into this one particularly notable work in the history of Christianity.⁴⁹ I must note that, somewhat like Chrysostom, Luther in *On the Jews and Their Lies* appeals primarily to the Old Testament for justification. Even though the use of the Fourth Gospel is sparse and not primary to the discussion, the way in which Luther incorporates Johannine quotations and themes reveals a distinct aspect of Anti-Judaism. Like in Chrysostom, the arguments from the Gospel reach a new metaphysical level that not only separates Jews from God but also portrays them as God-opposing evil. Of the Johannine elements that Luther

⁴⁷ Michael A. Mullett, “Luther’s later years,” in *Martin Luther* (London: Routledge, 2004), 246.

⁴⁸ Martin Luther, “On the Jews and Their Lies, 1543,” trans. Martin H. Bertram in *The Christian in Society* (ed. Franklin Sherman; vol. 47 of *Luther’s Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 121-306.

⁴⁹ For the relationship between *On the Jews and Their Lies* and Luther’s other works, such as *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*, see the chapter entitled “Luther’s Prejudices: Luther and the Jews” in Michael Mullett’s *Martin Luther*.

incorporates, the two strongest are the differentiation between different kinds of Jews and the demonization of the Jews. While not central to his argumentation, these components provide certain lynchpins allowing the extent to which he condemns the Jews.

Fascinatingly, just as many contemporary scholars seek to distinguish between different Johannine uses of the term “the Jews,” Luther also differentiated between different kinds of Jews: the unbelieving Jews of his time and those from which Christians trace their theological ancestry. This contrast becomes obviously apparent towards the end of *On the Jews and Their Lies*, when Luther encourages other pastors to “tell [the Jews] that there are two classes of Jews or Israelites.”⁵⁰ Accordingly, the way to distinguish between the two groups is how they handled the coming of the Messiah in Jesus. The first followed the law of Moses “until the advent of the Messiah,”⁵¹ while the latter switched allegiances to the Emperor in order to continue following the Law. It is unclear whether Luther means to imply that the latter were never really true Jews when he says of them: “The other Jews are those of the emperor and not of Moses.”⁵² However, the rest is fairly clear; Luther connects the Jews involved in the Gospels’ crucifixion stories with the Jews of his own time: “From these the present remnant of Jews descended, of whom Moses knows nothing.”⁵³ These unfaithful and disconnected Jews are contrasted with the first group that was truly faithful, and it is those Jews that Luther generally favors. Earlier in the treatise, he cites the Fourth Gospel’s positive use of the term “the Jews” as coming directly from Jesus’ mouth: “Christ himself declares in John 4[:22], ‘Salvation is from the Jews.’”⁵⁴ In fact, much earlier in his life Luther recognizes certain Jews positively by titling his somewhat more

⁵⁰ Luther, “On the Jews and Their Lies, 1543,” 271.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 140.

favorable work on the Jews, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*. And so, at the end of *On the Jews*, Luther needed to articulate clearly between faithful and unfaithful Jews. Many Johannine critics today try to distinguish between different kinds of Jews in the Fourth Gospel, just as Luther did, both possibly because of the ambiguity of ancestry in John 8.

Without this separation into different kinds of Jews, Luther would not have been able to condemn the Jews of his time as he does. First of all, Luther begins this condemnation of the Jews of his time arguing that their boasting about this ancestry offends God. As he constructs the Jews of his time as totally offensive to God, he begins to totally separate his Jewish Messiah from contemporaneous Jews. This separation is to such a degree that it is not simply about their misunderstanding. They become ones who Moses does not know and thereby only find authority in the “emperor.” This argument then becomes the justification for his sixth measure of political advice that keeps the Jews from banking: “since they are dwelling in and disobeying Moses in foreign countries under the emperor, they are bound to keep the emperor’s laws and refrain from the practice of usury.”⁵⁵ Later, before he argues that the Jews should only be allowed physical labor for work, the justification becomes more intense: “Their wish to be Mosaic Jews must not be indulged.”⁵⁶ So we see that Luther uses a separation of different kinds of Jews common to Johannine study to condemn the Jews, though it will become even more profound with his incorporation of Johannine metaphysics.

Luther transforms the Jews into the epitome of the evil that opposes God primarily through referencing the Gospel of John. In the middle section of the treatise regarding the Jews’ understanding of Messiah, Luther lists all sorts of insults against the Jews and attributes them to the mouth of Christ. This list ends by referencing Matthew and John on who the Jews are: “in

⁵⁵ Ibid, 271.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 272.

brief, a brood of serpents and children of the devil.”⁵⁷ Later in the treatise, while giving justification for his destructive, political proposals of what should be done with the Jews, Luther begins to favor this title “children of the devil” for the Jews, extending it to mean that they do the devil’s works: “people who will accord us [Christians] the same benefits as does their father, the devil.”⁵⁸ As though he has only insufficiently condemned the Jews, Luther intensifies his argument even admitting that he is speaking “more spiritually about this.”⁵⁹ He then states that the Jews’ actions against Christians and Christ are actions against God Himself. While he first uses Matthew and Luke’s somewhat softer articulation of this relationship (“He who receives me receives him who sent me” from Matthew and “He who rejects you rejects me” from Luke), he turns and quotes John twice as abstract icing on the cake: “And in John 15[:23], ‘He who hates me hates my father also.’ In John 5[:23], ‘That all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him,’ etc.”⁶⁰ Luther then uses this dichotomy to condemn the Jews for not reading the New Testament and to advocate political action against the Jews.

The use of the Fourth Gospel to establish the Jews as evil and against God provides abstract justification for his atrocious advice of what to do with the Jews, specifically personal denigrating acts of Christians towards Jews. His basic argument is that Christians, by permitting the evil done by Jews against God, should receive the same punishment as the Jews should receive for cursing God and His Son: “if we ourselves do not wish to stand condemned by their sins, we cannot tolerate that the Jews publicly blaspheme and revile God the Father, before our very ears by blaspheming and reviling Jesus our Lord, for as he says, ‘He who hates me hates my

⁵⁷ Ibid, 232.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 277.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 278.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Father also.”⁶¹ Notice how Luther explicitly uses quotations from John to encourage intolerance of Jews. As the ultimate act of intolerance, though not among the official list of political advice, Luther advocates the expulsion of Jews from Germany as had already occurred in other European countries: “If we wish to wash our hands of the Jews’ blasphemy ... we have to part company with them.”⁶² Just in case his listeners didn’t get the point and don’t want to follow his advice regarding the Jews, Luther warns of the eternal consequences of such non-action: “God’s honor and the salvation of us all, including that of the Jews, are at stake.”⁶³ Though for the first 130 pages of the treatise Luther barely mentions the New Testament, we see that Luther uses the Gospel of John to portray the ultimate sin of “the Jews” and bring the battle to a supernatural level.

Luther also uses particular methods to interpret Scripture. Both Chrysostom and Luther follow a fairly literal reading of the quotations of Jesus in the New Testament. Because Luther at other times follows a more complex method of interpretation, his literalness may not be the heart of the problem that brings him to the antisemitic measures. Still, it is worth noting that he uses rhetorically literal authority in Jesus’ words. Many arguments end with Scriptural quotations beginning “Thus our Lord Jesus Christ says...”⁶⁴ or “Yea, as Christ says...”⁶⁵ Though not a general element of Luther’s style of argumentation, he also once refers to a metaphor that Chrysostom uses: “act like a good physician who, when gangrene has set in, proceeds without mercy to cut, saw, and burn flesh, veins, bone, and marrow... Burn down their synagogues,

⁶¹ Ibid, 280.

⁶² Ibid, 288.

⁶³ Ibid, 289.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 278.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 294.

forbid all that I enumerated earlier, force them to work...”⁶⁶ It is worthwhile to note that both Chrysostom and Luther extend a quotidian metaphor from scripture as justification, which is in Luther’s case for his deplorable political advice. In general, what brings Luther to articulate antisemitic measures is also a great difference of his with contemporary scholars: his consistent lack of self-criticism. The best example is when Luther opposes others’ demonizing him in their arguments: “When he [the papists’ Beelzebub] was unable to refute my gospel, he wrote that I was possessed of the devil.”⁶⁷ Yet, as illustrated above, he does just the same against the Jews. In these ways, we see how Luther exhibits pre-modern methods of interpretation.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 292.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 254.

CHAPTER FIVE

RACIALIZED CHRISTIANITY, NAZI GERMANY, AND JOHN

“On November 15, just days after [Kristallnacht], the bishop of Thuringia, Martin Sasse, issued his response: a pamphlet entitled *Martin Luther on the Jews: Away with Them!* (*Martin Luther über die Juden: Weg mit Ihnen!*), in which he reprinted excerpts from Luther’s notorious 1543 pamphlet, *Against the Jews and Their Lies*, urging the destruction of Jewish property.”⁶⁸

Seeking to fulfill Luther’s vision, particularly with regard to legitimizing his political proposals in *On the Jews and Their Lies*, pro-Nazi German Christian scholars in the 1930’s and 40’s sought to construct a new kind of racialized Christianity rid from all Jewish elements. These leaders drew upon the work begun in the nineteenth century of various religious scholars in Western Europe that incorporated elements of racial theory into their exegeses of the Bible. These racial interpretations, such as the fact that Jesus himself was not Jewish but Aryan, became incorporated into the *völkisch* movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Therefore, before the Nazi party even came into power, certain German church and political leaders were calling for a Germanized, anti-Jewish church.⁶⁹ To fulfill these aims, this German Christian movement eventually formed the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life, which published anti-Jewish Scripture and worship aids fairly extensively.⁷⁰ These arguments combined with the authors’ presentation of the

⁶⁸ Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 76.

⁶⁹ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 26-47.

⁷⁰ Though many scholars have regarded the influence of these publications and wider theological understanding on the Holocaust as marginal, Doris Bergen in *The Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in The Third Reich* and Susannah Heschel in *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* have very recently presented convincing arguments otherwise. For an introduction to these arguments, see pgs. 1-4 in Doris Bergen, *The Twisted Cross* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) and pgs. 1-6 in Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*.

pivotal role of the Gospel of John in the efforts to form a racialized Christianity lead me to evaluate in this paper the use of the Fourth Gospel within certain influential theological documents for this movement.

Ernest Renan's *The Life of Jesus* reveals how incorporation of racial theory into nineteenth century biblical interpretations drew heavily from the Gospel of John. Weaving together biblical and extrabiblical sources in *The Life of Jesus*, Renan integrates modern language of race and geographical background throughout the narrative. Renan in general leaves the difference between race and geographical background ambiguous as in the following reference to John 7:52: "it was believed (not without reason) that [the Galileans] were not of pure Jewish blood, and no one expected Galilee to produce a prophet."⁷¹ Thereby, we must assume that Renan's geographical conclusions are implicitly racial, though Renan is unwilling to explicitly speculate on Jesus' race.⁷² Interpreting the gospel in light of this ambiguous modern racial language, Renan uses quotations from the Fourth Gospel to indicate that opposition to Jesus in Jerusalem has to do at least partially with Jesus' racial/geographical background in Galilee.⁷³ Contrasting Galilee with Jerusalem, Renan even seeks to disassociate Christianity from Judaism.⁷⁴ In this way, incorporating various quotations from the Gospel of John, Renan begins the racial method of interpretation that will characterize later German Christian scholars. In fact, Heschel even argues that Renan's "vocabulary...proved indispensable to subsequent racializations of Jesus."⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ernest Renan, *The Life of Jesus* (trans. W.G. Hutchinson; [New York]: A.L. Burt, 1861 [1863]), 215. For a discussion of recent scholarship on Galilee, see the introductory chapter of Sean Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

⁷² Ibid, 83.

⁷³ Ibid, 310.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 113.

⁷⁵ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 33.

The German Christian scholars of the early twentieth century, who incorporated such racial and geographic language, turned strikingly to the Gospel of John beyond any other biblical book, especially as they decanonized the Old Testament and abandoned explanations for Paul's Judaism. The Fourth Gospel became the first New Testament text chosen for re-translation by Bishop Heinz Weidemann of Bremen, called "one of [the German Evangelical Church's] prime spiritual forces" by Time Magazine in 1937, the week after this publication.⁷⁶ Weidemann clearly delineated his rationale for choosing to begin rewriting Scripture with the Fourth Gospel calling it "the most sharply anti-Jewish document."⁷⁷ Thereby, the importance of the Gospel of John to certain German Christians is clear in this work, along with their incorporation of racial theory. Along the same vein as Renan, Weidemann chose to use racial language as it more appropriately appealed to his National Socialist context.⁷⁸ Though many consider Weidemann's *Das Evangelium Johannes deutsch* "the first new anti-Jewish Scripture,"⁷⁹ it was certainly not the last for Nazi Germany.

A major effort to re-translate and distribute an "authentic" anti-Jewish New Testament comes from the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life, publishing an entire compilation of the New Testament, *Die Botschaft Gottes*. From the beginning of the project, the workers designed it to highlight the Fourth Gospel because of, at least according to Heschel, its "strong anti-Jewish motifs."⁸⁰ The second of only four sections is devoted entirely to the Gospel of John, lacking as intense alterations as the other New Testament texts. Whether or not simply due to anti-Jewish tendencies, this second section solely on John

⁷⁶ "Gospel According to Saint Hitler," (*Time Magazine*, 25 Jan 1937), 1.

⁷⁷ Cited and translated by Bergen in *The Twisted Cross*, 161.

⁷⁸ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 110.

⁷⁹ Bergen, *The Twisted Cross*, 161.

⁸⁰ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 108.

establishes a basic theology for the entire work, unlike traditional Lutheran interpretations more likely to have derived the theological basis also from Pauline sources.⁸¹ This particular Johannine theology also features ambiguous racial/geographic language similar to Renan, which Heschel argues would have been understood racially: “Identified as neither a Jew nor an Aryan, [Jesus] is simply a resident of certain regions, though the Galilean-Aryan equation would have been understood by readers.”⁸² Though we technically cannot know whether the geographic distinctions of Renan and the German Christians had racial undertones, it would be strange if they did not because the use of the Gospel of John becomes central for and extensive in the racial interpretations of the German Christians.

Recognizing such importance of the Fourth Gospel, let us examine as before the Johannine themes cited within these works – Renan’s *The Life of Jesus* and the secondary literature on German Christian publications. First, explicitly citing the Gospel of John as their scriptural basis, various scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries carefully differentiated between Jerusalem and Galilee with regard to their reception of Jesus, as many scholars do today.⁸³ Unlike contemporary scholars, most of these earlier scholars then assume a contradistinction between the locales: Jerusalem being the site of wayward Judaism and Galilee as the place where the truth in Christianity began. As early as Renan, we see this kind of dualistic framework: “The North [Galilee] alone has made Christianity; Jerusalem, on the contrary, is the true home of that obstinate Judaism.”⁸⁴ Weidemann’s *Das Evangelium Johannes deutsch* goes as far as to call Judea “Jewland,” and “this “Jewland” is carefully distinguished

⁸¹ Ibid, 109.

⁸² Ibid, 110.

⁸³ For a overview of recent scholarship on Galilean Studies, see Sean Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1-26.

⁸⁴ Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, 113.

from the province of Galilee, where Christ preached.”⁸⁵ *Die Botschaft Gottes* from the Institute also “identifies Jesus with Galilee, both in origins and activities, and associates Judea with menace”⁸⁶, thus explicit in their dualistic associations. Though for the Gospel writers this distinction in no way makes Jesus less “Jewish,” this distinction during the early twentieth century, as Heschel points out, “effectively separat[es] the eschatological teachings of Jesus from a Jewish framework,”⁸⁷ even without explicitly the Anti-Jewish language of Renan and the German Christians. While the Johannine theme of separation of Galilee and Jerusalem does not necessarily imply anti-Judaism, these scholars either consciously or unconsciously use it to separate Jesus and Christianity from Judaism. From this separation comes the characterization of Judaism as pharisaic and legalistic because they see the opposition to Jesus in Jerusalem as notably from the Pharisees.

For Renan, Weidemann, authors from the Institute, and other German Christians, the ultimate opponents of Jesus are the Pharisees, often explicitly indicating them as the ancestors of the Jews of their time. The portrayal of the Pharisees by Weidemann and the Institute scholars mirrors this oppositional understanding. In Weidemann’s new translation of John, the primary passages left unchanged are those in which Jesus argues with the scribes and Pharisees.⁸⁸ This tension exists similarly in *Die Botschaft Gottes*, where “Jesus has to leave Judea out of fear of the Pharisees”⁸⁹ though in the gospel of John the phrase “fear of the Pharisees” does not explicitly occur (cf. 12:42) but the phrase “fear of the Jews” does (7:13; 19:38; 20:19; cf. 9:22). While the re-translations reveal this comprehension of the Johannine text regarding Jesus and the

⁸⁵ “The Gospel According to Saint Hitler,” 1.

⁸⁶ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 110.

⁸⁷ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 62.

⁸⁸ Bergen, *The Twisted Cross*, 161.

⁸⁹ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 110.

Pharisees, the interpretations starting with Renan take this understanding and apply it to the Jews of their time as the enemies of the Christians. For example, immediately after Renan describes the Pharisaic opposition as “the invincible obstacle to the ideas of Jesus,” he says that “the Pharisees were the true Jews; the nerve and sinew of Judaism.”⁹⁰ Obviously, Weidemann’s choice of the term “Jewland” instead of Judea in his new Gospel indicates a similar unmediated connection between the Pharisees that opposed Jesus and contemporaneous Jews. Lastly, for an extreme example of how this Johannine understanding of pharisaic opposition implied that Christians should fight against Jews, a German Christian memorandum

exhorted church leaders to proclaim themselves ‘completely on Jesus’ side in the fight against phariseeism, as the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of John clearly indicate,’ and called for commitment to ‘Luther’s struggle against Christ-hating, exploitative Judaism...and thereby also to the struggle of Hitler to defeat the destructive Jewish influence.’”⁹¹

In this way, Renan and German Christians found in the Fourth Gospel opposition from the Pharisees and connected it to the Jews of their time.

As these scholars turned away from traditional Christianity’s rise from Judaism, for they understood it only to be legalistic, they sought new ways to understand Christianity as opposed to Judaism. For one, they emphasized the Johannine theme of elevation of the spiritual over the legal, which we analyzed in the work of Chrysostom. Again, Renan gives an early example of this transition arguing that “Jesus recognized only the religion of the heart, whilst that of the Pharisees consisted almost exclusively in observances.”⁹² His justification for this understanding of Jesus’ “religion of the heart” comes directly from the Johannine story of the Samaritan woman. Paraphrasing John 4:19-24, Renan theorizes that Jesus right at this point

⁹⁰ Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, 299.

⁹¹ Bergen, *The Twisted Cross*, 161.

⁹² Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, 300-1.

founds a new kind of religion, a “pure worship.” Because his understanding is that this new religion is directly opposed to Judaism, Renan concludes in the footnote that the end of verse 22 (“for salvation is from the Jews”) is a later interpolation. In this way, Renan uses the Johannine theme of elevation of spiritual over legal worship to conclude that the religion of Jesus is the direct opposite of Judaism. For an example of a similar inclusion in German Christian discourse, take Walter Grundmann, academic director of the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life and New Testament professor at the University of Jena. Grundmann asserts that “Jesus knew God’s wishes intuitively, through his heart, in contrast to Jews, who only know God through reason and laws.”⁹³ This kind of understanding of the Johannine theme of spiritual worship (though not simply Johannine) is fairly traditional, whether or not it is an accurate picture of Judaism. However, the elevation of the spiritual over legal has traditionally meant the devaluation of Judaism, considered the legal opponent to Jesus and Christianity. On top of that, this understanding seems to take on new meaning within the context of a pro-Nazi organization.

The last theme I will examine as it relates to our previous analysis of the Jews as Christ-killers is central to German Christians: Jesus’ opposition to the Jews. It seems that the German Christians did not see any difference between the traditional understanding that the Jews killed Jesus and their understanding that Jesus hated the Jews. In the preface to *Das Evangelium Johannes deutsch*, Weidemann indicates his rationale for re-translating John using the traditional accusation of Jewish deicide: “The German of the Third Reich must know what Christ, Whom the Jews nailed to the cross, means.”⁹⁴ However, the entire work revolves around portraying

⁹³ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 21.

⁹⁴ “The Gospel According to Saint Hitler,” 1.

Jesus' mission as confronting Judaism.⁹⁵ So much so that Bergen describes the new Gospel as "a manifesto of hatred toward Jews, not a story of salvation."⁹⁶ Again, beyond simply these re-translations, we find that German Christian discourse at the time also reflected this portrayal of Jesus as part of popular understanding, for a "German Christian confirmation examination asked: 'Who was Jesus Christ?' and 'against whom did he fight?' 'A hero and warrior,' candidates responded, who fought against 'Jews and Pharisees.'"⁹⁷ It seems likely that this understanding that Jesus hated the Jews is based on the traditional understanding that the Jews are responsible for Jesus' crucifixion, which, as we have seen in Luther and Chrysostom, was based in part on the Fourth Gospel. Yet taking the Jews as Christ-killers to mean that Christ hated the Jews blatantly reveals the degree to which these scholars ignored the biblical message. This extrapolated understanding of Jesus' message contradicts, though possibly not explicitly Johannine, a basic element of the New Testament message: love your enemies (see e.g. Matt 5:43-48).

As we have seen, the Gospel of John became central to religious theorists using racial language starting with Ernest Renan's *The Life of Jesus*. The prominence of the Fourth Gospel hit new heights for antisemitic writers, as the decanonization of the Old Testament left these scholars mining the New Testament for texts sympathetic to their interpretations, turning centrally to the Gospel of John. Though some of the Johannine themes analyzed earlier in this thesis reappear in these writings, Renan's and the German Christians' understanding of the elements from the Fourth Gospel is distinct. Though extrapolated from the Fourth Gospel, the racial division between Galilee and Jerusalem is a different justification for antisemitic claims.

⁹⁵ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 107.

⁹⁶ Bergen, *The Twisted Cross*, 162.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 159.

Similarly, the opposition to Jesus by the Pharisees and the elevation of the spiritual over the legal justify measures within the Nazi context that both differ from Chrysostom and Luther and echo their understandings. Nonetheless, the German Christian scholars also formulated completely new understandings, especially with regard to Jesus as a hater of Jews. In all this, we see the rising importance of the Fourth Gospel for racial religious theorists and the Johannine elements that were part of their, if not their entire, focus. Lastly, let us analyze these scholars' method of interpretation or lack thereof.

In these works from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, modern methods of interpretation began to be included, though it is also often hard to distinguish a particular method of interpretation – instead it seems these authors often simply add their independent ideas to the sacred text. For an example of modern hermeneutical discourse, Renan admits that he does not view the Jesus discourses in the Fourth Gospel as historical, though he quotes them. In reference to Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman, he argues in a footnote that “we must not insist too much on the historical reality of such a conversation.”⁹⁸ The other authors also seem to take a historical-critical approach, searching for the original meaning of the political and geographical landscape at Jesus' time, as we saw before not only in Renan but also in Weidemann and Lohmeyer. Beyond the modern method in understanding the text, it is also important to note the way that the text was used in church life. Just like neo-Nazis online today,⁹⁹ free quotations of verses from the Gospel of John were used to justify anti-Jewish lessons, such as John 8:44-47 being used as the opener to a “textbook lesson from 1940 titled

⁹⁸ Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, 234.

⁹⁹ For an example, see the video entitled “Jews are Children of the Devil”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ss3G-lTIqkc>

‘Jesus’ Fight against the Jewish Spirit.’”¹⁰⁰ There is also within these works less of a consistent method of interpretation but interpolation into the texts themselves. In his translation of the Jews in John, Weidemann substitutes emotional language that is not in the text itself: “More than once the phrase ‘The Jews jeered and said’ appears in the new Nazified version instead of ‘Then said the Jews,’ as in the Lutheran version.”¹⁰¹ In these ways, Renan and the German Christians incorporated the modern method of interpretation, though they also freely used and abused the Fourth Gospel.

¹⁰⁰ Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 159.

¹⁰¹ “The Gospel According to Saint Hitler,” 1.

CHAPTER SIX

INCORPORATION OF *WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE* INTO CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE

The way that scholars have interpreted the Fourth Gospel over the centuries in antisemitic literature should inform our contemporary understanding. We must first hold accountable the Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism of many Christian works, particularly those analyzed in this paper, though scholars argue over how best to do that. Some try to place the blame solely on particular historical interpreters who *mis*interpreted the Fourth Gospel somehow to exonerate the sacred text, while others see Anti-Jewish attitudes inherent within the Gospel. Choosing to blame one or the other – the interpreter or the text – is, as Hoet articulates, a “false dilemma,”¹⁰² considering the role of each in effecting anti-Judaism. On the one hand, interpreters, such as Chrysostom, Luther, and the German Christians, are responsible not only for their simple use of the text in anti-Jewish and antisemitic proposals but also for the specific way in which they interpreted the text to justify such sentiments. On the other hand, the text is also responsible for the way that it engendered such responses from scholars using different methods of interpretation over the centuries. Responsibility, at least in part, demarcates that to whom or that to which one should turn for future reconciliation. Though one can no longer turn to these interpreters nor can one ever request a response from a text, engaging these issues through the interpreters and texts responsible will hopefully diminish our own culpability in future interpretations. There are many different types of questions raised by engaging “the Jews” in the Fourth Gospel and its *Wirkungsgeschichte*. In what follows, I hope to develop an understanding of responsibility that

¹⁰² Hendrik Hoet, “‘Abraham is our Father’ (John 8:39): The Gospel of John and Jewish-Christian Dialogue” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers from the Leuven Colloquium* (ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville; Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), 196.

points towards the resolution of important questions regarding the Fourth Gospel and its anti-Jewish/Semitic *Wirkungsgeschichte*.

Though the language of responsibility might seem imprecise to some scholars, many scholars work under such a framework whether they state it explicitly or not. Many scholars regard anti-Judaism within interpretations of the Fourth Gospel as a problem that must be solved, particularly the editors of *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers of the Leuven Colloquium, 2000*. Finding solutions to problems often means finding the cause or agent of such problems – that is, who or that which is responsible. In fact, the above editors in the same introduction use section headings using this type of language: “Positions in Defence of the Author” and “Positions Accusing the Author.” In the second, they explicitly indicate that there are “authors who admit that the Fourth Evangelist is responsible.”¹⁰³ Adele Reinhartz also uses such language except with regard to the text itself; reacting to the common proposals regarding the meaning of *hoi Ioudaioi*, she argues quite succinctly that her “fear is that the effect of such interpretations...is to whitewash this text and absolve it of responsibility for the anti-Jewish emotions and attitudes it conveys.”¹⁰⁴ In this context, to ignore the responsibility seems simply to not solve the ethical dilemmas raised by the text, though responsibility can have a much wider meaning. Holding someone or something responsible is indicating that he, she, or it is accountable for being the agent or cause of particular attitudes or actions. Therefore, many scholars seek to resolve the problems of Anti-Judaism in the Fourth Gospel by finding one

¹⁰³ Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, “Wrestling with Johannine Anti-Judaism: A Hermeneutical Framework for the Analysis of the Current Debate,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers from the Leuven Colloquium* (ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville; Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), 9, 14-15.

¹⁰⁴ Adele Reinhartz, “‘Jews’ and Jews in the Fourth Gospel”, in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers from the Leuven Colloquium* (ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville; Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), 356.

particular responsible party, but I will give evidence that indicates that both the interpreters and the text are responsible.

First, interpreters such as Chrysostom, Luther, German Christians such as Weidemann and Grundmann are clearly responsible for their anti-Jewish and/or antisemitic works and for their use of the Fourth Gospel. Obviously the immediate cause of such works is the persons themselves. Even if they had simply quoted from the Gospel of John, the interpreters themselves would be at least somewhat responsible for the particular choice and redistribution of that quotation, especially in regard to the particular stance put forward. Of course these scholars must be also held responsible for their independent interpretations of the Fourth Gospel. In the third chapter, I clearly delineated the distinct arguments of Chrysostom based in the Gospel, such as discouraging parishioners from associating with the Jews and from following any Jewish practices. These assertions as distinct from the Fourth Gospel find their cause primarily in the person of Chrysostom. Similarly, Luther encourages political action in *On the Jews and Their Lies* that does not directly reference Scripture, unless one can find express support for the burning of synagogues and schools in the Bible. Lastly and somewhat even more clearly, the German Christian translations of the Gospel of John create very distinct interpretations of certain verses or chapters. For example, the Institute's New Testament replaced John 4:22 with "The Jews are our misfortune."¹⁰⁵ In these ways, we find that the interpreters are very distinctly responsible for the Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism they purport.

However, the text itself is also responsible. The evidence for such responsibility could come from what the text says. Certainly, many scholars argue that the text is or is not responsible because of how they read the text – that is, because of their particular interpretation.

¹⁰⁵ Mark R. Lindsay, *Covenanted Solidarity: The Theological Basis of Karl Barth's Opposition to Nazi Antisemitism and the Holocaust* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2001), 167.

For example, Culpepper argues that John is “the first document to draw a connection between ‘the Jews’ who condemned Jesus and Jews known to the Christian community at a later time... [which] creates a dangerous potential for antisemitism.”¹⁰⁶ However, since scholars disagree so profoundly over the original meaning of “the Jews” in the Fourth Gospel, I would argue that a different understanding of responsibility of the text is needed. If we instead compare interpretations, especially of different types and at different time periods, we can develop an understanding on what the text has meant. The more the interpretations agree, the better we can conclude that the text is responsible for such understanding. Though many different people could misinterpret a text, it is hard to conclude with a great deal of evidence from significant changes of context that there are not elements inherent in the text that are responsible for said interpretations. Using the example from before, I find that there must be elements of the text responsible for such an interpretation, though not necessarily anti-Jewish, since Culpepper’s analysis of the text concurs with interpretations made by Chrysostom, Luther, and the German Christians, in which they connected, in some way, the Jews of their own time with the Jews of Jesus’ time through the Fourth Gospel. In this way, I call a text responsible for certain interpretations.

Particularly, the Fourth Gospel is responsible for anti-Jewish attitudes and beliefs because Chrysostom, Luther, Renan, and the German Christians distinguished certain anti-Jewish themes from the Gospel despite different methods of interpretation over the centuries. Throughout the previous three chapters, I noted not only the similar Johannine themes and their variations but also concluded each section with a synopsis of the method of interpretation used in the works.

¹⁰⁶ R. Alan Culpepper, “Anti-Judaism in the Fourth Gospel as a Theological Problem for Christian Interpreters,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers from the Leuven Colloquium* (ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville; Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), 74.

Here then, I will specify a few of the key differences in interpretation yet, despite of this, point to the similar thematic insights. First, Chrysostom understood the discourses in the Fourth Gospel to literally be the words of Jesus, while Renan specifically states otherwise. However, both Chrysostom and Renan elevate spiritual worship over legal and then use it to deplore Judaism. In terms of hermeneutic, Chrysostom and Luther also vary considerably. Though Chrysostom simply does not distinguish between different kinds of Jews, Luther chooses to separate the Jews into different original grouped meanings. As we said before, both however identify the Jews of their time directly with the Jews as negatively (and positively) portrayed in the Fourth Gospel. In fact, using this connection, both also then call the Jews of their time Christ-killers. Often noted by scholars examining anti-Judaism, this theme along with other elements of the Fourth Gospel appear so often over the centuries that the text must be responsible for such anti-Judaism.

Girded by this understanding that both interpreters and the text itself are responsible for the anti-Judaism, I would like to examine the types of problems for which they are the agent or cause. My research indicates that there are three main areas for inquiry regarding the problems raised by the anti-Judaism in the Fourth Gospel: hermeneutical, theological, and historical-critical. In the first two areas, I will simply highlight the general problems/solutions and indicate in what areas more research could be done. In terms of historical-critical research into the issue of “the Jews” in the Gospel of John, I will propose a way of incorporating knowledge about the *Wirkungsgeschichte* and give an example in the next chapter.

A very common solution to the anti-Jewish problem of the Fourth Gospel is to propose a new hermeneutic. In fact, Rosemary Radford Ruether, in her early work *Faith and Fratricide* that profusely challenged this dialogue, states that “There is no way to rid Christianity of its anti-Judaism, which constantly takes social expression in antisemitism, without grappling finally with

its Christological hermeneutic itself.”¹⁰⁷ Much more recently, the editors of *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* conclude their introductory analysis with a similar hermeneutical injunction – that is, with a section entitled “The Need for Hermeneutics”¹⁰⁸ responding to whether “these problematic texts can have a place within the very process of revelation.”¹⁰⁹ The *Wirkungsgeschichte* of this paper highlights how the Gospel of John has been problematic, especially from three different interpretative structures. Though I cannot here develop my own hermeneutic that wrestles with these issues, much research could be done to judge hermeneutics based on the way they respond to this *Wirkungsgeschichte* and other similarly problematic historical interpretations.

This *Wirkungsgeschichte* also raises problems for theologies of the Fourth Gospel. As these scholars in their anti-Jewish/antisemitic works used Johannine dualities such as spiritual vs. legal and knowledge vs. lack of knowledge of the Father through Jesus Christ, we could question whether this duality of belief and unbelief in Jesus is inherently immoral. In fact, many scholars have wrestled with supercessionist theology,¹¹⁰ particularly indicating that supercessionism has been used to justify antisemitism for centuries. Related is their theology on how to respond to unbelieving Jews. Obviously we cannot ethically agree with the proposals of Chrysostom, Luther, Renan, and the German Christians, whether by simply not associating with them or destroying their livelihood or even lives. It seems these historical interpretations challenge Johannine theological understandings of belief in general, whether or not they refute them.

¹⁰⁷ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 116.

¹⁰⁸ Bieringer et al, “Wrestling with Johannine Anti-Judaism,” 33-44.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 39.

¹¹⁰ For an overview of the discussion in this area, see the section entitled “Supersessionist Christology in John?” in “Wrestling with Johannine Anti-Judaism” by Bieringer et al.

Much of contemporary Johannine research on anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel is historical-critical. Scholars, in particular, wrestle with whether our understanding of the original meaning of words such as “the Jews” is correct or not, particularly post-Holocaust. While contemporary historical-critical interpreters should not turn to the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of a text to understand its original meaning, familiarizing ourselves with how these historical interpreters understood and used the Gospel of John’s references to “the Jews” should still in some way inform our understanding of the term today. While my formal understanding of semiotics and semantics is insufficient to fully examine the meaning of the words “the Jews” in the history of the Fourth Gospel, I would like to carefully delineate a few of the reasons that the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of this paper may inform the study of translation and interpretation of “the Jews” in Gospel of John. First and foremost, studying discriminatory uses of the Gospel makes us aware of the high stakes that surround translation and interpretation. While Chrysostom’s conclusions reveal at least the interpersonal discrimination against the Jews in the development of Christianity, we see how Luther’s scriptural understanding led to conclusions regarding the political treatment of an entire religious group, especially in the later German Christian justification of Nazism. Now, whether or not one finds Chrysostom’s and Luther’s interpretations historically influential, understanding the way in which diverse authors, even historically, have interpreted and continue to interpret the original meaning of the gospel of John should influence our constructions, as they give us constructions to emulate or avoid. Lastly, whether specifically through the works of Chrysostom, Luther, Renan, and the German Christians or simply mirrored in such works, this denigrating history against the Jews is part of our own linguistic understanding of the term. In the following chapter, I propose a particular

translation of “the Jews” that seems to address some of the discriminatory history and potential but is based on contemporary scholars’ understanding of original literary meaning.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HISTORICAL-CRITICAL EXAMPLE WITH *WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE*

Today there are various proposals regarding the original meaning and context of the term *hoi Ioudaioi*, usually translated as “the Jews.” Scholars have suggested many ways to address its contentious history and the evolution of the term “the Jews.” Some scholars suggest changing the translation itself, as Stephen Motyer recommends extending the phrase by giving contextual meaning.¹¹¹ Other scholars do not specifically address the translation itself but choose outside the Biblical texts to use quotation marks around the term ‘the Jews’ in its negative uses. Considering the semantic variation between the numerous uses of the term in the Fourth Gospel, I will propose the use of quotation marks in translating the expression “the Jews” when used to represent those who oppose Jesus¹¹² because it more closely resembles the original literary meaning. The reasons are summarized as follows: Quotation marks around “the Jews” in certain contexts indicate that the author is using the term differently not only from the contemporary understanding but especially from the general ethnic usage in the Gospel itself. Quotation marks also more strongly suggest the evangelist’s irony that many Jews are not accepting the true revelation that comes through the Jews. In fact, because other proposals in changing the translation, such as giving the term greater context, eliminate the literary irony, they are not convincing alternatives. Finally, as it seeks to mitigate the universal ethnic or religious quality

¹¹¹ Stephen Motyer, “Bridging the Gap: How Might the Fourth Gospel Help Us Cope with the Legacy of Christianity’s Exclusive Claim over against Judaism?” in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (ed. R. Bauckham and C. Mosser; Grand Rapids: Eerdsman, 2008), 153.

¹¹² Unfortunately, there is no scholarly consensus on exactly which uses of *hoi Ioudaioi* are oppositional. For a survey of ten studies on such hostile uses, see U.C. von Wahlde, “The Johannine ‘Jews’. A Critical Survey,” *New Testament Studies* 28 (1982): 33-60. These studies agree on 31 instances of hostility: 1:19; 2:18, 20; 5:10, 15, 16, 18; 6:41, 52; 7:1, 11, 13, 15; 8:22, 48, 52, 57; 9:18, 22a, 22b; 10:24, 31, 33; 13:33; 18:14, 31, 36; 19:7, 31, 38; 20:19, though von Wahlde, other scholars, and I would conclude that there are others.

of the term “the Jews” in contemporary translation, the use of quotation marks should also partially address the portrayal that automatically associates the Jews in the Fourth Gospel with Jews of contemporary times, as we have seen it used to subjugate Jews over the centuries.

Because John uses the term *hoi Ioudaioi* in certain contexts to represent those unbelieving Jews and even the Romans that oppose Jesus¹¹³, quotation marks distinguish the term “the Jews” from its more general ethnic usage and to that particular, significantly distinct usage. Lincoln’s characterization of this group is quite convincing: “There is a strangeness about this usage that makes clear that the term cannot refer to all Jews but only to those who are representatives of the unbelieving world.”¹¹⁴ He uses the example of Pilate in 18:35 to show that “Jew” can apply to anyone “who belongs to the world that does not believe in Jesus.”¹¹⁵ This characterization is the one used in all the heated verses. For example, the context of chapter 8 reveals that when Jesus tells ‘the Jews’ that “You are of your father, the devil,” he, as a Jew, is not arguing against religious or ethnic Jews in general but against Jews who once did but no longer believe in him. As certain non-Jews receive an even harsher rebuke in John 15:6 for falling away from faith, the harshness of the language is not simply because they are Jewish and oppose Jesus. However, what matters for our discussion is merely that the writer of the Gospel chooses to refer to this oppositional Jewish group also as “the Jews.” This oppositional/negative usage is distinguished from a more general ethnic category, which in fact more closely mirrors contemporary usage. With phrases such as “The Passover of the Jews was near” in 2:13, the general ethnic usage is fairly clear. In fact, Lincoln establishes quickly and persuasively in his commentary that “the sense of the term is the broad one of the Jewish people as distinct from

¹¹³ Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005), 72.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 72.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 72.

other ethnic groupings.”¹¹⁶ Also, it seems that this ethnic meaning is meant in the most positive use of *hoi Ioudaioi* when Jesus says to the Samaritan woman, “salvation is from the Jews.” Not using quotation marks around the Jews in these contexts but using them when it refers particularly to the Jews in opposition to Jesus not only reveals this distinction in contemporary language but also maintains the original references distinct – whether to those who do not believe in and, by so doing, oppose Jesus or to those who share Jesus’ ethnic identity.

While I have categorized this usage through the actions of a certain group, those that do not believe in and oppose Jesus, because it distinguishes the particular literary and historical reasons, scholars often describe this use of the term “the Jews” as “negative.” There are clear reasons that other scholars do so. Firstly, John’s purposeful representation of this group as negative is an important literary tool. It is hard to argue against the fact that “a group of people, unfortunately also called ‘the Jews,’ are consistently presented negatively.”¹¹⁷ While Lincoln sees this as a “reflection of intra-Jewish conflict,”¹¹⁸ which may or may not be true, its literary purposes almost certainly reflect the creation of opposition to Jesus, which in any story is presented negatively. Unfortunately, the other reason to describe these usages as negative is that the interpretation of “the Jews” over the centuries, especially in its usage against Jews, is negative. Therefore, this categorization of the term as “negative” does not allow these authors to clearly distinguish between their literary and historical explanation of this term’s usage and the way historical reception has affected that understanding. For example, right after saying that “the unfortunate choice of this term has generated centuries of pain for the Jewish people,” Moloney argues that “the repeated use of the expression ‘the Jews’ in a negative sense has

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 71.

¹¹⁷ Francis J. Moloney, “The ‘Jews’ in the Fourth Gospel: Another Perspective,” in *The Gospel of John: Text and Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2005 [2002]), 40.

¹¹⁸ Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 72.

nothing to do with national, political, or religious affiliation.”¹¹⁹ It makes it harder to understand whether or not his argument’s justification comes from the later usage of these negative passages. This distinction is necessary because later usage cannot justify historical and literary claims about original meaning, only explain our understanding of the term today and maybe make ethical claims about the text itself. Therefore, I articulate the usage in the Gospel primarily based on the action of the group – opposing Jesus – instead of on its negative usage. For the rest of this paper, I will use both, oppositional/negative, for the sake of clarity.

The distinction through the use of quotation marks between the oppositional/negative usage and the general ethnic usage also highlights the irony that the Fourth Gospel author intends. Quotation marks tend to purposefully distance semantic meaning from what is normally thought. If John 5:18a read instead, “For this reason ‘the Jews’ were seeking all the more to kill him”, the contemporary reader would at least question which Jews the author had in mind. Since most scholars agree that the literary usage of this term in oppositional/negative contexts is ironical in its different meanings, the quotation marks emphasize that use. Some translations, such as those proposed by Stephen Motyer, by incorporating contextual understanding, do not seem to preserve this irony. This is unfortunate because at least Stephen Motyer’s translations have the advantage of combating antisemitism and well categorize the contextual uses of *hoi Ioudaioi*. For example, Motyer chooses to translate 9:22 “His parents said this, because they were afraid of *the more hard-line Jews in the synagogue leadership*. For *these Jews* had determined that anyone who confessed Jesus as the Christ should be expelled from the synagogue.”¹²⁰ However, this translation “introduc[es] a restrictive (implicitly only ‘some’)

¹¹⁹ Moloney, “The “Jews” in the Fourth Gospel: Another Perspective,” 40.

¹²⁰ Motyer, “Bridging the Gap: How Might the Fourth Gospel Help Us Cope with the Legacy of Christianity’s Exclusive Claim over against Judaism?” 153.

where none is semantically” in Judith Lieu’s critique. It is the lack of focus on the specific group that literarily gives space for the irony in John’s portrayal that Jews are persecuting Jewish followers of Jesus, who is not only a Jew but the Jew who came to save them. Of course, since only certain Jews are seen as persecuting Jesus, quotation marks highlight the above ironic distinction because of their general semantic meaning and by maintaining the same words.

Beyond the above literary and historical reasons for choosing to use quotation marks around certain uses of the term “the Jews,” though sufficient justification to do so, this punctuation also questions the use of the negative surrounding emotions to apply to contemporaneous Jews such as done by earlier interpreters such as Chrysostom, Luther, and the German Christian scholars. In Motyer’s introduction to his section on translation, he quotes Johannes Beutler’s rationale for using quotation marks around the Jews: “so that the reader is admonished not to read into the text the general meaning of ‘the Jews’ in everyday language and to come to conclusions which make the Jewish people or religious community responsible for the death of Jesus.”¹²¹ For example, Jesus’ words in 18:36 would instead read, “If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to ‘the Jews’,” which rhetorically forces the reader to question whether the Johannine usage here simply indicates the general ethnic group and particularly the ethnic group today. The use of quotation marks should then distinguish a different, ironic meaning, which closer study would then determine to be the group in opposition to Jesus. However, there may be ethical problems with the enclosure of “the Jews” in quotation marks which might emphasize the ethnicity, thereby inducing greater antisemitism.

¹²¹ Ibid, 146.

For such reasons, some scholars, such as Adele Reinhartz, do not find that the use of quotation marks adequately translates the Johannine usage. Motyer summarizes Reinhartz's objections: "to enclose 'the Jews' in quotation marks blurs their historical actuality in the setting of the Evangelist and his community, and this illegitimately *defuses* the real, historical anti-Judaism of this text."¹²² Honestly, if I assume that the Johannine community distinguished between believing and non-believing ethnic Jews and came to regard the latter as the Jews in its broad usage when they left the synagogue, I agree with at least the latter of her objections. However, the ethnic/positive use of the same words as in the oppositional/negative uses should reveal the possible anti-Judaism of the Johannine community, while indicating the distinction in the story. Therefore, though it might "defuse" the anti-Judaism in the text, it does not disregard that possible part of the original intentions of the Johannine community. I find it is more important to use quotation marks as they better convey in contemporary language the original distinction between the oppositional and ethnic uses of the term *hoi Ioudaioi* and also because they neutralize the anti-Jewish interpretation that ethnic Jews should be blamed for the death of Christ.

In summary, there is a particular literary use of the term *hoi Ioudaioi* in the Fourth Gospel that applies to the group of Jews and even others like Pilate who oppose Jesus.¹²³ Since the author creates this opposition in a story, the portrayal of this group is in general negative, but it is more helpful to describe the Johannine uses as oppositional instead of negative because it distinguishes between the original use and later reception. However one calls this use, it is particular and distinct from the other uses of the term *hoi Ioudaioi*, often purely ethnic and religious in nature, and therefore the use of quotation marks to distinguish the

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Of course not all uses of *hoi Ioudaioi* are oppositional, such as John 4:22: "...for salvation is from the Jews."

oppositional/negative use better conveys this distinction in contemporary language. The use of quotation marks also highlights the original irony inherent. Unfortunately, that irony is lost in other new translations, such as Motyer's expansions. The main hermeneutic benefit to this approach is that it seems to reduce a major issue we found with various interpreters in church history—that is, the automatic association of contemporaneous Jews with the Johannine negative/oppositional use of the term. While Reinhartz, as I'm sure other scholars, argues that quotation marks do not adequately convey the original message, her objections do not seem to apply when quotation marks are only used to indicate oppositional/negative use. All in all, quotation marks used in this way in translation seem to better convey the literary meaning of the term "the Jews," while also addressing some of the discriminatory history of the Fourth Gospel.

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