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Short Title

MAN'S NATURAL ATTITUDE TO CHRIST

David Ralph ...

June 1954

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MAN'S ATTITUDE, BY NATURE, TO CHRIST
AS ARTICULATED IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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June 1959

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The purpose of this investigation is to determine, on the basis of the Gospel according to St. John, how man, by nature, reacts to Christ. This issue is by no means merely academic. Christ's testimony concerning His Gospel conflicts with at least two situations which exist in our "Christianized" society. For one thing, our Lord told His disciples that the world would hate and persecute them because of His Gospel. Yet, in America today, "Christianity" receives the approval of the majority of people. In the second place, Christ informed His disciples that He had chosen them, not vice versa. The current emphasis in "evangelical" preaching, however, challenges people to "make their decision for Christ."

This conflict between the words of our Lord and the ideas which are current today prompts us to look at St. John's Gospel and try to discover the Christ whom men oppose and the reason why they cannot choose Him.

A detailed exegetical study of every passage which has anything to say about man's attitude toward Christ would be beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore we must limit this study in two respects. In the first place, exegetical

notes are included in the text only when they have particular relevance to an expression of man's attitude toward Christ. The second limitation is that the catalog of passages, although an effort has been made to make it sufficiently extensive for the purpose of this investigation, does not include every passage on our subject.

The Issue in Contemporary Jewish Thought

Two Jewish scholars, Zeitlin and Fox, have recently given an interpretation of the cause of Christ's crucifixion which conflicts with the fourth Gospel. Fox asserts that all the Jews of Judea and Jerusalem were not involved in Christ's trial and crucifixion.¹ It is true that every Judean certainly was not physically present outside Pilate's praetorium. Nonetheless, St. John's account of the opposition to Christ contradicts Fox's theory that only a small number of high priests (who, according to Fox, were merely pawns of Pilate) were involved in Christ's death.² Zeitlin has a similar explanation for this statement:

A superficial reading of the story of the Passion gives the impression that the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. As we analyzed the narrative of the trial, however, it became evident that the Jewish people were not responsible for the death of Jesus.³

¹G. George Fox, Jesus, Pilate and Paul (Chicago: Isaacs & Company, c.1955), p. 103.

²Ibid., p. 104.

³Solomon Zeitlin, Who Crucified Jesus? (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1947), p. 171.

Zeitlin claims that Jesus was put to death as a political offender because it was feared that He might begin a revolution against Rome.⁴ He argues,

The fact that the high priest had to assert again and again, "We have no king but Caesar," indicates that not only was Jesus' trial a political issue but that the high priest was fearful of being accused of being an accomplice in declaring Jesus a King of the Jews.⁵

It should also be noted that, in addition to these Jewish scholars, Cullmann also argues that Christ was put to death by the Roman government as a Zealot leader.⁶ He declares, however, that, although the Romans were legally responsible for our Lord's crucifixion, the Jews were morally responsible.⁷

These theories stimulate our desire to investigate St. John's testimony to the opposition against Christ.

The Method

The basic source used in this study is Nestle's Novum Testamentum Graece. The exegetical tools are noted in the bibliography. Several commentaries on the fourth Gospel, some scholarly works on the relations between Christ and the Jews, and a few popular expositions of biblical characters

⁴Ibid., p. 169.

⁵Ibid., p. 167.

⁶Oscar Cullmann, The State in the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1956), p. 41.

⁷Ibid., p. 43.

were also employed.

Pertinent passages appear at the head of each subdivision in the second and third chapters of this thesis. These passages were collected through a study of the Gospel in the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible. They were then translated from the Greek into the form in which they appear in this paper.

All italicized words in quotations (except for Biblical quotes) are the italics of the original authors.

CHAPTER II

THE DISPLAY OF HUMAN OPPOSITION

The World

He was in the world, and the world came into existence through Him, and the world did not know Him. (1:10)

What He has seen and heard, this He is testifying and no one is receiving His testimony. (3:32)

"the world . . . has hated Me. . . . (15:18)

And when He comes, He will expose the world concerning sin . . . that they do not believe on Me. . . . (16:8f.)

"you will no longer see Me. . . . the world will rejoice" (16:16,20)

On the surface, one might suppose that a visitation of the Creator would occasion general acclaim and homage on the part of His creatures. The Gospel according to St. John, however, is replete with manifestations that the visitation of the Son of God gave rise to a response which was diametrically opposite to such popular reverence.

Although Christ brought all things into being, the world did not even recognize Him. His words conveyed eternal life (cf. 6:68) but the world did not accept His message. On the contrary, it hated Him and rejoiced in the removal of His visible presence.

The world's animosity did not die with Christ. It continued to vent its anger because of Jesus through its perse-

cution of His disciples (cf. 15:19ff.). Thus, St. John writes in the present tense when he declares, "He is testifying and no one is receiving His testimony." (3:32) The sin of which the world is convicted is that it does not believe.

The Jews

His own did not receive Him. (1:11)

Although He had performed so many signs before them, they were not believing on Him. (12:37)

They did not know that He was speaking about the Father to them. (8:27)

"do we not correctly say that You are a Samaritan and You have a demon?" (8:48, cp. vs. 52)

"He has a demon and is mad; why do you listen to Him?" (10:20)

the Jews all the more were repeatedly seeking to kill Him. (5:18)

He did not want to walk about in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. (7:1)

Then they took up stones to throw upon Him. (8:59)

The Jews again took up stones in order that they might stone Him. (10:31)

Then they were again seeking to arrest Him. (10:39)

They brought him (namely, the man who had been born blind) to the Pharisees. (9:13)

But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. (11:46)

"If He were not one who does evil, we would not have delivered Him to you." (18:30)

Then they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber. (18:40)

Then they cried out, "Take Him away! Take Him away!
Crucify Him!" (19:15)

Before we consider the details of these references to the Jews' reactions, it seems advisable to try to determine whom St. John means by "the Jews." We are told that Jesus was traveling about in Galilee and not in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. (7:1) Thus, the emphasis of the term is on "people living in the country of Judea" and not on those living outside of it.¹ It should also be noted that, on the one hand, the "Jews" are identified with the Pharisees (compare 1:19 with 1:24) and, on the other hand, they are distinguished. (11:45f.) Hoskyns comments,

the Evangelist therefore uses the phrase the Jews to denote the national rejection of the Christ and especially His rejection by the Jewish authorities, by the Pharisees, and by the chief priests and the Pharisees.²

Much of what is said in this section on "the Jews" also applies equally to "the Jewish leaders" which are treated in the following section.

It was noted above that the created world neither recognizes nor accepts its Creator; what is more striking is the fact that the "citadel of Jewish orthodoxy" did not receive its "true Light." Christ came to His own home--the house of

¹Solomon Zeitlin, Who Crucified Jesus? (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1947), p. 170.

²Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber and Faber Limited, c.1947), p. 173.

Israel--and His own people did not accept Him.³ They misunderstood His message from the Father and did not believe on Him.

The Jews did not merely ignore this Jesus of Nazareth whom they would not receive; on several occasions, their reaction was both verbally and physically hostile. One might get the impression from the synoptic Gospels that the plot to put Christ to death was first seriously considered shortly before His arrest. St. John informs us that the Jews had a continuing desire and made repeated attempts to kill Him.

Some of the Judeans were working with the Pharisees in an attempt to dispose of Jesus. When the man who had been born blind told his acquaintances that "the man called Jesus" had made clay and healed him on the sabbath, they immediately asked, "Where is He?" (9:11f.) Since Jesus could not be found, they brought the healed man to the Pharisees for questioning. (9:13ff.) On another occasion, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and many of the Jews began to believe as a result of this sign, some of the Jews reported what Christ had done to the Pharisees. (11:43-6)

Finally, St. John records their reactions to Christ when He was on trial before Pilate. There they accused Him of being a person who commits evil and vehemently demanded that Barabbas be released and Christ be crucified.

³Ibid., p. 146.

The Jewish Leaders

The Pharisees

"We are speaking what we know and are testifying to what we have seen and you are not receiving our testimony. . . . you do not believe. . . ." (3:11f.)

Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?" (8:19)

Then some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God because He does not keep the sabbath." (9:16)

"Give glory to God: we know that this man is a sinner." (9:24)

The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You are testifying concerning Yourself; Your testimony is not true." (8:13)

"Did any of the leaders or Pharisees believe on Him?" (7:48)

In spite of all this, even many of the leaders believed on Him, but they were not acknowledging it on account of the Pharisees in order that they might not be excommunicated. (12:42)

Then the Pharisees said to one another, "You see, you are accomplishing nothing; look, the world goes after Him." (12:19)

Christ's words to the Pharisee Nicodemus, "You [plural] do not believe," set the stage for the Pharisee's reaction. On one occasion, Nicodemus asked whether Jewish law judged without a hearing (7:51) and, later on, some of the Pharisees questioned how a sinful man could perform the signs which Christ did. (9:16) However, Nicodemus' protest was squelched and the division among the Pharisees was short lived; they refused to come to our Lord and Savior, Jesus, and believe. As a group, they sat in judgment upon Christ and

rejected Him as a sinful sabbath-breaker who could not be from God.

As judges of Christ, they could not accept His sole testimony. When He directed their attention to the Father as a second witness, they replied, "Where is your Father?" They completely missed the point and demanded another human witness (compare 9:18).

Having rejected the Savior for themselves, the Pharisees directed their efforts toward keeping others from following Him and threatened to excommunicate anyone who would acknowledge Him as Christ (compare 12:19 with 9:22). When the raising of Lazarus caused many to believe in Him, they counselled with the chief priests to kill Him. (11:53)

During our Lord's final entry into Jerusalem, the crowds hailed Him as the King of Israel but the Pharisees were incensed by their apostasy. The Pharisees are not mentioned by name in the passion narrative but presumably they formed a substantial part of "the Jews" who shouted, "Crucify Him!"

The chief priests

the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to arrest Him. (7:32)

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and were saying, "What are we trying to do, for this man performs many signs? If we permit Him [to continue] thus, everyone will believe on Him. . . ." (11:47f.)

And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing; neither do you calculate that it is to your advantage that one man should

die for the people and that the entire nation should not perish." (11:49f.)

So from that day on, they counselled to kill Him. (11:53)

Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given an order that, if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, so that they might arrest Him. (11:57)

And the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus also because, on account of him, many of the Jews were going away and were believing on Jesus. (12:10f.)

"We have no king but Caesar." (19:15)

Then, when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" (19:6)

We are familiar with the high priest, Caiaphas. All of the above references but one, however, refer to a group of "chief priests" (the plural of Caiaphas' title, ἀρχιερεύς).

The plural is used in the New Testament and in Josephus to denote members of the Sanhedrin who belonged to the highpriestly families: ruling high priests, those who had been deposed, and adult male members of the most prominent priestly families.⁴

Rabbi Fox informs us that the temple priests were adherents of the Sadducean Party⁵ and, as Solomon Zeitlin correctly asserts, "The beliefs of the Pharisee ran diametrically opposite to those of the Sadducees."⁶ (Confer Acts 23:6-8.)

⁴William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 112.

⁵G. George Fox, Jesus, Pilate and Paul (Chicago: Isaacs & Company, c.1955), p. 19.

⁶Zeitlin, op. cit., p. 86.

The fact that the Pharisees and the chief priests counselled together in order to do away with Christ reveals their intense opposition to Him. Theologically they were at variance with each other but at heart they were united by their desire to destroy the Son of God.

St. John refers specifically to the chief priests in the latter part of his Gospel. Except for the reference to their sending officers to arrest Christ, they are mentioned only after Christ had raised Lazarus from the dead. This raising of Lazarus, since it caused many to believe on Jesus, forced the Jews to take immediate action.⁷ A council of chief priests and Pharisees convened and they raised the question, "What are we trying to do, for this man performs many signs?" The conative present expressed in their question describes the action which they are attempting but not accomplishing.⁸ Hoskyns comments, "they are uncertain whether, so long as He remains at liberty, they have sufficient power to control the crowds."⁹

Ironically, Caiaphas declared the solution to their dilemma, "it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people. . . ." St. John informs us that Caiaphas was

⁷Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 33.

⁸Ernest De Witt Burton, Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, c.1898), p. 8.

⁹Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 410.

divinely inspired to give this prophecy concerning Christ's vicarious death (11:51f.) but the human factor obviously was a calculated determination to kill Jesus.

The chief priests reacted positively to this "human factor" in Caiaphas' advice and resolved to kill both Christ and Lazarus, the latter being a living testimony to Christ's divine power. Together with the Pharisees, they made every effort to find and arrest Jesus.

Even Pilate could not dissuade these chief priests from their intention to have Jesus put to death. Unmoved by the pathetic spectacle of the scourged and thorn-crowned Christ, they shouted for His crucifixion. Not even their Jewish patriotism could be aroused where Jesus is concerned. "Pilate is represented as asking the priests finally whether it is their deliberate intention that he should crucify their King."¹⁰ Their immediate reply is that Caesar is their only king; they deny any messianic hopes as regards Jesus.

The Followers

Jesus said to him, "If you do not see signs and wonders, you certainly will not believe." (4:48)

Then the people, seeing the sign which He had done, were saying, "This is truly the Prophet who comes into the world." Jesus then, knowing that they were about to come and take Him by force that they might make Him a king, retired again to the hill by Himself. (6:14f.)

¹⁰R. H. Strachan, The Fourth Gospel: Its Significance and Environment (London: Student Christian Movement Press LTD., c.1941), p. 317.

So they said to Him, "What sign then are you performing in order that we might see and believe you? What are you accomplishing? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness. . . ." (6:30f.)

After this many of His disciples drew back and no longer walked about with Him. (6:66)

Jesus says to them (namely, to the Jews who had believed Him, cf. vs. 31), "If you are the children of Abraham, you do the works of Abraham; but now you are seeking to kill Me. . . ." (8:39f.)

This section on "the followers" of Christ deals with those who were His disciples after a fashion. The above references indicate, however, that such believers also opposed His true work. Christ's general rebuke to the official from Capernaum reveals the true nature of such "faith": "If you (plural) do not see signs and wonders, you certainly will not believe." Hoskyns gives this commentary:

The whole episode, with its three times repeated phrase Thy son liveth, and ending, as it does, with the faith of the man and of his whole house, provides an illustration of the power of Jesus and of that faith which withers if it be not sustained by tangible, visible, and remarkable miracles (I Cor. i. 22). This faith is criticized by Jesus. . . .¹¹

Such "faith" which is continually dependent upon signs is not only weak as regards the believer but also wrong as regards the object. The episode of Christ's feeding the five thousand is a good example of this type of opposition. The crowds acclaimed Jesus as "the Prophet" and attempted to force Him to become their king. Apparently they wanted a "bread-king" who would supply them with food without their efforts.

¹¹Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 252.

The context offers some support for this interpretation; Christ later rebuked them for seeking Him because their stomachs had been filled. (6:26) (Compare also 6:30f.) Another possible interpretation of their reaction is suggested by the fact that they wanted to make Him their king. When they saw His display of power in multiplying the loaves, they might have concluded that He would miraculously conquer the Romans.¹² In either case, their intentions for Him opposed His true mission.

The nature of their opposition became more apparent when Jesus began to speak about food which would indure to eternal life. The crowd refused to believe that Jesus has been given authority by the Father to grant eternal life. They demanded a visible demonstration which would prove His claim. Christ gave them no absolute proof but continued to make His absolute claim; as a result, many of His disciples left Him.

On a later occasion, Jesus, who knew what was in man (3:25), revealed the evil intentions which were lurking in the hearts of these "followers"; He told the Jews who had believed on Him, "now you are seeking to kill Me. . . ." (8:40)

Christ's Disciples

The disciples did not really know Him

In the meanwhile, the disciples besought Him, saying,

¹²Ibid., p. 290.

"Rabbi, eat!" But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." Then the disciples were saying to one another, "Has someone brought Him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is that I do the will of Him who sent Me and that I accomplish His work. Are you not saying, 'There are still four months and then the harvest comes'? Look, I tell you! Lift up your eyes and see the fields, for they are already white for harvest." (4:31-35)

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written with a view to Him, and that they did these things to Him. (12:16)

Then some of His disciples said to one another, "What is this which He is saying to us, 'A little while and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me,' and, 'because I am going to the Father'? What is this which He is saying, 'a little while'? We do not know what He is talking about." (16:17f.)

"If you had known Me, you would have known the Father also." (14:7)

"If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father." (14:28)

St. John's references to "the disciples" generally refer to the twelve apostles. We will consider them as a group in this section; and then take a closer look at some of them individually in the next section.

One would imagine that at least these close companions whom Christ had hand-picked (6:70) would have been in complete harmony with Him. This was manifestly not the case. Early in the narrative, they revealed their ignorance of His mission and message. At least two of the disciples had heard John the Baptist call Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29); yet, they were amazed that He had lowered Himself to speak with the Samaritan woman. (4:27)

Christ told them about His "food" of fulfilling His divine commission, but their worldly minds thought only of earthly food. While He was revealing Himself to the Samaritan, they were, so it appears, discussing nature. They looked at the physical fields and observed that the harvest was still four months away; but Jesus looked at the approaching Samaritans and declared the "fields" ready for the "reapers."¹³

The disciples did not grasp the significance of the events which took place during Christ's ministry. He made His entry into Jerusalem upon an ass' colt and the crowds shouted His praises as the King of Israel. This was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy as St. John points out. (12:14f.) While these events were taking place, however, the disciples did not see the connection. The author of the fourth Gospel implies a similar instance of their failure to understand the meaning of Christ's actions with regard to His cleansing of the temple. (2:22)

Our Lord's farewell discourse is filled with explanation and encouragement but the disciples again did not understand. His testimony that He was about to "go to the Father" did not fit into their frame of thought. They had spent many months in intimate fellowship with Him; yet, when the hour of His departure had come, He had to tell them that they had not known Him in the past and did not love Him at that time. (14:7,28) (The conditional clauses are past contrary-to-fact and present

¹³Ibid., p. 246.

contrary-to-fact respectively.)

Their discipleship collapsed when His hour had come

The disciples say to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" (11:8)

"Do not let your heart continue to be unsettled; neither let it continue to be afraid." (14:27)

"But, because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart." (16:6)

"You will weep and you will lament . . . you will become distressed." (16:20)

"When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come. . . . So you also have sorrow now" (16:22)

"Behold, the hour is coming and it has come when you each will be scattered to your own home and will leave Me alone." (16:32)

The contrast between Christ and His disciples is vividly portrayed in the manner in which they face His glorification. In His good Shepherd discourse, Christ had declared that He would willingly lay down His life and take it up again (10:18) but the disciples did not see that His obedience to the Father would lead to His death and resurrection. Rather, they wanted Him to circumvent death; they tried to dissuade Him from returning to Judea because the Jews there were intent upon killing Him. One historian expresses their desires to have our Lord avoid the cross and establish an earthly kingdom as follows:

Down to the end some of His disciples cherished the belief that He would somehow prove Himself Messiah, in

spite of His strange teachings and His unwillingness to assert Himself and plainly declare His Messiahship.¹⁴

In His farewell discourse, Christ told the disciples what their reaction to His death would be. He saw that their hearts were confused and terrified. (14:27) (The verbs are in the present tense of the imperative mood, forbidding the continuance of an action already in progress.)¹⁵ Jesus assured them that His departure was to their advantage but they still were grief-stricken and filled with distress comparable to that suffered by a woman in labor. At the crucial moment, they fled in all directions and thus deserted the Lord in His divine obedience unto death.

Some of the Twelve

Philip

So when Jesus raised His eyes and saw that a great crowd was coming to Him, He said to Philip, "Whence should we purchase bread in order that these may eat?" Now He was saying this in order to test him; for He Himself knew what He was going to do. Philip answered Him, "Forty dollars' (two hundred denarii) worth of bread is not enough for them in order that each might receive a little food." (6:5-7; cf. vvs. 8f.)

Now there were some gentile proselytes among those who had come up to worship at the feast. So they approached Philip who was from Bethsaida in Galilee and were beseeching him saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew. (12:20-22)

¹⁴J. F. Bethune-Baker, Early Traditions About Jesus (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1930), p. 184.

¹⁵H. P. V. Nunn, A Short Syntax of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: The University Press, 1949), p. 84.

"If you had known Me, you would also have known the Father; from now on, you know Him and you have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied." (14:7f.)

We have already noted how the disciples were worldly-minded when Jesus revealed Himself to the Samaritans.¹⁶ Now we observe Philip's reaction when Jesus tested him to determine his spirituality. Christ saw the crowds coming to Him and knew that He was going to feed them. He wanted to see, however, where Philip would place the emphasis in his conception of their needs. What they needed most was "Bread from heaven"--the flesh of the Son of God (6:27ff.)--but Philip evaluated their needs only in terms of earthly food. Andrew made the same mistake. (6:8f.)

Philip also showed signs of having a nationalistic Messianic hope. Some gentile proselytes approached him and requested to see Jesus. Dodd asserts that, in Johannine useage, there are two overlapping meanings for this word, "to see" (*ἰδεῖν*). He says,

Accordingly, the terms *ὄρα*ν and *θεωρεῖν* are freely used with Christ as object. Sometimes they refer to the mere fact that Jesus was seen at Jerusalem and elsewhere, as any man is seen by his fellows. But sometimes they are used with a more pregnant meaning, the meaning once expressed in the words, *θεάσασθαι τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ* (i. 14).¹⁷

The request of these Greeks is therefore an illusion to the

¹⁶Supra, pp. 16f.

¹⁷C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: The University Press, 1955), p. 167.

extension of the Gospel to the gentiles.¹⁸ These gentiles made their request repeatedly (iterative imperfect) and then Philip went and told, not Jesus, but Andrew. Brown's interpretation of Philip's actions seems justified. He suggests that Philip was hedging because he was not sure that these non-Jews should have anything to do with Jesus.¹⁹

In His farewell discourse, Christ challenged the faith of the disciples and made an absolute claim of divine Sonship. The disciples were to believe that they were acquainted with the Father if they were really acquainted with Jesus. But Philip was not satisfied with the Messiah's statement regarding an invisible fellowship with the Father. "He demands a direct proof of the Fatherhood of God."²⁰

Simon Peter

Then He came to Simon Peter; Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to Him, "What I am doing, you do not know now, but you will know after these things." Peter said to Him, "You certainly will not ever wash my feet!" (13:6-8)

"Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." (13:37)

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. (18:10)

¹⁸Ibid., p. 380.

¹⁹Charles Reynolds Brown, These Twelve: A Study in Temperament (Cornwall, N. Y.: The Cornwall Press, Inc., c.1926), p. 80.

²⁰Strachan, op. cit., p. 119.

He said, "I am not." (18:17)

He denied it and said, "I am not." (18:25)

Then Peter again denied it. (18:27)

When many of Christ's followers had been leaving Jesus, Peter had boldly confessed Him to be the "Holy One of God." (6:69) From the above references to Simon's actions on the night of Jesus' arrest, however, one gets the impression that his desire was that he should save the "Holy One" and not that the "Holy One" should die for him or make him holy. Peter was repulsed by the idea that Christ should humiliate Himself for his benefit. Jesus had previously declared that He would lay down His life for the "sheep" (10:11,16) but Peter wanted to die for Jesus. (It seems to be more than a mere coincidence that St. John records both Christ's and Peter's statements with the same key words: ψυχῆ, τιθεῖν, ὑπέρ.)

It is not surprising therefore that, when Jesus turned Himself over to the soldiers, Simon opposed Him and began to fight. Peter's denial is usually explained by saying that he turned into a coward when confronted by real danger. Such an interpretation is possible but it does not seem to be consistent with St. John's portrait of Simon. Considering that he had wanted to single-handedly withstand a band of soldiers, it seems more likely that Peter denied His Savior, not outwardly through fear, but inwardly through disillusionment. Because Jesus refused to fight, Peter no longer considered himself His disciple.

Thomas

Then Thomas, who is called the twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go in order that we may die with Him." (11:16)

"Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?" (14:5)

"Unless I see the print of the nails in His hands and put my finger into the print of the nails and put my hand into His side, I will never believe." (20:25)

"do not continue to be unbelieving. . . ." (20:27)

Jesus said to him, "(because) You have seen Me; do you believe?" (20:29)

"Thomas was the pessimist of the group and seemed habitually to look on the dark side of life."²¹ When Christ announced His deliberate intention to return to Judea, this disciple showed a complete lack of hope by saying, "Let us also go in order that we may die with Him." Davies comments, "the speaker has made up his mind that the world will be too strong for his Master. . . ."²²

Christ directed His disciples' vision to a spiritual kingdom and explained that He was going to prepare a place for them. Brown paraphrases Thomas' reply: "How can we know the road when we do not see the goal!"²³ He wanted to see

²¹T. Stanley Soltau, Who Do Men Say That I Am? (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, c.1949), p. 85.

²²Trevor H. Davies, The Inner Circle: Studies in the Associates of Jesus (New York: George H. Doran Company, c. 1924), p. 237.

²³Brown, op. cit., p. 141.

the goal of eternal life but the death of Christ filled him with blank despair. His faith was in the things which he could touch and see. Before the resurrected Christ appeared to him, he was in a state of unbelief. Even after he had seen Jesus and confessed Him as his Lord and God, Christ had to question the genuineness of his belief.

Judas

Jesus answered them, "Did not I choose you twelve? And one of you is a devil." He was speaking of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him. (6:70f.)

"Why was this ointment not sold for sixty dollars (three hundred denarii) and it be given to the poor?" But he said this, not because he was being concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief and, having the money box, he was stealing what was put in. (12:5f.)

"He who ate My bread with Me raised up his heel against Me." (13:18)

Then, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night. (13:30)

And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples. So Judas, procuring a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there. . . . (18:2f.)

Judas, who betrayed Him, was standing with the soldiers. (18:5)

The opposition of Christ's intimate associates had its most obvious manifestation in the betrayal by Judas. Christ had chosen Judas as one of the twelve; yet he was a devil, that is, he was "diabolical in nature, hostile to Christ."²⁴

²⁴George Barker Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1899), p. 194.

(Compare with Mt. 16:23, where Christ called Peter "Satan" because he spoke against Christ's intention to suffer and die.) Immediately before our Lord called Judas a devil, Peter had declared, in the name of all the disciples, "we believe and know that You are the Holy One of God." (6:69) "Judas remained under the hypocritical cloak of this confession. . . ." ²⁵ When Mary anointed Jesus with expensive ointment, this son of Iscariot again was hypocritical; he hid his dishonest greed behind a facade of concern for the poor.

Judas shared Christ's friendship and then turned against Him like an animal which kicks the man who feeds it.²⁶ He associated with the Light of the world and then went out into the "night" and took his stance beside Christ's enemies.

Summary

In this chapter we have seen the manifestations of humanity's opposition to Christ and His Gospel. It is true that, at some times during His ministry, huge crowds followed Jesus but their enthusiasm waned and turned into a hateful desire to kill Him. The inner core of "disciples" continued to follow but their hopes for Him ran counter to His divine mission. In the end, they too deserted Him and our Lord stood alone as mankind used all its resources to put Him to death.

²⁵Albert Nicole, Judas the Betrayer, translated from the French (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, c.1957), p. 15.

²⁶Strachan, op. cit., p. 269.

CHAPTER III

THE CAUSE OF HUMAN OPPOSITION

Introduction

We now ask ourselves, "What was the reason for all this hostility? Why was everyone either pulling in the opposite direction from Christ or pushing Him to His death? We can give the answer in one word, *δωρεάν*; "They hated Me without reason." (15:25) Christ is the Son of God; He speaks the truth; He sacrificed His life as God's Messiah in order that the world might have eternal life. Oddly enough, these factors--Christ's person, revelation, and work--are the very things which man opposes. We shall now look at seven of these "causes" of mankind's clash with Jesus of Nazareth.

Christ's Humanity

"You do not know whence I am come or where I am going; you are judging according to the flesh." (8:14f.)

Then the Jews were murmuring about Him because He said, "I am the Bread which came down from heaven." And they were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it that He now is saying, 'I have come down from heaven?'" (6:41f.)

"can it be that the leaders truly know that He is the Christ? But we know whence He is; and when the Christ comes, no one will know whence He is." (7:26f.)

"You are not yet fifty years old and have you seen Abraham?" (8:57)

"We stone You, not because of a good work, but because of blasphemy and because you, being a man, make yourself

God." (10:33)

Christ's humanity was altogether too obvious. The Jews were offended by His claims because they did not know His divine origin. They used their human powers of observation and judged Him only "according to the flesh." When our Lord directed their attention to Himself and told them that He is the "Bread which came down from heaven," they could not accept this testimony because they felt confident that they knew His human parentage. The fact that the religious leaders did not arrest Christ led some of the Jerusalemites to question whether these leaders were accepting Him as the Messiah. They dismissed this idea, however, because they were "well acquainted with this Jesus from Nazareth. Hoskyns explains that the belief which was current at the time was that the Messiah would be unknown until He suddenly appeared."¹

The Jews scoffed at the idea that Jesus could have seen their father Abraham; with their human judgment, they could see that Christ was not even fifty years old. In their estimation, the assertion that He is God was nothing short of blasphemy. "They cannot accept Him because they think they know all about Him: they think He is just one of themselves."²

¹Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber and Faber Limited, c.1947), p. 317.

²Ernest G. Loosley, Through the Eyes of His Enemies: Studies in the Interpretation of Jesus (London: The Epworth Press, 1928), p. 84.

Christ's Concept of Worship

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship Him." (4:23)

"Take these things away! Stop making the house of My Father a house of trade!" (2:16)

The Jews then asked Jesus and said to Him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it." The Jews then said, "This temple was built over a period of forty-six years; and will You raise it in three days?" (2:18-20)

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees assembled the council and were saying, "What are we to do, for this man performs many signs. If we let Him go on thus, everyone will believe on Him and the Romans will come and destroy both our place and our nation." (11:47f.)

Our Lord's concept of worship is far removed from the traffic of animals and the sacrificial rituals which formed the core of temple worship in His day. His words to the woman of Samaria show that His coming had ushered in a new era of worship.

By driving out the merchants and money changers, Christ tried to remove a manifest abuse of true worship. His cleansing of the court of the Gentiles indicated that all nations were to have access to God. (Mk. 11:17) The Jews, however, were nationalistic and tended to place their trust in their temple. They questioned Christ's authority and demanded a sign. The reply which Jesus gave them reveals the conflict between true worship and their impiety. He told them that, if they would destroy (λύσατε; imperative expressing consent

or proposing an hypothesis)³ the center of communion with God, He would build up what they had torn down. The Jews missed the point; their concern was directed only to the physical house of worship. Their reply expressed a note of pride in their man-made temple.

As Christ gained in popularity, this same conflict between true worship and national trust in a building again appeared. The religious leaders feared that a revolt might be occasioned by the followers of Jesus and that the Romans would attack and destroy Jerusalem.⁴ At heart, however, their motive for "protecting" the temple was selfish. Soltau says,

The issue in their minds was not as to the truth and the authority of the teaching of the One whose supernatural power they could not deny . . . , but simply, "What can we do to preserve our present place and to render ineffective His influence among the people?"⁵

Christ's Messianic Role

"All who came before Me are thieves and robbers." (10:8)

"I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." (10:11)

Then the Jews gathered around Him and were saying to Him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told

³Ernest De Witt Burton, Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, c.1898), pp. 80f.

⁴J. F. Bethune-Baker, Early Traditions About Jesus (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1930), p. 179.

⁵T. Stanley Soltau, Who Do Men Say That I Am? (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, c.1949), p. 69.

you and you do not believe." (10:24f.)

"When I am lifted up, I will draw all men to Myself."
(12:32)

Then the crowd answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; how can you say that the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?" (12:34)

"I do not receive glory from men, but I know you--that you do not have the love of God in you. . . . I have come in My Father's name, and you are not receiving Me; if another came in his own name, him you would receive."
(5:41,43)

When we recall the type of messianic hope which was prevalent when Christ became incarnate, it is not so surprising that the Jews rejected Him and opposed His claims. They expected a "messiah" who would deliver Israel and avenge the injustices which her oppressors had inflicted upon her.⁶ Rabbi Fox describes this longing as a "passionate hope for a Messiah who would vanquish Rome and restore Judea to peace and to her former glory."⁷

John Bright calls our attention to two additional aspects of the Jewish Messianic hope: (a) The expectation of a moral Messiah which was intimately connected with the keeping of the law--especially that of the Sabbath; (b) The apocalyptic notion which was a longing for the catastrophic intervention of God to establish His Kingdom. These were not opposing

⁶Lord Charnwood, According to Saint John (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, c.1925), p. 165.

⁷G. George Fox, Jesus, Pilate and Paul (Chicago: Isaacs & Company, c.1955), p. 20.

camps within Judaism. Indeed one individual might have shared both viewpoints.⁸

Jesus did not satisfy any of these messianic expectations. On the contrary, He called all the false messiahs who had preceded Him "thieves and robbers" and declared His intention to sacrifice His life.

Jesus had told the Jews, "I am," and they had tried to stone Him. (8:58f.) Later, they demanded that He "plainly" tell them whether He was their Messiah. What they wanted was an affirmation from Christ which would be immediately understood by their human intelligence. They demanded to know whether Jesus was their kind of Messiah.

Our Lord continued to refer to the fact that He would be "lifted up" and thereby draw all men to Himself. The crowd at the feast revealed their ignorance of God's messianic plans by challenging this idea that the Christ should die. Rather, they asserted their opinion that He would establish an eternal earthly kingdom.

At heart, the Jews did not place their confidence in the Father's power, but in human ability. They rejected Jesus, not because He exalted Himself, but because He did not; He seeks only to glorify the Father, but they were looking to God only to glorify themselves.⁹ Robertson argues,

⁸John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1953), p. 171.

⁹Hoskyns, op. cit., pp. 247f.

If Jesus had only dared to raise the standard of revolt against Rome, the Pharisees would have hailed Him with joy as Messiah. But they had no patience with a merely spiritual Messiah who left the Jewish nation under the Roman yoke.¹⁰

Christ's Condemnation of Sin

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they do not have an excuse for their sin. . . . If I had not performed among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father." (15:22,24)

"He was a lamp which burns and shines, and you wished to rejoice for a while in his light." (5:35)

"Do not suppose that I will accuse you to the Father; Moses is the one who accuses you, he in whom you have put your hope. For if you were believing Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote concerning Me; but if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (5:45-47)

They answered Him, "We are seed of Abraham and we never have been in bondage to anyone! How is it that You say that we will become free?" (8:33)

"But now you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. . . ." (8:40)

"The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify concerning it that its works are evil." (7:7)

And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness more than light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, in order that his deeds might not be exposed. (3:19f.)

No one likes to be criticized. Our Lord's repeated exposure of man's sin therefore was a cause of much of the hos-

¹⁰A. T. Robertson, The Pharisees and Jesus (London: Duckworth & Co., 1920), p. 99.

tility directed against Him. In Christ, man is confronted by God in such a manner that he can no longer claim any excuse for his sin. It is true that our Lord was sent into the world, not to condemn it, but to save it (3:17); yet, judgment is inseparable from His saving mission. "Truth, like light, necessarily judges everything which it touches."¹¹ The result of the Savior's manifestation of "light" from the Father was the hatred of mankind against both the Light and Him who sent it.

The Jews rejected Christ because they refused to repent. John the Baptist had been sent to prepare the way for the Messiah by preaching repentance. His sin-revealing light is a permanent call to repentance. (The participles in 5:35 are present tense; compare also the perfect of enduring result in verse 33, "John has born witness.") The Jews, however, had only a fleeting interest in the Baptist. "They rejoiced only for a season; and this meant that they had paid no serious attention to him."¹²

They were impenitent also in spite of the testimony of the Pentateuch. They refused the salvation which Christ was offering because they were refusing the testimony of Moses. (The conditional sentence, 5:46, is present contrary-to-fact.) Hoskyns argues that this reference to Moses refers, not only

¹¹George Barker Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1899), p. 183.

¹²Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 272.

to the prophecy that God would raise up a "Prophet" (Deut. 18:15), but also to the whole pentateuchal theme of God's condemnation of sin and promise of redemption.¹³ The Jews were antagonized by Christ because they were not accepting Moses' evaluation of their need and prophecy of God's deliverance.

Rather than face the devastating fact of their guilt, they placed their confidence in their physical descent from Abraham. These Jews had "believed" in Jesus (8:30f.) but their faith was independent of an honest evaluation of their own sinfulness. They acknowledged the power of Christ's works and the depth of His words, but they resented His exposition of their traditional morality.¹⁴

Men wanted to kill our Lord because He speaks the truth. "It is the Truth, the revelation of eternal reality, that Christ declares."¹⁵ This "eternal reality" is that the Son makes men free; but men refuse to admit that they are in bondage. The world is opposed to Christ therefore because He is the irrefutable witness to its guilt; men hate the Light because it exposes their evil works. The impenitent heart prefers the comfortable "darkness" of rejecting the Savior.

¹³Ibid., p. 276.

¹⁴R. H. Strachan, The Fourth Gospel: Its Significance and Environment (London: Student Christian Movement Press LTD., c.1941), p. 212.

¹⁵C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: The University Press, 1955), p. 177.

Christ's Authority Over the Sabbath

The Jews began to persecute Jesus because He was repeatedly doing these things on the sabbath. (5:16)

The Jews then were saying to the man who was healed, "It is the sabbath and you are not permitted to carry this pallet." But he answered them, "The One who made me well said to me, 'Take up your pallet and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet and walk'?" (5:10-12)

The day on which Jesus made clay and opened his eyes was a sabbath. . . . Then also the Pharisees asked him again how he received his sight. (9:14f.)

"What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" (9:26)

"If on the sabbath a man receives circumcision so that the law of Moses might not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made the whole man well on the sabbath? Stop judging according to appearance and judge according to the right judgment!" (7:23f.)

The day on which Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes was a sabbath. So some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God because He does not keep the sabbath." (9:14)

"we know that this man is a sinner." (9:24)

It is interesting to note that the Jews began (ingressive aorist) to persecute Christ because of His repeated infractions of their sabbath laws. Their emphasis on the observation of minute laws conflicted with Christ's emphasis on mercy. It appears that our Lord intentionally attacked their sabbath regulations for we are told that He repeatedly (iterative imperfect) was doing these things on the sabbath.

The Jewish legalism is brought out in the reaction to Christ's healing of the invalid. By healing the "whole man"

on the sabbath, Christ is revealing Himself as the promised Messiah.¹⁶ The Jews, however, were interested only in accusing according to the law, not in rejoicing over a manifestation of God's glory. The invalid referred to Christ as "the One who made me well"; they desired merely to find out who had told him to break the sabbath.

Their reaction to Christ's healing of the man who had been born blind again shows their concentration upon the "how" and not upon the "what" of the sign. They repeatedly asked to be told how Jesus had healed him; their minds were closed to the meaning of this unique miracle and open only to the fact that the Lord had broken their interpretation of the law.

Christ pointed out the fallacy in their reasoning. They themselves regularly waived the sabbath law in lieu of another law, viz. the command to be circumcised. They performed this rite on the "eighth day" even when it fell on a Saturday; yet, using their unrighteous and inconsistent judgment, they hated Jesus for healing on the sabbath. They were convinced that He was a sinner. Loosley says, "what underlies their criticism of Jesus is their whole conception of religion."¹⁷

Christ's Authority As Teacher

"How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and are not seeking the glory from the only God?"
(5:44)

¹⁶Hoskyns, op. cit., pp. 315f.

¹⁷Loosley, op. cit., p. 84.

"Did any of the leaders, or of the Pharisees, believe on Him? But this crowd, which does not know the law, is accursed." (7:48f.)

And they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses but we do not know where this man is from." (9:28f.)

They answered him and said, "You were born entirely in sins and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out. (9:34)

"You are examining the Scriptures because you suppose you have eternal life in them and these are they which are testifying concerning Me, but you do not wish to come to Me that you might have life." (5:39f.)

"He who sent Me is true, He whom you do not know; but I know Him for I am from Him and He has sent Me." So they were seeking to arrest Him. . . . (7:28-30)

As was noted above, the Jews began to persecute Jesus because He was breaking the sabbath.¹⁸ Jewish opposition to Christ, however, was not due merely to their "righteous anger" over some legal infractions; rather, it was based upon something much deeper. Jocz argues,

The real conflict between Jesus and the authorities . . . was not of an academic nature. It was personal. The offence laid to the charge of Jesus was his claim . . . , the claim of unique authority.¹⁹

Christ is the Glory; He is the revelation of divine power and "light" from the source of God Himself. The Jews, however, desired human praise and not this glory. The Pharisees believed that they themselves were the very source and norm of

¹⁸Supra, p. 35.

¹⁹Jacob Jocz, The Jewish People and Jesus Christ (London: S.P.C.K., 1949), p. 40.

truth; they felt that their rejection of Jesus established Him as an imposter.

"We are disciples of Moses!" It was noted above that they did not receive the true message of Moses and repent.²⁰ Their emphasis was not on "Moses" but on "we"; thus they manifested their faith in their own learning. St. John ironically records their haughty statement that they could not be enlightened by a sinner.

Our Lord did not let them remain under their illusion of self-righteous scholarship. They assumed that they possessed eternal life simply because they ransacked the Scriptures. Christ informed them that their assumption was false. They had misinterpreted their Bible: man can have life only in Christ; the function of Scripture is to lead man to Him, not to provide man with food for his own egotism. "Thus the pride of the Jews in their indefatigable study of the Scriptures is undermined at its source."²¹ Christ exposed man's ignorance of God and asserted His own absolute knowledge and authority. In doing this, He makes the opposition of natural man inevitable.

Christ's Diet

"My Father still is working and I am working." Therefore the Jews all the more were seeking to kill Him, not only

²⁰Supra, pp. 33f.

²¹Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 273.

because He was breaking the sabbath, but also because He was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal to God. (5:17f.)

"Before Abraham came into being, I am." So they took up stones to throw at Him. . . . (8:58f.)

"We stone You . . . because of blasphemy, because You, being a man, make Yourself God." (10:33)

"We have a law and, according to this law, He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God." (19:7)

"You are from the below; I am from the above. You are from this world; I am not from this world." (8:23)

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (15:18f.)

"I am speaking the things which I have seen from the Father and therefore you are doing the things which you have heard from your father." (8:38)

"Why do you not understand My words? Because you can not hear My words. You are from you father, the devil, and you will to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and is not in the truth because the truth is not in him. . . . but, because I say the truth, you do not believe Me." (8:43-45)

The basic offense in Jesus of Nazareth is the deity of the incarnate Christ. In attempting to explain the heart of the collision between Christ and humanity, Strachan says, "the dispute very soon passes into a controversy regarding the person of Jesus Himself, or His divine claims."²² The animosity of the Jews was only intensified when Jesus explained His authority to heal on the sabbath: "My Father still is working

²²Strachan, op. cit., p. 21.

and I am working." The Jews correctly interpreted these words to mean that Christ's relationship to the Torah was identical with that of the Father.²³ In their estimation, however, His divine claim was nothing short of blasphemy. Christ's assertion of His deity was not only the basis of their two attempts to stone Him but also the ultimate reason for their desire to have Him crucified.

The reason for man's lack of harmony with Christ's deity lies in the fact that there are two opposing realms: the realm of this world and the realm of "the above."

The world hates those who are not a part of it. This clash is due to the fact that the world is in bondage to its demonic prince, the devil. (14:30; 16:11; 8:31ff.) Christ's revelation of the Father therefore causes the world to seek to silence His voice. It is opposed to the Truth because its "father" is the propagator of lies and has no part with the truth. It seeks to kill God's Messiah because its "father" is a murderer from the beginning. In other words, the devil constantly opposes God's beneficent plans; the Jews, in this same spirit, were seeking to destroy the Son of God and thus counteract His work for mankind.²⁴

Ultimately, the world rejected Christ because, as Satan's realm, it is essentially antagonistic to God's rule.

²³Ibid., p. 168.

²⁴Stevens, op. cit., p. 196.

CHAPTER IV

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD CHRIST TODAY

Who Crucified Christ?

As was noted in our introductory chapter, there is an hypothesis current among some Jewish theologians that Christ was crucified simply as a political offender.¹ The whole tenor of the fourth Gospel, as has been shown, dramatically shows that the conflict between Christ and the Jews was much more serious than this view would allow.

According to St. John, the opposition against Christ was not a last minute decision involving only a few of Pilate's pawns. The Jews were constantly opposing Christ and were repeatedly seeking to kill Him. The crowds which followed Him eventually left and turned against Him. Even His own disciples were "following" Him only in body. When His hour came, they too deserted Him. In short, there was real and widespread antagonism against the Lord.

We might summarize the reasons for this antagonism as follows:

- a. Christ's humanity was an offence: the Jews could not accept His absolute claims because they viewed Him only as a man.
- b. His concept of worship was a contradiction of the ritualistic temple worship in which they placed

¹Supra, pp. 2f.

their hopes. His cleansing of the court of the gentiles opposed their Jewish exclusiveness.

- c. His determination to die for His "sheep" did not fulfill their messianic expectations.
- d. Christ's condemnation of sin aroused the anger in their unrepentant hearts.
- e. His authority over the sabbath contradicted their legalism.
- f. His absolute authority as the teacher opposed their self-righteous, biblicistic intellectualism.
- g. His divine nature was the inevitable target for the lies and treacherous hatred of the Devil-ruled world.

The Attitude of All Men, by Nature

Whoever accepts the authority of the fourth Gospel must assert that the crucifixion of Christ was a complete national rejection of God's Messiah. Speaking historically, the Jews crucified Christ. The Gospel according to St. John, however, will not let us rest here. It was not written to give gentile Christians reasons to be "Jew haters." Fox refers to the injustices which "Christians" have perpetrated against the Jews since the time of Christ.² St. John certainly does not propound such anti-Semitism.

We must remember that also non-Jews are reported as being opposed to Christ and His Gospel. The Samaritan woman had her pride in "father Jacob" (4:11) and, in the early part of her discourse with Jesus, she showed an attitude of complete ma-

²G. George Fox, Jesus, Pilate and Paul (Chicago: Isaacs & Company, c.1955), p. 42.

terialism. Pilate, though convinced of Christ's innocence, scoffed at His testimony to the truth, had Him scourged, and finally consented to His crucifixion. (18:33ff.) The soldiers repeatedly mocked and struck the Savior. (19:2f.)

The ultimate point which St. John makes in regard to the rejection of Christ is that the world hated Him and it stands condemned. (15:18f.; 16:11) Hoskyns says,

The author did not require of his original readers that they should exercise skilful historical imagination or force themselves into a position not already theirs. He assumes that his readers stand where the Jews once stood . . . that all men, because they are men, occupy this position.³

The same Christ confronts man today and man, by nature, is basically the same. Mankind, as under the rule of the "prince of this world," rejects Christ today for the same reasons as the Jews rejected Him two thousand years ago. Many theologians still are offended by the fact that the incarnate Christ continues to make His claim of absolute authority and divinity. Mankind still looks for its own kind of "messiah." Humanity continues to be proud of its own morality and intelligence and it therefore hates God's sin-revealing Light. The world today is still the realm of Satan which opposes the rule of God in Jesus Christ.

If our choice depended upon our own human potential, we too would make our decision against Christ and cry out, "Not

³Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel (London: Faber & Faber Limited, c.1947), p. 49.

this man, but Barabbas!" (18:40) All glory be to God: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you." (15:16)

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