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Grelot, Pierre.
Les Juifs dans l'Évangile selon Jean: Enquête historique et réflexion théologique

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Felix Just
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, CA 90045

This latest work by Pierre Grelot, the prolific and well-known but seldom-translated French biblical scholar, revisits the difficult and much-discussed problem of "the Jews" in the Fourth Gospel. The book, which neatly divides into three main parts, is very thorough and fairly careful in its investigation of the primary texts. In the two chapters of the book's first main part, Grelot poses the question as to whether the term *Ioudaïoi* should properly be translated *Judéens* ("Judeans") or *Juifs* ("Jews"). After a very brief survey of the OT, some intertestamental literature, and the NT writings outside of the Fourth Gospel, Grelot quickly concludes that for the period after the Babylonian exile the term almost always refers to "Jews" in the religious/ethnic sense, rather than meaning "Judeans" in a strictly geographical sense. He then analyzes in detail each of the Johannine occurrences of *Ioudaïoi* and not surprisingly reaches the same conclusion.

The second main part of this book investigates "The Historical Situation of the Texts." While Grelot agrees with J. A. T. Robinson's emphasis on the "Jewish" nature of the Fourth Gospel (*The Priority of John* [London, 1985]), he disagrees with the latter's proposal for a very early dating of the Fourth Gospel, accepting instead the currently dominant theory of multiple stages of composition with a final edition near the end of the first century. After another overview (chap. 3) of all the Johannine texts in which the term *Ioudaïoi* occurs, now under consideration of their possible placement in the various stages of the Gospel's composition, Grelot goes into more detail to distinguish between those elements of the Johannine text which seem to come from the oldest levels of tradition (chap. 4), those which provide evidence for very late stages of redaction (chap. 5), and those which should be considered neutral (chap. 6). Again, it is not surprising that he assigns the few "neutral" uses of the term *Ioudaïoi* to the oldest tradition, while attributing the majority of the "negative" occurrences to the latest stages of redaction, when the Johannine community is thought to be experiencing vehement opposition from and persecution by the Jewish community of their own day under the influence of the Pharisaic rabbis of Jamnia.

In part three, Grelot looks for the historical roots of the controversy between the Johannine Christians and "the Jews," tracing it mainly to the messianic claims made about the person of Jesus by the early Christians (chap. 7). Grelot's main emphasis here is that the controversy was an inner-Jewish affair, since Jesus himself was thoroughly Jewish. Moreover, all the claims made by the Johannine community about Jesus are thoroughly in keeping with Jewish traditions and expectations, even if the particular claim that he is the fulfillment of these expectations was rejected already by Jesus' own contemporaries. The last chapter reemphasizes that not only was Jesus thoroughly Jewish, but that the evangelist John and his community were also thoroughly Jewish, even if they came into conflict with the Pharisaic rabbis who became the dominant force in Judaism after the destruction of the temple. In a final "General Conclusion," Grelot again stresses that the Fourth Gospel should not be considered anti-Jewish, but it presents an individual challenge to all people today, whether Jew or Christian, to believe in Jesus.

The strength of this book is in its theological insistence, throughout Grelot's detailed analysis, that the Fourth Gospel should not be subjected to a naively literalistic reading that attributes its highly polemical statements against "the Jews" to Jesus himself, and thus also should not continue to be used as a basis for anti-Semitism. Although the Jewish people, as the first nation chosen by God, were the first to be faced *collectively* with the choice of belief/unbelief presented in the person of Jesus, the Johannine "Jews" also represent all humanity ("the world") in that all people *individually* are faced with the same choice. Such practical concerns are certainly still pertinent in the world today, in France, in the United States, and elsewhere. The book's main weakness, on the other hand, is that it reaches its primary conclusion (that the Johannine *Ioudaïoi* almost always refers to "Jews" rather than "Judeans") much too quickly (within the first five pages) and without engaging in serious dialog with the works of other scholars who have written on this same topic recently. Aside from Robinson (cited above) and M.-E. Boismard and A. Lamouille, *L'Évangile de Jean* (Paris, 1977) more generally, he ignores the many significant scholarly proposals made in the past few decades (for an overview, see J. Ashton, "The Identity and Function of the ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΙ in the Fourth Gospel," *NovT* 27 [1985] 40-75). Grelot admits that the problem is one of translation into French (and other modern languages) rather than with the Greek term itself; a modern translator is forced to choose between "Judeans" and "Jews" (or possibly "Jewish authorities"). Yet Grelot separates these two meanings too rigidly chronologically, as if *Ioudaïoi* properly meant "Judeans" in a strictly geographical sense before the Babylonian exile, but meant "Jews" in a predominantly ethnic/religious sense after the return from exile. Such an either/or division, however, is not appropriate for the mentality of either era. Even at the time of Jesus and John, the "Judeans" were not only those who permanently resided in the geographic province of that name (as Grelot repeatedly maintains), and throughout history "the Jews" have had very strong ties to their ancestral homeland and to its capital Jerusalem on many different levels (socially, economically, psychologically), just like or even more than most other ancient Mediterranean peoples. Once again, even if the

"historical inquiry" of this book breaks little new ground, Grelot's "theological reflection" does make an important contribution on a pastoral level. (8/97)