

## ORTHODOXY AND HETERODOXY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### INTRODUCTION

Joseph Priestley relates<sup>1</sup> that in the parliamentary debate on the British Test Laws, Lord Sandwich said, "I have heard frequent use of the words 'orthodoxy' and 'heterodoxy,' but I confess myself at a loss to know precisely what they mean." William Warburton (1698-1779), the Bishop of Gloucester, is then said to have enlightened him, "Orthodoxy is my doxy—heterodoxy is another man's doxy." As reflective of the psychological strength, the utter conviction and total partisanship underlying many assertions of the New Testament authors, this description is not bad at all. As a definition of right belief, however, it is horribly deficient, because it is simply a psychological description and says nothing of the objective truth or falsity of the believer's theological position and of its relationship to God's self-disclosure in revelation but testifies only to his personal conviction.

In a much more precise manner, the present Code of Canon Law labels as "heretic" the baptized person who, while retaining the name Christian, pertinaciously denies or calls into doubt one of the truths that have to be believed with divine and Catholic faith.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, the Code clearly refers to a considerable body of defined and definable doctrine stated in propositions that have been proposed for the belief of the faithful by an accepted magisterium which asserts that they have been divinely revealed.<sup>3</sup> The technical precision of this canonical concept of heretic, however, the developed theological formulations and ecclesiastical institutions which it presupposes, and the sharp intellectual focus of its standard against which the potential heretic is to be judged—a clearly defined or definable body of truths to which he gives assent or dissent—all these stand in stark contrast to the imprecise, inchoative, and experiential realities evident in the New

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 572.

<sup>2</sup> *Codex Juris Canonici* 1325 § 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Codex Juris Canonici* 1323 § 1.

Testament writings and make simple application of the contemporary technical term, at the least, inadvisable. We shall have to approach our task descriptively if we are to do justice to the biblical data and arrive at that understanding of the diverse theological perspectives of the first century which can help us in our theological reflections in an ecumenical age.

Karl Rahner reminds us that "heresy is only possible among brethren in the Spirit" and that "there can hardly really be any such thing as heresy, or any real feeling against it" except in Christianity.<sup>4</sup> This is so, because every Christian be he "heretic" or "orthodox" claims the same revelation of God as his theological starting point. Through his personal understanding of this revelation, he enters into a definite relationship to the God who gave it and with others who believe. But should the believer have an erroneous perception of this revelation, which he grasps salvifically in knowing it, he would then stand in an improper relationship to it, grasping it in a faulty manner, and thus could imperil his own salvation. This last is an important point, for it tells us why there is personal, individual need to be correct in one's understanding of God's self-disclosure: false belief imperils salvation. Socially, false belief imperils the unity of the Christian body immediately and the salvation of its members ultimately.

The possible threat of false belief on the intellectual horizon, however, particularly in our open and complex society, is no excuse for tunnel vision or myopia, since the revelation itself as content is not exhausted by ecclesiastical formulations of it in any given historical period. Variant understandings of revelation are thus possible within certain limits set by the revelation itself, although when formulated they must not be so dissimilar as to be contradictory at, and to, the point of reference which is the revelation itself. Thus these realities—the importance of right belief for salvation and the possibility of divergent views of revelation—highlight in the New Testament and in contemporary Christianity the need for criteria to determine when a particular theological perspective is, or is not, in conformity with God's revelatory gift.

<sup>4</sup> K. Rahner, *On Heresy (Quaestiones Disputatae 11)*; N.Y.: Herder and Herder, 1964) p. 10.

## I. JESUS' MINISTRY: THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN ΑΙΘΗΣΙΣ

With this in mind, we can pass to a description of the New Testament phenomena. At the outset, we must extend Rahner's concept of "brethren in the Spirit" to include those to whom the Spirit spoke in the Old Testament, the community of Israel. In so doing, we include in our discussion the many parties in Judaism at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. It is necessary that we widen the scope of our study in this way to see Christianity itself in proper perspective as the major ΑΙΘΗΣΙΣ visibly emerging in the New Testament and to trace its movement away from, and beyond, the Judaism of the day.

1) *First-century Judaism: an Orthopraxy and Orthodoxy*

D. S. Russell has described first-century Judaism as an orthopraxy, not an orthodoxy. He notes that "In pre-Christian times there was no 'normative' Judaism from whose standards of 'orthodoxy' certain sections of the people broke away. Judaism was in fact much less concerned about 'right belief' than about 'accepted practice.'" <sup>5</sup> Yet if we enlarge our perspective to include all segments of the Palestinian population, Russell's statement is not entirely true. Among the 500-600,000 inhabitants of Palestine estimated by Joachim Jeremias, <sup>6</sup> we find the Samaritans, who certainly laid claim to the Mosaic religion, <sup>7</sup> were counted even in a later period by Hegesippus as a Jewish sect, <sup>8</sup> and who were just as certainly beyond the pale of accepted Judaism at this time, <sup>9</sup> as John 4:9 reflects. The covenanters of

<sup>5</sup> D. S. Russell, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1967) p. 155. See also M. Simon, *Jewish Sects in the Time of Jesus* (Phila.: Fortress, 1967) p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Phila.: Fortress, 1970) p. 205.

<sup>7</sup> J. MacDonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans* (Phila: Westminster, 1964) pp. 147ff.

<sup>8</sup> Hegesippus wrote in the latter part of the second century. Fragments of his "Memoirs," a work against heretics, are preserved in Eusebius, who writes of him, "The same writer also described the sects which once existed among the Jews as follows: 'Now there are various opinions (γνώμαι διάφοροι) among the circumcision, among the children of Israel, against the tribe of Judah and the Messiah, as follows: Essenes, Galileans, Hemerobaptists, Masbothei, Samaritans, Sadducees, and Pharisees.'" (*H. E.* 4,21).

<sup>9</sup> Simon, *Jewish Sects*, p. 7.

Qumrân, too, whatever their connection with the various Essene groups spread throughout the land,<sup>10</sup> were less clearly in the mainstream of Judaism than, say, the Pharisees or Sadducees. There seem to have been theological boundaries between these and other groups then in Palestine, some of which boundaries, as in the case of the Samaritans, had hardened for a variety of reasons, which included theological rancor, to such an extent that there was no social and liturgical communion between the divergent parties.

And yet it is also true that no one voice spoke for the religion of "mainstream" Judaism in this period. No single Jewish group was large enough or strong enough to speak for all of Judaism. The Pharisees were by far the most popular and influential party, yet, as Josephus tells us,<sup>11</sup> they numbered only about 6,000 men in the total population. Their principal rivals, the Sadducees, were "a small and select group of influential and wealthy men who exercised considerable power in the civic and religious life of the nation. The powerful priesthood was represented within this social aristocracy by the High Priest and his retinue and by other leading priestly officials."<sup>12</sup> The Essenes, again Josephus tells us,<sup>13</sup> were 4,000 strong. Various smaller groups are impossible to count. The Zealots were really radicalized Pharisees, who were allied particularly with the Shammaites and who acknowledged only theocratic rule.<sup>14</sup> The Herodians, who are mentioned only three times in the New Testament (Mk 3:6; 12:13; Mt 22:16), are even harder to identify as a normative voice and perhaps were only political supporters of Herod drawn from several backgrounds. The various baptist groups, of whom John the Baptist is the best-known representative prior to Jesus, are more obscure still.<sup>15</sup> The bulk of the people belonged to the *'am hâ-'âreš*, the people of the land, who seem to have spoken for themselves, avoided close association with any of the diverse sects, and to have occupied themselves chiefly

<sup>10</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2,8,4 (II, 124).

<sup>11</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17,2,4 (XVII, 42).

<sup>12</sup> Russell, *The Jews . . .*, p. 158.

<sup>13</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* 18,1,5 (VIII,20).

<sup>14</sup> M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten* (Leiden: Brill, 1961) p. 384.

<sup>15</sup> See J. Thomas, *Le mouvement baptiste en Palestine et en Syrie* (Paris: Gembloux, 1935).

with the process of daily living, although they were religious enough according to their own lights.<sup>16</sup>

Even the most sacred of religious institutions could not lay claim to universal teaching authority of the sort we have under discussion. "The duties of the priesthood lay in the area of ritual. The Sanhedrin was a court of justice whose function was to interpret and apply the law of Moses, rather than a council occupied with formulating doctrinal statements. Moreover, the Sanhedrin was far from representing a homogeneous point of view."<sup>17</sup> Nor were scribal dicta universally followed, although scribes themselves were greatly honored.

The absence of a universally accepted authority capable of acting as a magisterium for the Judaism in which Jesus exercised his ministry makes it seemingly impossible for us to apply the categories of orthodoxy or heterodoxy in the period, except in relationship to one or other party and its doctrines within the totality of first-century Palestine.

Perhaps the closest thing to doctrinal consensus in a credal formulation to be found for this period is the *šema'* (Dt 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Nb 15:37-41), particularly its opening declaration: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone!" As Neufeld remarks, "When one attempts to locate a 'confession of faith' in early rabbinical Judaism, it immediately becomes apparent that the literature is quite devoid of explicit creeds or theological formulas."<sup>18</sup>

And yet, it was not merely historical and sociological reasons but also their unacceptable theology (cf. Jn 4:19-24) which excluded the Samaritans from the main body of Judaism. In an unarticulated way, there seems to have been consensus on a doctrinal minimum beyond which one could not go without danger of exclusion from Israel. Attempting to formulate this, we might say that it required belief in "One God, one people, one *Tôrâ*." Within this credal ambient, there was ample room for dissent on a host of lesser *δόγματα* which were related to the above, such as baptisms, circumcision, the Sabbath, the

<sup>16</sup> But not religious enough for the Pharisees, who despised them. Cf. Jn 7:49.

<sup>17</sup> Simon, *Jewish Sects*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> V. H. Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) p. 34.

food laws, the extent of the Scriptures, and so on. This credal consensus—one God, one people, one *Tôrâ*—when interpreted by the diverse religious and political parties,<sup>19</sup> produced the variegated Judaism of the day. Historical, sociological, political, and geographic factors obviously played their parts in diversifying Judaism, but without the basic elements of faith enumerated above, one could hardly lay claim to an inheritance in Israel.

## 2) *Jesus and Jewish Sects*

It is unfortunate that we do not have detailed evidence of the way in which Jesus, and Christianity after him, reacted to each of the many theological currents then present in Judaism. That we do not is in part due to Jesus' conflict with the civic and religious "in" groups, and in part due to the lateness of the New Testament literature, which directed its apologetic and polemic against the principal forces in contemporary Judaism with which nascent Christianity had to contend at the time of writing.<sup>20</sup> These principal forces were the Sadducees, comprising the chief priests and the lay nobility, and particularly the Pharisees, whose scribal leaders were more numerous and powerful than other scribal groups.<sup>21</sup> After the catastrophe of the Jewish War (66-70 A. D.), the Pharisees became the ascendant religious party in Judaism, and for this reason, they figure most prominently in the memory and apologetic of the New Testament writers. Because of this, when we come to compare and contrast Christianity and "Judaism," we must remember that it is not enough to

<sup>19</sup> The term used to describe some of these parties, *αἵρεσις* appears 9 times in the New Testament to designate: the Sadducees (Acts 5:17), the Pharisees (15:5; 26:5), the Christians (24:5,14; 28:22), factions within the Church at Corinth (1 Cor 11:19), "divisions" as a "work of the flesh" (Gal 5:20), and "destructive factions" or heresies (2 Pt 2:1). In none of these, except perhaps the last two, does the term approach the pejorative theological connotation of "heretical sect" as it is understood today. The emphasis seems to lie on the idea of "party" or "faction"; the context indicates whatever degree of hostility there is to the "party."

<sup>20</sup> New Testament word usage reflects this preponderance of the major parties in the concerns of our texts. R. Morgenthaler, *Statistik des neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes* (Zurich: Gotthelf Verlag, 1958) gives the following statistics: Σαδδουκαῖοι (14 x); ἀρχιερεὺς (105 x, exclusive of Hebrews; φαρισαῖος (97 x); γραμματεὺς (62 x); ζηλωτής (8 x); Ἡρωδιανοί (3 x).

<sup>21</sup> Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, pp. 243,254.

look at the Old Testament, since it is largely from the points of view of these Jewish schools of thought, and particularly from that of early rabbinic Pharisaism, with which "Judaism" was increasingly identified as the first century progressed, that Christianity is treated in the New Testament as an undesirable ἀίρεσις.

Taking our cue from Bauer's description<sup>22</sup> of the manner in which the "orthodox" dealt with "heretics" in the postapostolic age, we may detect the characteristic techniques of controversy applied by both Jesus and his powerful enemies in their frequent confrontations. The patten of controversy is this: (1) A clash of opinions leads to (2) the rejection of the opponent's right to speak. (3) His work is attributed to evil, and (4) he is attacked in his person and in his way of life. (5) His views are said to be without authoritative basis in either Scripture or tradition, so that (6) others are warned against him and his false doctrine. (7) At times, steps are taken to remove the threat he poses, even to the employment of illegitimate means.

Thus the Synoptics follow Jesus as he clashes with the Pharisees over matters of the Law (laws of purification [Mk 7:14-19],<sup>23</sup> the Sabbath rest [Mk 2:23-28; 3:1-5], divorce [Mk 10:2-12], the great commandment [Mk 12:28-34; the context shows it is a hostile situation]), and as he rejects their tradition of the ancients (Mk 7:9-13), and debates with them about the person of the Messiah (Mk 12:25-37). These Gospels note, too, his encounter with the Sadducees on the question of the resurrection (Mk 12:18-27). In time, the chief priests demand Jesus' credentials, for they question his authority to act as he has done (Mk 11:28). Both Pharisees and Sadducees demand that he establish himself by a sign from heaven (Mk 8:11; cf. 15:32; Mt 16:1). As opposition to Jesus mounts, his enemies say that he does his works by the power of Beelzebul (Mk 3:22), that he is

<sup>22</sup> W. Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (*Beiträge zur historischen Theologie* 10; Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr, 1934; Zweite Auflage mit einem Nachtrag von Georg Strecker, 1964). [An English translation is in preparation under the direction of Professor R. A. Kraft of the University of Pennsylvania.] Pp. 134-149. See also P. Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (*Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series* 10; N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1970) pp. 53-60.

<sup>23</sup> See the parallel passages not cited here or for many of the following texts.

a glutton, a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners (Mk 2:16; Mt 11:18-19). He shows no respect for the tradition of the elders (Mk 7: 5,9-13). He blasphemes (Mk 2: 6-7; cf. 14:64). Steps are taken to do away with him (Mk 3:6; Lk 20:20), and false witness (Mk 14:55-59; at his trial) and bribery (Mk 14:10-11; cf. Mt 28:11-15) are used against him.

John's Gospel even seems to intensify the Conflict. Jesus is labeled as a sinner (Jn 9:24). He is unlettered in the law (Jn 7:14).<sup>24</sup> He is not from God (Jn 9:16,29). No prophet, no Messiah comes from Galilee (Jn 7:41-42; 7:52; cf. 1:46). Rather, Jesus is a Samaritan and has a devil (Jn 10:20; 8:48). The authorities do not believe him and so are not led astray (Jn 7:48; 7:12). They *know* that God has spoken to Moses but not to Jesus (Jn 9:29).

From his side, Jesus responds in kind (Mt 23; Lk 11). He reproves the Scribes for being strict with others but easy on themselves (Lk 11:46). The Pharisees are fools and hypocrites (Lk 11:40; Mt 23:13,15,23,25,27,29); their scribes are blind guides leading the blind (Mt 15:14). One must beware of the leaven of their teaching (Mk 8:15; Mt 16:5,12). The Sadducees just do not know the Scriptures properly (Jn 5:39,46; Mk 12:24). In short, the opposition is of the devil, their father (Jn 8:44).

All these passages reflect bitter debate, but it is a debate still within the confines of early first-century Judaism. It is only much later, when Christians realize the full impact of Jesus' teaching, works, and personality in the light of the paschal events that the theological walls whose first courses were laid during Jesus' earthly ministry rise gradually to the point of separating Christians from Jews definitively. This separation does not take place all at once, or to the same degree in every locality,<sup>25</sup> but it was begun while Jesus walked the earth. He is the builder, the corner-stone, and the stumbling block of the new construction.

### 3) *The Principal Issues*

The principal issues which divide Christians and Jews appear

<sup>24</sup> The implication is that because Jesus has not studied, he is unqualified to teach.

<sup>25</sup> Acts gives ample illustration of this.

precisely in the three areas of doctrinal consensus to which we have referred earlier by the formula "one God, one people, one *Tôrâ*. As Raymond Brown notes,<sup>26</sup> there is a slow development in the usage of the title "God" for Jesus in the New Testament. Earlier stages of the material seem to reserve the title "God" for the father, under the influence of Old Testament usage. Gradually, the term "God" is understood in a broader fashion as capable of including both Father and Son. "The late Pauline works seem to fall precisely in this stage of development . . . . By the time of the Pastorals, however, Jesus is well known as God-and-Saviour."<sup>27</sup> This development in the Church's understanding of Jesus is rooted in his actions during his ministry: in his miracles (Mk 1:27; 4:41; cf. also Jn 3:2; 9:31-37); his authoritative ethical teaching (Mk 1:22); his self-assured superiority to the Temple,<sup>28</sup> the Sabbath (Mk 2:23-3:5), the judgement of sinners (Mk 2:1-12; Lk 7:36-50; Jn 7:53-8:11); in his personal sinlessness (Jn 8:46); in his expressed awareness of his unique relationship with the Father (Mk 8:38; 14:36); and so on. Obviously, once the full implications of Jesus' personality were perceived by the Christian community and rejected by its opponents, there came to light a point of diversity and dissension which W. D. Davies has called the "Christological factor . . . in Christianity which . . . is non-negotiable even with its mother faith," a factor "which remains as the barrier to reducing the relation between the two faiths to a mere schism."<sup>29</sup>

A second point of the future division between the two faiths lay implicit in Jesus' attitude towards the nations. Although restricting his own earthly mission to Israel,<sup>30</sup> to fulfill the promise to the Fathers

<sup>26</sup> R. E. Brown, "Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?" *TS* 26 (1965) 545-73. An expanded version of this article appears as pp. 1-38 of Brown's *Jesus God and Man: Modern Biblical Reflections* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1967).

<sup>27</sup> Brown, *TS* 26 (1965), 570.

<sup>28</sup> As reflected in his actions towards the Temple—eschatological possession (Mk 11:1-11), cleansing of the Temple (Mk 11:15-20)—and his response to the chief priests' questions (Mk 11:27-33).

<sup>29</sup> W. D. Davies, "Torah and Dogma: a Comment" *HTR* 61 (1968) 87-105. The quotation is from p. 105.

<sup>30</sup> Mt 15:24. This statement lies in the context of a miracle done for a Gentile; yet Jesus makes it clear that this case is exceptional. See J. Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* (*Studies in Biblical Theology* 14; London: SCM Press, 1958) pp. 25-39.

that salvation be offered first to the Jews, Jesus promised the Gentiles a share in the salvation to come.<sup>31</sup> Contrary to popular belief, he asserted that descent from Abraham was no sure guarantee of salvation or protection against the judgement of God.<sup>32</sup> Gentiles would arise as the accusers of Israel in the judgement (Mt 12:41-42; cf. Mt 11:20-24). The universalism implicit in the command to love even one's enemies (Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27-28), in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), and in the cure of the Syrophenician's daughter (Mk 7:24-30), would, when properly assessed in the apostolic period, lead to quarrels and division not only between Christians and others but within the *ἐκκλησία* itself. Those who did not appreciate Jesus' teaching that in the eschatological act of God the Gentiles would be offered the benefits of the kingdom equally with the chosen people (but *after* the chosen people) were convinced that it was necessary for Gentiles to enter the Kingdom of God by first passing through Judaism (Acts 15:1). The universalism implicit in Jesus' teaching and ministry was made the norm of practice in the apostolic Church only after much acrimony and suffering among the brethren.

Finally, the *Tôrâ* itself became a source of dissension. On earth, Jesus had shown a certain freedom in dealing with the Law,<sup>33</sup> as well as outright rejection of some Pharisaic interpretations of the Law (Mk 7:9-13). He was also shown inculcating observance of the Law, even in its exact detail (Mt 23:1,20; Mk 14:12-16; Mk 17:24-27; Lk 4:16). There is a certain ambivalence about this, and it is reflected in the practices of the earliest Christians. They, too, observed the Law (Acts 3:1, 21; 20),<sup>34</sup> so evidently they did not think that Jesus had done away with it or prohibited its observance. And yet, as Paul observed, Christ was the end of the Law (Rom 10:4).

The difficulty was not that of Christians alone, for an ambiguity towards the Law in the messianic age and/or the age to come per-

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 46-51.

<sup>32</sup> John the Baptist had already attacked the view that descent from Abraham assured salvation (Mt 3:9); Jesus reaffirms it (Lk 16:26; Jn 8:31-59).

<sup>33</sup> This is exemplified in his treatment of the food laws (Mk 7:14-16), the Sabbath rest (Jn 5:8-13; 9:14), and in his forgiveness of the adulterous woman (Jn 7:53-8:11), who should have been stoned, according to the Mosaic Law (Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22).

<sup>34</sup> Note their hesitancy over the food laws: Acts 10:14-15,28; Gal 2:11-17; Rom 14:14; Col 2:20-22.

vaded Judaism.<sup>35</sup> The heterogeneity of first-century Judaism warns us against presenting too facile and clear-cut a picture of Jewish expectations regarding the *Tôrâ* at that time,<sup>36</sup> particularly with much of what is in the rabbinic sources reflecting a narrowing down to Pharisaic (and even counter-Christian?) expectations. Nevertheless, the general expectation in Judaism then, as today, was for the perdurance of the Law. "As the gift of Yahweh and as the ground plan of the Universe, it could not but be perfect and unchangeable; it was impossible that it should ever be forgotten; no prophet could ever arise who would change it, and no new Moses should ever appear to introduce another Law to replace it. This was not only Palestinian belief but also that of Hellenistic Judaism."<sup>37</sup> Yet side-by-side with this consensus, the belief was expressed in Judaism that the *Tôrâ* would be modified in the messianic age.<sup>38</sup> And, according to some rabbinical statements, the Gentiles would be among those who accepted the yoke of the Law.<sup>39</sup> Some rabbinic texts suggest a new *Tôrâ* to appear in the messianic age,<sup>40</sup> and others suggest that the traditional *Tôrâ* would be abrogated in the "Age to Come,"<sup>41</sup> a period possibly distinct from, possibly identical with, the messianic age.<sup>42</sup>

Jesus would not be in ignorance of these speculations, nor of the role of the Servant of Yahweh as *Tôrâlehrer*.<sup>43</sup> Aware of himself as both Messiah and Suffering Servant, he would have to come to grips with this question of the Law. W. D. Davies suggests<sup>44</sup> that Jesus actually did bring a new *Tôrâ* as Messiah, however exegetes today may understand it, but that he did not annul the Law *explicitly* dur-

<sup>35</sup> W. D. Davies, *Torah in the Messianic Age And/Or in the Age to Come* (JBL Monograph Series 7; Phila.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952). Most of this is reprinted in W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1964), to which page references are given.

<sup>36</sup> See Davies' warning, *Setting*, pp. 184-7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 157-8.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 170,173. Cf. *bShabbath* 151b; *bNiddah* 61b.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 179-80. Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 98,8,9 on Gn 49:10,11.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 172-9. Cf. *Tg Is* 12,3; *Midr Qoh.* 2,1; 11,8; 12,1; *Tg Ct* 5,10.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 180-3. Cf. *bSanhedrin* 97a; *bAbodah Zarah* 9a; *jMegilla* 70d; *Ep. Barnabae* 15,4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 182,188.

<sup>43</sup> *Is* 42:4.

<sup>44</sup> W. D. Davies, "Matthew 5:17,18," *Christian Origins and Judaism* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1962) pp. 31-66.

ing his earthly ministry, because he had not yet earned the right to do so by fulfilling the role of the Servant of Yahweh through his suffering and death.<sup>45</sup> During his ministry, Jesus' observance or breaking of the Law was determined by human need.<sup>46</sup> Personally, his own tendency was to conserve the Law and keep to its prescriptions, but when the need arose, he broke with the Law's letter to observe the second element in the Law's fundamental principle: love of God and neighbor. In upholding the Law (as in Mt 5:17-18), he sought to mollify the Pharisees and to dampen any possible antinomianism of the *'am hā-'āreṣ*, who would have seen his occasional departure from the Law.<sup>47</sup> It took many years before the Church fully understood Jesus' attitude towards the Law and reduced this understanding to practice.

As another controversial point in the same general area of God's revelation to Israel, we must mention briefly the Christian interpretation of the Scriptures then recognized. Jesus himself saw the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms as testifying to his person and his work, and he so instructed his disciples.<sup>48</sup> Taught by the Lord, the early Church sought in the sacred writings the hidden plan of God which explained the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>49</sup> With increasing clarity, the Church saw that the whole economy of salvation led to him. Non-believing Jews could not allow their Scriptures to be interpreted in so Christocentric a fashion, and when Jesus' followers finally alleged that all sacred history pointed to, and was summed up in, Jesus Christ, there was another unbridgeable chasm of thought between Christians and Jewish co-religionists on a fundamental issue.

## II. THE APOSTOLIC PERIOD: CHRISTIANITY'S DRIFT FROM JUDAISM

### 1) *The Christian Community*

The slowly widening rift between Christians and their Jewish brethren evidenced in the New Testament provides both background

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p. 56.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* p. 59.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p. 52.

<sup>48</sup> Lk 24:25-27,32,44 give the clearest examples of this, in a post-resurrectional context. But see Mk 12:10 (Ps 118:22-23); Mk 4:12 (Is 6:9-10); Lk 4:16-21 (Is 61:1-2;58:6); Mt 11:10 (Mal 3:1); etc.

<sup>49</sup> S. L. Edgar, "New Testament and Rabbinic Messianic Interpretation" *NTS* 5 (1958-1959) 47-54.

and context for the history of divisions and dissent within the early Church itself, for many of the first Christians still thought of themselves as Jews and as remaining within the parent body of Judaism (Gal 2:13; Acts 21:20-21; cf. 1 Cor 1:24; Rom 2:17-29). In their origins, they were a mixed lot drawn from the various Jewish sects and segments we have been describing. Acts alone mentions Hebrews and Hellenists (6:1),<sup>50</sup> Nicolaus the proselyte (6:5); Simon the magician (8:9-24), the worshiping minister of Queen Candace (8:26-39), Samaritans (8:25; 9:31), Cornelius the Roman centurion and φοβούμενος<sup>51</sup> (10), Greeks (11:20[?];<sup>52</sup> 14:1), Menahem, the close associate of Herod Antipas (13:1), and many more, presumably including Sadducees, Essenes, and the 'am hā-'āreṣ. Obviously, these people entered the nascent Church with unchanged viewpoints on many issues critical to the community, absorbing Christian revelation into the framework of their previous thought. Thus the various speculations on the messianic age and the place of the Law in this period found defenders in the early Church as well as in the rest of Judaism, although these speculations must necessarily have been modified for Christians by their faith.

This faith of the Church was most clearly and closely unified around the doctrinal consensus that Jesus was the Christ (Jn 1:20; 1 Jn 2:22; 5:1), Lord (Rom 10:9; Phil 2:11), and Son of God (Jn 1:34; 1 Jn 4:15), as the various confessions of faith put it.<sup>53</sup> "The several parts of the New Testament provide evidence that the *homologia* embodied the essence of the Christian faith regarding the person of Jesus. The place of importance which the *homologia* had in the life of the church further demonstrates that these expressions of faith were significant both in the inner life of the church and in its contact with the outside world."<sup>54</sup> Yet in the early Church, there

<sup>50</sup> Jews who spoke only Greek. See C.F.D. Moule, "Once More, Who Were the Hellenists?" *ExpT* 70 (1958-1959) 100-2.

<sup>51</sup> Ψοβούμενοι and σεβόμενοι (τὸν θεόν) are technical terms to designate Gentiles who had become half-converts to Judaism. Cf. Acts 10:22,35; 13:16, 26,43,50; 16:14; 17:4,17; 18:7.

<sup>52</sup> Some mss. read "Hellenists" here.

<sup>53</sup> The earliest kerygmatic statements, e.g., 1 Cor 15:1ff., also center on the Lord. But see 2 Cor 11:4; Jude 4; 1 Jn 2:18-29; 2 Jn 7, which combat false Christologies.

<sup>54</sup> Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*, p. 141.

was still much diversity of doctrine, much which needed to be clearly stated and established, so that Christianity, too, seemed to be largely an orthopraxy capable of remaining within the large body of Judaism. This opinion seems corroborated by certain passages in Acts where the Christian movement is designated as a "Way" (9:2; 18:25; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14,22). That this way of life is built around a doctrine, however, is clear from the names affixed to the disciples by outsiders, who call them "Christians" (11:26; cf. 1 Pt 4:16) and the "αἵρεσις [or party] of the Nazarenes" (24:5), the latter title assimilating them to the parties of the Pharisees (15:5; 26:5) and Sadducees (5:17).

Before long, practical pressures of daily existence and the large influx of Gentiles into previously Jewish communities threatened the harmony of the infant Church. Since the strongest doctrinal consensus centered on confession of Jesus as Lord, the problems afflicting the Church developed in areas affecting social and religious contact between ethnic groups and particularly in the vast area of Christianity's confrontation with the Mosaic Law.

Unfortunately, we are poorly informed on the precise formulation of the questions troubling the faithful, since we catch only glimpses of them in the New Testament texts, and these snatches are phrased by those who combat the positions they describe and do not hesitate to castigate what they disapprove.

Thus we really know little about things as: (1) the σχίσματα at Corinth, which threatened to divide Christians there into followers of Apollos, Cephas, Paul, (or Christ?)<sup>55</sup> (1 Cor 1:12); (2) or the reference to vegetarians and observers of days, at Rome (Rom 14:2, 5); (3) or those whose god is their belly (Rom 16:18; Phil 3:17); or the reference to "myths and genealogies" in 1 Tim 1:4; (5) or the errors and failings of Alexander (1 Tim 1:19-20; 2 Tim 4:14; cf. Acts 19:33),<sup>56</sup> Demas (Phlm 24; Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:10), Diotrephes (3 Jn 9,10); Hermogenes (2 Tim 1:15), Hymenaeus (1 Tim 1:19-20; 2 Tim 2:18), Philetus (2 Tim 2:17-18), Phygelus (2 Tim 1:15),

<sup>55</sup> It is not clear whether this is a fourth party, a "Christ" party, or if it is Paul's own cry.

<sup>56</sup> Scholars variously identify one, two, or three Alexanders in these texts. That one Alexander is mentioned in the Pastorals seems more probable.

the Nicolaitans (Ap 2:6, 15)<sup>57</sup> and the Jezebel at Thyatira (Ap 2:20). Apparently, we shall never know the details of the views opposed here. But in all this controversy, we can find the broad outlines along which dissent arose and watch the emergence of criteria to which appeal is made in the struggle.

## 2) Paul

Chief protagonist in the area of Gentile-Jewish relationships and the question of the Mosaic Law is the Apostle of the Gentiles, whose epistles report on the state of affairs preceding the Jewish War of 66-70 A. D.

Paul is careful to show tolerance and not disturb the consciences of his Jewish co-religionists who are in good faith. He is not the opponent of a different life-style which would leave him in peace. Upon occasion, he shows himself to be most considerate of Jewish sensibilities and anxious to please them. For this reason, he has Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:1-3), undertakes the Nazirite vow at the request of James and the Jerusalem elders (Acts 21:17-27), and speaks of his readiness to be a Jew to win over the Jews, even though he is no longer "under the Law" (1 Cor 9:20). This attitude of tolerance is extended to any who experience genuine difficulties of conscience in the practice of their belief in Christ (1 Cor 8:1-13).<sup>58</sup>

But when his Gospel (Rom 2:16; 16:25 [2Tim 2:8]), which is a true reflection of the one Gospel (Gal 1:6-7), is concerned, Paul crushes opposition whenever he can. He champions the right of the Gentiles not to observe the Mosaic Law and rebukes Peter at Antioch

<sup>57</sup> Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 1,26,3; 3,10,6) and Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 3,4,25; cited in Eusebius, *H.E.* 3,29) took Nicolaus the Deacon (Acts 6:5) to be the founder of this group, and some modern authors seem inclined to grant this possibility, even though the evidence is very meager, e.g., A. Ehrhardt, "Christianity before the Apostles' Creed," *HTR* 55 (1962) 74-119 (here p. 87). This article has been reprinted as pp. 151-199 of Ehrhardt's *The Framework of the New Testament Stories* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964).

<sup>58</sup> This passage concerns eating of the εἰδωλόθυτον, meat offered to idols. Whether Jews or Gentile converts are experiencing the difficulty here is disputed. See J. Dupont, *Gnosis: Le connaissance religieuse dans les épîtres de Saint Paul* (Louvain, 1949) pp. 265-377.

for yielding to those ἐκ περιτομῆς (the circumcision party among the followers of James) by separating from table fellowship with Christian Gentiles and thus compelling them by the force of his example Ἰουδαΐζειν, "to live like Jews" (Gal 2:14). Paul's clash with those members of James' party (Gal 2:12), who are apparently converted Pharisees (Acts 15:5), is much more frequent and direct. Although these "false brethren" are unauthorized by James and the apostles and elders who were with him at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1,24), they seem to be powerful enough to mount a continued effort to overthrow Paul's work.

Throughout the epistles, we see the familiar pattern of controversy: (1) clash of opinions, (2) rejection of the opponent's right to speak, (3) attribution of his work to evil, (4) attacks upon his person and way of life, (5) denial of an authoritative basis for his views, (6) warnings against him and his doctrine, (7) threats and actions against him.

Thus Paul faces great opposition, not only from those outside the faith (Acts 13:44,59; 14:2,19; etc.) but also from those within (Gal 2:4-5), both of whom must have regarded him as the worst kind of heresiarch. He is forced to defend his status as an apostle of Jesus Christ inferior to none (1 Cor 9). He is called a plague-bearer and an agitator by his enemies without (Acts 24:5), and crafty (2 Cor 12:16), mad (2 Cor 5:13; cf. Acts 26:24), and an imposter (2 Cor 6:8) by those within. He is accused of weakness (2 Cor 10:10), of duplicity (Gal 5:11; Acts 16:3 and Gal 2:3-5; 2 Cor 10:1), of lying (Rom 9:1; 2 Cor 11:31; Gal 1:20; Phil 1:8; 1 Thess 2:5,10; [1 Tim 2:7]), and perhaps of taking liberties with the collection (2 Cor 6:3; 7:2; 8:20-23), although he takes pains to avoid this last charge (1 Cor 16:1-4). In his own defense, he asserts his right to speak, since he is an apostle and has seen the Lord (1 Cor 9:1) and has been given a revelation (Gal 1:12) which was confirmed as correct by the "pillar" apostles of the Church at Jerusalem (Gal 2:2,6-9) and by "signs, wonders, and deeds of power" at Corinth (2 Cor 12:12) and elsewhere. He defends his doctrine (Gal 1:8-9) and himself (2 Cor 10:10) against his critics, and speaks of his frequent perils from false brethren (2 Cor 11:26).

But Paul is no opponent to be taken lightly, and he can turn a neat phrase of invective himself. He speaks of ψευδαπόστολοι,<sup>59</sup> false, and even "super," apostles (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11), who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ (1 Cor 11:13) and really have no right to speak. In fact, these false brethren are disciples of Satan (2 Cor 11:15) and peddle God's word (2 Cor 2:17), which they preach out of rivalry with Paul (Phil 1:17). Their god is their belly (Phil 3:19; Rom 16:18). These are dogs and evil workers who mutilate the flesh (Phil 3:2). They do not even practice the Law that they preach (Gal 6:13). Instead, they practice underhanded ways, tampering with the word of God (2 Cor 4:2). Would, says Paul, that they would mutilate themselves (Gal 5:12): Nevertheless, their destiny will correspond to their deeds (2 Cor 11:15). Look out for them, he warns (Phil 3:2)! If anyone preaches a Gospel to you other than that which you have received, let him be ἀνάθεμα, accursed! (Gal 1:9).

### 3) *Later Developments*<sup>60</sup>

Pejorative language becomes stronger and even more *ad hominem* as we move to the Pastoral Epistles. In the days of stress, men will come who are "lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it"<sup>61</sup> (2 Tim 3:2-5; cf. 1 Tim 4:2; 6:4-10; Ti 1:10-16). These men, who have now come, are named. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, who make shipwreck of their faith. Excommunication is in-

<sup>59</sup> C. K. Barrett's "ΨΕΥΔΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΙ (2 Cor 11:13)," *Mélanges bibliques en hommage au R.P. Bédé Rigaux* (Paris: Duculot, 1970) has considerably helped me in this section, although I had arrived at similar conclusions by a parallel route, as the earlier part of this paper should demonstrate.

<sup>60</sup> One can only approximate a sequence of the New Testament writings here, since their dates are far from certain. In general, however, the sequence reflects modern exegetical consensus.

<sup>61</sup> *Per se*, this passage has wider application than to those who cause divisions among the brethren (e.g., the mention of those who disobey their parents), but the dissenters are certainly included, and much of the language is paralleled in our other descriptions of the opponents of "orthodoxy."

voked against these men and others who are inclined to be factious<sup>62</sup> (1 Tim 1:19-20; Ti 3:10-11), as Paul once cast out the incestuous Corinthian (1 Cor 5:5), although in rebuking any sinner, one hopes for his conversion (2 Tim 2:24-26). The present apostasies from the faith are said to have been predicted by the Holy Spirit (1 Tim 4:1; cf. Acts 20:29-30; 2 Thess 2:3-12; 2 Tim 3:1-9; 4:3-4). The opponents in the Pastorals still seem to be predominately Jewish, although not exclusively so (1 Tim 1:3,6; 4:3,7; 6:20; 2 Tim 2:16-18; 4:15; Ti 1:10-14; 3:9). In combatting their views, appeal is made to the apostolic link (2 Tim 1:13; 3:14) and to the Scriptures for true doctrine (2 Tim 3:15-17). Timothy and Titus are urged to speak out against the opposition in defense of the faith entrusted to them by the Holy Spirit (1 Tim 1:18; 4:11-16; 6:11-15,20; 2 Tim 1:7; 4:1-2,5; Ti 1:13; 3:8). They are to show great concern for the security of the deposit (*παραθήκη*) of faith (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12,14), and are to inculcate "sound doctrine" (1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Ti 1:9,12; 2:1,2), for this contains many a "sure saying" (*πιστός ὁ λόγος*; 1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:13; Ti 1:9; 3:8). They are to appoint other reliable men to continue the transmission of this doctrine (1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 2:2; Ti 1:9).<sup>63</sup>

The same concern for perseverance in true doctrine is evident in the Epistle to the Hebrews, with its exhortations to avoid apostasy (4:14; 6:6) by stricter obedience to what has been received from the Lord through the apostles and has been attested by signs, wonders, mighty works, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (2:1-4). There is greater emphasis here on the hopeless fate of the apostate (2:2; 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:16-17). The many and detailed allusions to the Jewish Scriptures, and the author's insistence that the old covenant is super-

<sup>62</sup> This excommunication is in the spirit of the Old Testament injunction to "purge the evil from your midst" (Dt 17:7; 19:19; 22:24).

<sup>63</sup> M. Bourke, "Reflections on Church Order in the New Testament" *CBQ* 30 (1968) 493-511 emphasizes this point, "There is a surprising continuity between the duties of these men and those which belong to the Apostle himself in the Pauline epistles. Just as the latter preaches the gospel and safeguards it from deformation by irresponsible teachers, so the delegate is established by the apostle as the one who is to preserve the apostolic teaching." p. 504.

seded, identify the danger feared as a relapse of these Christians into older Jewish practices.<sup>64</sup>

Small pieces are added to our picture by the Catholic Epistles. 1 Peter points out the work of the Holy Spirit speaking through those who evangelize (1 Pt 1:12). James makes appeal to work for the conversion of those who stray from the true way of life (Jas 1: 19-20; cf. Jude 23). Jude calls Christians to battle for the faith delivered once for all to the saints (3). There are those who deny Jesus Christ (4), he says, as the apostles predicted they would (17). These people cause divisions (19), and faithful Christians are asked to convince any who doubt and to win back the fallen (22-23).

In the decades immediately following the destruction of the Temple (70 A.D.), Jewish reaction to Christianity in some places appears to have been drastic and even violent. This is shown by analysis of those passages of the Gospels which can be attributed to the third or editorial level of the Gospel materials. Matthew, for instance, makes Jesus warn his disciples before they set out on their apostolic mission, "Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles." (Mt 10:17-18). This passage and others like it (Mt 10:21,28; 23:34,37; 28:15) reflect a hostile relationship between Christians and other Jews, and a separation of Christians from certain synagogues, if not from Judaism as a whole. As Douglas Hare remarks, "In the years immediately preceding the war the Palestinian situation was aggravated by intense nationalism, and Christian missionaries undoubtedly found their work impossible in many communities. After the war the Christian mission to Israel was probably reactivated as Christians took advantage of the despondency of a defeated people. During the same period, however, the rabbis were successfully gaining control of the Jewish religion and its institutions. As synagogues which had formerly been independent of Pharisaic control came under the domination of Jamnia, Christian missionaries found that toleration of their work sharply decreased. It is probable that in post-war

<sup>64</sup> The better exegetical opinion holds that the addressees of this letter are Jewish Christians.

Palestine Pharisaic hostility drove Christian missionaries out of many communities."<sup>65</sup>

Rejection of those who believe in Christ is reflected in John's Gospel too, in those passages which speak of exclusion from the synagogue for the one who confesses Christ (Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16:2). J. Louis Martyn has related these passages to conflict between John's church and the synagogue in the evangelist's day.<sup>66</sup> Declaring someone an *'αποσυνάγωγος* seems related to the well-attested Jewish practice of imposing bans upon dissidents who threatened the halakic tradition,<sup>67</sup> although Martyn warns us against making too strict a parallel here.<sup>68</sup>

About the year 85, the Jewish academy at Jamnia, under the leadership of Rabban Gamaliel II added to the chief synagogal prayer known as the "Tefillah" or "Amidah" (also the "Eighteen Benedictions" or "Shemoneh 'Esreh") a twelfth benediction called the "Birkath ha Minim," composed by Samuel the Small, which read in part: "For persecutors let there be no hope, . . . and let Christians and *minim* perish in a moment, let them be blotted out of the book of the living and let them not be written with the righteous."<sup>69</sup> Obviously, the Jew asked to lead in the synagogue in prayer could not pronounce such a curse upon himself if he were a Christian, and so this "benediction" served as a touchstone of Jewish orthodoxy and a further means of detecting Christians and excluding them from the synagogues.

Schuyler Brown's recent study on Lukan theology notes<sup>70</sup> that "in the typical New Testament parenthesis, apostasy and perseverance

<sup>65</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 6; N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1967) p. 128.

<sup>66</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1968). See my serious reservations with Martyn's work, however, in *The Seminary Journal* (The Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia) 21 (Oct., 1968) 38-9.

<sup>67</sup> C. H. Hunzinger, *Die jüdische Bannpraxis im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (Göttingen, 1954).

<sup>68</sup> Martyn, *History*, p. 151.

<sup>69</sup> Davies, *Setting*, p. 275.

<sup>70</sup> Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke* (*Analecta Biblica* 36; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) pp. 146-7.

are considered as the varied outcomes of *πειρασμός*, i.e., the testing of faith." In Acts, there is a notable shift in terminology from "your faith" to "the faith," an objectification which entails an ecclesialization of the idea at this time. The bearer of faith is not the individual Christian but the community. The link between the earthly way of Jesus and the way of the Christian religion is the *fides apostolica*. Having been "sifted" during the Passion (Lk 22:31), the apostles as believers themselves, and eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (Lk 1:2; Acts 6:4), now guarantee the belief of the faithful (cf. Lk 1:4).

Towards the end of the first century, the Epistles of John lament that many antichrists have come who have departed, as John says, "from us," the true believers (1 Jn 2:18-19), by denying that Jesus is the Christ (1 Jn 2:22). These opponents seem to be incipient Gnostics who deny the divine sonship of Jesus and his incarnation (1 Jn 2:18-29; 4:1-6; 2 Jn 7), and the remedy against them is to "listen to us" (1 Jn 4:6) and thus hold to what you have heard from the beginning (1 Jn 2:7; 3:11), because the "anointing you have received," the Holy Spirit (1 Jn 3:24; 4:2), teaches you through us (1 Jn 4:13-14; 1:1-4), so that you do not need these others to teach you (1 Jn 2:27). The faithful are not to receive those who do not have correct doctrine (2 Jn 10). Diotrefes himself, the apostle's adversary in 3 Jn, practices exclusion, putting out those who acknowledge the apostle's authority (3 Jn 9-10).

The Apocalypse highlights growing factions at the end of the century. At Ephesus, there are self-styled apostles (2:2); Jewish adversaries at Smyrna (2:9), Pergamum (2:14), and Philadelphia (3:9); Nicolaitans at Ephesus (2:6) and Pergamum (2:15), and a Jezebel at Thyatira (2:19). The work of these people is that of Satan (2:9,24; 3:9). In an attempt to avoid possible tampering with his message in the book, the author invokes curses upon those who add to, or subtract from, his words of prophecy (22:18-19).

Finally, the author of 2 Peter, the last of the New Testament writings (c. 100-125 ?), is at pains to justify his right to speak and to interpret Scripture, including Paul's writings (3:15-16), being the possessor of the Spirit of God, who inspired the prophets (1:19-21). In so speaking, he is conscious of a link between himself and the

apostles (3:2); in fact, he poses as Peter (1:1,16-18). Supported by this identity, he denounces the ψευδοπροφήται who introduce 'αίρεσεις into the Church and deny the second coming of Christ (2:1; 1:16; 3:4). The other errors of these false prophets are not readily identifiable (2:10,17-22).

#### CONCLUSIONS

Now that we have surveyed the New Testament evidence, what conclusions may we draw from it? I suggest the following observations:

1) The gradual growth and difficult detection of a heresy harmful to the parent community.

Many opinions flourished in late pre-Christian Judaism and in the early Church. Some of these were tolerated. Some, when reduced to their practical consequences, led to quarrels and the personal conflicts which caused divisions or σχίσματα among the faithful. As long as doctrinal consensus was maintained on essentials, differences were tolerated, if not always encouraged. But once it could be shown that the opinions of a 'αίρεσις or party struck at the heart of this doctrinal consensus, the parent body reacted to the new 'αίρεσις as to a virus, isolating it, building up resistance to it, expelling it from the body, sometimes with great cost to itself. In New Testament times, as today, it was difficult to detect a doctrine incompatible with previous consensus, since its adherents then, as now, always proclaimed its truth as God's revelation, and because both sides, as in most controversies, had an element of truth in their favor. This element provided the basis for the combatant's airs of self-righteousness. We see this clearly in the disputes between Christianity and Judaism.

2) Christianity lay within Judaism throughout the New Testament period.

For the whole of the New Testament period, Christianity was preoccupied with, and not fully separated from, Judaism. In some places, of course, a fairly sharp break between synagogue and church can be detected by the last quarter of the first century. Elsewhere such a break is not at all evident, and no clear contradiction in terms

between "Jew" and "Jewish Christian" should be assumed, given the heterogeneous nature of both Judaism and Christianity at this time. Recently, Peter Richardson has noted that the Church did not appropriate the title "Israel" for itself until Justin Martyr (c. 160 A.D.).<sup>71</sup> Such appropriation signals a mutually exclusive separation from Judaism at this point, but this is well past the New Testament period.

3) The social quality and personalism of heresy.

Because the New Testament tells us so little about the opinions reproved by the inspired writers, particularly when these are variant opinions within Christianity itself, I have chosen to point up the personal element in the term and phenomenon of "heresy." The New Testament most often uses *αἵρεσις* to designate a "party" or group following an opinion or way of life. Examination shows that the adherents of the party are bound together by a common way of life which they consider to be a correct interpretation of revelation answering to their human needs, so that the human factors in a "heresy" both the individual (emotions, mental outlook, personality traits) and the social (communality of action) enter in as constitutive elements of the biblical concept of a "heresy" just as these factors enter into a correct notion of "biblical faith." This is why so much of the pattern of heretical combat is *ad hominem*. One attacks not only the views, but the opponent himself, his right to speak, his mode of living, and his work's results.

4) Criteria for discerning truth from false and heretical views.

To combat false views, the New Testament champion of truth appeals to the acknowledged foundations of religion, something which he shares with his opponent, even if he understands them differently. He appeals in particular to the foundational revelation and to what he considers to be its authoritative interpretation. For Judaism, this means an appeal to God's covenant mediated by Moses and to the *Tôrâ* which interprets this event. For Christians, this means first of all an appeal to the revelation given in Jesus and to authenticated apostolic testimony. Thus Paul feels compelled to prove his apostolic

<sup>71</sup> Richardson, *Israel*, pp. 9-14.

status and his harmony of doctrine with the "pillar" apostles at Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10) to assure acceptance of his Gospel by others. Later Christian authors invoke a link between themselves and the apostles. Judaism seeks signs from God to authenticate a view. In the Church, the Holy Spirit of God is said to be the guarantor of the apostolic witness, since he confirms it with signs, wonders, mighty deeds, and the presence of his gifts. In both Judaism and Christianity, the practical results of a doctrine give evidence of its truth or falsity. With the passage of time and the disappearance of the apostles in the Church, appeal is made to their writings, in the manner of appeal to Old Testament writings. At this point, pseudonymity and falsification of documents appear as weapons in the debate.

5) The evil of heresy.

The great evil of a heresy, taking this term as it is understood today, lies in the damage it can do. It is capable of endangering the salvation of the Church's membership by threatening the unity of the community's consent to the essentials of its faith, essentials which must be properly understood if correct practice is to follow from them. The Church has always appreciated this danger from heresy and, as soon as it has perceived it, has taken vigorous measures to root out the heresy. But the very struggle against heresy has wrought great havoc among "brethren in the Spirit," and so the declaration of a heresy's presence should not be made lightly. One may infer from all this a moral for the Church of today. The need remains for it now, as in the days of the New Testament's composition, to have one Lord and one faith, to hold fast to its essential unity in Christ. At the same time, because of the difficulty of demonstrating that a variant theological opinion or practice strikes at the roots of the faith, there should be in ecclesiastical affairs the greatest measure of toleration and liberty. We are all called to the *practical* exercise of love for all mankind, and this includes preeminently those of the household of the faith.

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